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The Effects of Parental Marital Status and Family Form on Experiences of Childhood in Twentieth Century Scotland, c. 1920 – 1970.

Felicity Roseanne Joy Cawley, MA (Hons), MSc

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Economic and Social History

School of Social and Political Sciences

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

Submitted May 2018

Abstract

This thesis examines the effect of parental marital status and family form on experiences of childhood in twentieth century Scotland, c. 1920 to 1970. During the twenty-first century there has been increasing scrutiny placed on the family in response to a perceived increase in family breakdown since the 1990s. However, existing research has shown that the family has a rich and diverse history and that Scotland in particular has a strong cultural tradition of varying family forms. As such, this thesis examines the experience of childhood in nuclear families, 'broken' families, lone parent families, and stepfamilies in a historical context. In doing so, this thesis reveals the meanings of family for both society and individuals during the period of review, problematises the nuclear ideal and the experience of life in the nuclear family, and questions the boundaries of family as it is both lived and understood. This analysis is based on the personal testimonies, both oral history and the memoir, of those who experienced childhood in Scotland between 1920 and 1970, coupled with extensive archival sources including the records of organisations such as the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and mother and baby homes in central Scotland.

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the location of study with an essential overview of the distinct aspect of Scotland's housing, education and welfare structures throughout the twentieth century. Discussion of these environmental circumstances and contexts of childhood is crucial to framing the following analysis of remembered experiences of childhood. This framework is then followed by the first of four analysis chapters, the first of which examines the nuclear family. This formative chapter is shaped by the original oral histories carried out for this research. Interviewee testimonies revealed the importance of housing, community, parental and intrafamilial relationships on the experience of childhood.

Recurring themes of alcohol abuse, poverty, and family dysfunction were all revealed as influential in the shaping of memories and narratives of childhood.

Building on the themes in chapter two, the first analytic chapter, the third chapter focuses on the transitional phase of the ‘breaking’ of the family and looks at the impact of parental separation, death, and divorce on experiences of childhood. In doing so, this chapter also includes an experience of childhood outwith the family and examines institutional childhood. In focusing on the ‘breaking’ of the family, this chapter highlights the transient nature of this process and highlights the importance of the coping mechanisms and survival strategies adopted by families during this period. Following this, chapters four and five each examine a subsequent family form, namely the lone parent family and the stepfamily.

The examination of childhood within a lone parent family brings a gendered focus to the analysis with a concentration on the impact of lone motherhood on experiences of childhood. Whilst the themes from the previous chapters recur here, the impact of external support networks and the influence of the welfare state are explicitly interrogated for the first time, as well as the continued influence on external institutions and agencies in the shaping of family. Finally, analysis concludes with a consideration of life within a stepfamily. In doing so the chapters of the thesis echo the potential path of the family, from nuclear through to broken and lone parent, to stepfamily. This final chapter questions the ‘return to normality’ of the stepfamily and contrasts the experience of stepfamily life with that of the nuclear, further questioning the idealisation of this ‘traditional model’. Discussions of stepfamily life build on the role of emotions in experiences and definitions of family as well as including a discussion of the changing conceptions of child abuse. Throughout both final chapters the individual complexity of family life and experience is examined.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Rosemary Elliot and Dr Annmarie Hughes, for supervising this thesis and for their continued support and encouragement throughout this process. Additionally, this thesis formed a part of the AHRC funded project, ‘A History of Working Class Marriage in Scotland, 1855-1976’, as such I’d like to thank AHRC for funding this thesis as well as all members of the project team (Professor Eleanor Gordon, Dr Jeff Meek, and Dr Andrea Thomson) for providing on-going inspiration and support. My thanks also go to Professor Malcolm Nicolson for providing scholarly guidance and advice.

I also owe a deal of thanks to the archivists at the University of Glasgow and the National Library of Scotland. Particular mention must be made to Carole McCallum and Simon Docherty at Glasgow Caledonian University’s Archives and Special Collections for their help and assistance. I am also very grateful that 25 individuals took the time to speak to me about their experiences of childhood; they truly have made this thesis what it is.

I am fortunate enough to have carried out my research amongst a great group of friends and colleagues based at the University of Glasgow, thanks go to fellow PhD students: Rachel Cheng, Ewan Gibbs, Kirsty Kay, Dominic Reed, Laura Robertson, and Cris Sarg for being friends in and out of the office. I also received the support of a number of friends who were lucky enough to have received a crash course in Scottish childhood throughout this process, notably Alison McKay and Kate Stenson. I also started this journey with Jane O’Neill and Amy Guy who provided much needed cake and comfort. A special mention must also be made to friend and flatmate, Maëlle Duchemin-Pelletier, her patience knows no bounds.

Finally, I must thank my family for showing unfailing support and encouragement during the writing of my “big essay”.

Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Felicity Cawley

Abbreviations

HFMH	Haig Ferguson Memorial Home
MSS	Ministry of Social Security
NAB	National Assistance Board
NCDS	National Childhood Development Study (1958)
NCUMC	National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
RSSPCC	Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
SCUMC	Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child
TTBH	‘Time to Be Heard’
WHC	Women’s Help Committee

Introduction

All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.¹

This thesis explores the meanings of family and childhood for individuals and society between 1920 and 1970 in Scotland, with a focus on the 1940s onwards. It developed in response to political and media concern over the impact of changing family forms on child wellbeing in the early twenty-first century. In 2007 the UK came last in a study conducted by UNICEF on child wellbeing in rich countries.² The popular press quickly claimed that this was the result of family breakdown and politicians soon began to echo this sentiment.³ Then children and family spokeswoman for the Liberal Democrats, Annette Brooke, stated in response to the findings that, “effective measures are needed to address the early signs of family breakdown”.⁴ Indeed, the Department for Children, Schools and Families commissioned a report published in 2009 on the impact of family breakdown on children’s wellbeing. However, despite the report finding no association between poor child wellbeing and the prevalence of ‘broken’ families, there remains an on-going correlation between childhood wellbeing and family form in the press and public policy.⁵ Organisations such as the Centre for Social Justice, founded in 2002 by ex-leader of the Conservative Party Ian Duncan Smith, have also argued family breakdown is one of the key causes of social

¹ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 1.

² Unicef, *An Overview of child well-being in rich countries* (2007), available at <<https://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf>> [Accessed 16.11.2017].

³ Jonathan Bradshaw, ‘Demography of Childhood’, in Jonathan Bradshaw (ed.), *The Well-Being of Children in the UK*, 4th edition (Policy Press Scholarship Online, 2016), p. 26.

⁴ ‘Reaction: UN report of child wellbeing’, *The Guardian* (14.02.2007), available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/feb/14/childrenservices.comment>>, [Accessed 16.11.2017].

⁵ Ann Mooney, Chris Oliver and Marjorie Smith, *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children’s Well-Being* (Institute of Education, University of London, 2009), available at <<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11165/1/DCSF-RR113.pdf>> [Accessed 16.11.2017].

breakdown and poverty in Britain.⁶ Additionally in 2012, the media reported on the UK's family breakdown "epidemic" contrasting Britain's high rate of family breakdown against other European nations.⁷ Moreover, in 2015, the government announced plans to replace the Child Poverty Act 2010, stating that they were moving away from a relative definition of poverty and were instead going to develop a "range of other measures and indicators of root causes of poverty, including family breakdown, debt and addiction".⁸ 'Family breakdown' was being used in these instances as shorthand to describe the perceived increase in divorce rates, lone parent, and 'dysfunctional' families in recent decades. In this context, a happy family was defined as an intact family.

However, the increasing scrutiny of the family in recent years belies the fact that there is a substantial historical precedent for a wide variation in family forms and parental marital status in the UK throughout history. The correlation of family breakdown with societal breakdown and suggested new definition of child poverty places a moral emphasis on lifestyle choices rather than external structural social and economic factors. The continued inclusion of family breakdown in negative outcomes for children seeks to demonise, and lay blame on, 'non-traditional' family forms, particularly single parent families, whilst also returning to the seemingly ever present 'problem family' and 'feckless mother' rhetoric from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹ This is of particular interest as the initial UNICEF report from 2007 made note that family form, in particular children growing up in lone parent families, did not align with child poverty rates. Indeed, Scandinavian countries such as

⁶ The Centre for Social Justice, *Green Paper on the Family* (London: Centre for Social Justice, 2010), p. 4.

⁷ Jennifer Cockerell, 'UK in family breakdown epidemic,' *The Independent*, December 29, 2012, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-in-family-breakdown-epidemic-8432992.html>>, [Accessed 09/04/2016].

⁸ Department for Work and Pensions Press Release, 'Government to strengthen child poverty measure', <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-strengthen-child-poverty-measure>>, [Accessed 04/05/2016]. Notably in response, the Scottish Government passed the Child Poverty Bill (Scotland) in November of 2017 setting targets to eradicate child poverty in Scotland.

⁹ Pat Starkey, 'The Feckless Mother: women, poverty and social workers in wartime and post-war England', *Women's History Review* 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557.

Sweden had a higher occurrence of lone parent families than the UK and yet a much lower child poverty rate.¹⁰ This could arguably be explained by more generous welfare provision in Scandinavian countries. For example, Finland has provided all expectant mothers with a ‘baby box’ of essential supplies since the 1930s (notably introduced in Scotland in 2017) and Sweden had introduced laws as early as 1917 that protected the rights of illegitimate children, enforcing strong measures for ensuring paternity obligations.¹¹ The UK’s continued focus on the ‘breakdown’ of families and the ‘non-traditional’ family as having a negative impact on childhood wellbeing speaks to a continued focus on the nuclear family as being the ideal family as well as a continued belief that there is a modern breakdown of the traditional ways of family life.

However, the rise of the history of emotions as well as an increasing interest in marital violence and conflict within the family is challenging the oft-held unproblematic view of nuclear family life.¹² Popular best-selling memoirs such as *Angela’s Ashes* and *Night Song of the Last Tram* recount the authors’ deprived and abusive childhoods situated in working-class nuclear families.¹³ In more recent years the general rise in popularity of so called ‘misery literature’, which was one of the largest growing sectors in book publishing worldwide in 2011, has also brought about large-scale public awareness of the potential detrimental effects of conflict-ridden and difficult family lives, regardless of family

¹⁰ Unicef, *Child Well-being*, p. 7.

¹¹ ‘Scotland’s baby boxes’, < <https://www.mygov.scot/baby-box/>>, [Accessed 16.11.2017]; Barbara Hobson and Mieko Takahashi, ‘The Parent-Worker Model: Lone Mothers in Sweden,’ Jane Lewis (ed.), *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes: Shifting Policy Logistics*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1997), pp. 124-125.

¹² See, for example: Elizabeth Foyster, *Martial Violence: An English Family History, 1660-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marianna Muraveya, *Domestic Disturbances, Patriarchal Values: violence, family and sexuality in early modern Europe, 1600-1900* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

¹³ Frank McCourt, *Angela’s Ashes: a memoir of a childhood* (London: Harpercollins, 1996); Robert Douglas, *Night Song of the Last Tram* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 2005).

structure.¹⁴ Recent turns in the history of childhood have also sought to interrogate the role of emotions in childhood and the notion of childhood “happiness” in experiences.¹⁵ The question remains, therefore, as to whether ‘family breakdown’ is the cause of childhood inequality and unhappiness or whether there are multiple factors at play, including external ones. In a report written for the British Academy, notably the first to demonstrate the importance of a historical perspective on questions of public policy, Pat Thane argues that statistics suggest that there is an increasing occurrence in the breakdown of the family, but that they also show that educational attainment levels are rising and crime levels are stable or falling. This may suggest that socio-economic inequality is a more important challenge than the features of the family itself.¹⁶ This conviction in the disintegration of the modern family arguably stems from an unflattering comparison with the apparent ‘golden age’ of marriage in the 1950s and 1960s. A golden age that never existed.

This thesis therefore contributes to the ever-increasing research into the history of the family through an analysis of the impact of family form and parental marital status on experiences of childhood in twentieth century Scotland, c. 1920-1970. As research shows that children have historically been likely to experience life in differing family forms an assessment of the effects of such experiences within a historical context becomes essential in an attempt to understand the impact of family forms on experiences of childhood.

¹⁴ Anne Rothe, *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 6.

¹⁵ See: Peter Stearns, ‘Defining Happy Childhoods: Assessing a recent change’, *Journal of the History of Youth and Childhood* 3:2 (2010), pp. 165-186; Peter Stearns, ‘Childhood emotions in modern Western history’, in Paula Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), pp. 158-173; Claudia Jarzebowski and Thomas Max Safley (eds.), *Childhood and Emotion: Across Cultures 1450-1800* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014); Stephanie Olsen (ed.), *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁶ Pat Thane, *Happy Families? History and family policy: A Report Prepared for the British Academy* (London: The British Academy, 2010). pp. 69-70.

Making extensive use of personal testimony, both written and oral, this research gives voice to those often overlooked within the history of the family and seeks to explore how individuals understand and construct the effects of family form and parental marital status on their childhood retrospectively. The sources examined are analysed in order to uncover the ‘everyday’ and how a study of emotion and memory can reveal the nuances of family life. The use of oral history testimony allows for a further examination of the changing constructions of ‘family’ and considerations of a ‘good childhood’. Furthermore, this thesis evaluates the definition of ‘family’ as it is both lived and understood and challenges the aforementioned popular discourse, problematising the nuclear ideal and contrasting family forms. In doing so, this research explores the recollected lived experience of childhood within the family, uncovering the physical and emotional landscapes of childhood; the roles of housing, education, and familial relationships coming to the fore.

I. Historiographical Context

The perception of the breakdown of ‘traditional’ family life has been vindicated, in part, by early academic forays into the history of the family. Michael Anderson has stated that since the 1970s family history has been one of the main growth areas of social history.¹⁷ It certainly seems that there was a plethora of published studies of the history of the family appearing in the 1970s with Peter Laslett, Edward Shorter, and Lawrence Stone each publishing seminal studies on family history.¹⁸ Many of these early studies attempted to track

¹⁷ Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 1.

¹⁸ Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (eds.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Edward Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins, 1976); Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1977).

the rise of the ‘nuclear family’, arguing that despite conceptions otherwise the nuclear family form is the traditional family form – especially in the west.

Laslett’s influential study *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, takes a demographic approach in its attempt at proving the longevity of the nuclear family. Laslett asserts that one of the enduring characteristics of the western family is the shape and membership of the familial group. That is, that the family has been “confined for the most part to the parents and children themselves”; in what we would now refer to as a ‘nuclear’ form.¹⁹ Laslett’s conclusion follows his analysis of households in Ealing, Middlesex in 1599 in which he found a mean household size of 4.75.²⁰ A figure, he argues, that is representative of England as a whole from the sixteenth century until as late as 1901.²¹ However, his findings are problematic; his evidence is primarily based on highly contentious pre-census listings of individual communities. In generalising findings from individual communities in order to promote a national average, Laslett obscures variations he himself identifies amongst different classes and regions. Moreover, these findings are based on *English* data from which he generalises the unique nature of the *western* family.

In *Making of the Modern Family*, Shorter argues that the nuclear family is a “state of mind rather than a particular kind of structure or set of household arrangements.”²² Tracing the origins of the nuclear family to the late eighteenth century, Shorter argues that a “surge of sentiment” is the primary cause of its emergence, arguing that the nuclear, or ‘modern’ family, emerged due to three main factors: the rise of romantic love, particularly amongst the lower classes; the improvement in the mother–child relationship; and the distancing of the

¹⁹ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²¹ Peter Laslett, ‘Mean Household size in England since the sixteenth century’, in Laslett and Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time*, p. 126.

²² Edward Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 205.

family from the surrounding community, binding members of the family to one another.²³ Shorter's insistence on the lack of emotional attachment between parents and their children due to high infant mortality rates is similar to the argument made by Phillipe Ariès in *Centuries of Childhood*. Ariès argues that parental love and concern for children did not appear until the fifteenth century, owing to high infant mortality rates resulting in a lack of emotional attachment to children in previous centuries.²⁴ Ariès' conclusions on the discovery of childhood are contentious at best and have been countered by numerous scholars; it now being commonly accepted that diverging attitudes towards children in the past does not necessitate the conclusion of a lack of appreciation of childhood or the lack of parental love for children.²⁵

The attempts to trace the origins of the nuclear family came during a period when divorce and family breakdown were perceived to be increasing, giving rise to the myth of the 'golden age' of the family in the decades prior. Demographic studies of the family which focus on population statistics and marriage and divorce rates do seemingly highlight the 1950s and 1960s as a more stable era for families, tracing a decline in the nuclear family from the 1970s.²⁶ Moreover, Rosemary Collins argued in 1992 that the "conventional nuclear family" had been in decline since the 1960s citing an increase in illegitimate births.²⁷ However, in more recent years historians such as Thane have attempted to show that the

²³ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁴ Phillipe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Cape, 1962).

²⁵ Shulamith Shahar directly refutes Ariès' claim in her study of medieval childhood, stating that without a tradition of child-nurturing society could not have survived: *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990). See also: Adrian Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Phillipe Ariès,' *History and Theory*, 19:2 (1980), pp. 132-153; Richard T. Vann, 'The Youth of Centuries of Childhood,' *History and Theory*, 21:2 (1982); Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁶ Kathleen E Kiernan, 'The structure of families today: continuity or change?' OPCS occasional Paper 31 *The Family* (London: British Society for Population Studies, 1983).

²⁷ Rosemary Collins, 'Upholding the Nuclear Family: A study of unmarried parents and domestic courts', in C. Marsh and S. Arber (eds.), *Families and Households: Divisions and Change* (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 174.

perceived ‘golden age’ of marriage and family life in the 1950s and 1960s, which arguably has and continues to inform social policy and current popular belief in the ‘breakdown of family life’, is in fact an anomalous period in the history of the family.²⁸ Additionally, the parent project of this thesis, *A History of Working Class Marriage in Scotland, 1855-1976* has also begun to question the dominant ‘traditional’ family narrative with an exploration of ‘irregular’ marriage and family life in Scotland.²⁹ Furthermore, given the occurrence of irregular marriage and cohabitation in Scotland, the continued focus on *marriage* as a qualifier for the understanding of the nuclear family in the past is also misleading. Similarly, the high divorce figures cited in many studies can often be deceptive in an attempt to understand the changes to the family over time.

While it is certainly true that in recent years divorce rates have steadily increased this can, in most cases, be explained through changes in legislation making divorce easier to obtain for many.³⁰ Furthermore, these figures cannot be held as representative for Britain as a whole as parts of Britain have significant legislative differences; divorce, for example, being available, although arguably not obtainable for many, in Scotland since the sixteenth century and prohibited in Northern Ireland until 1939. Moreover, high rates of illegitimate births are certainly not a product of modernity. Anderson’s study states that around 60 percent of women during the early nineteenth century bore their first child out of wedlock.³¹ Indeed the

²⁸ Pat Thane, *Happy Families?*, p. 67.

²⁹ See: Eleanor Gordon, ‘Irregular Marriage: Myth and Reality’, *Journal of Social History*, 47:2 (2013), pp. 507-525; Annmarie Hughes and Jeff Meek, ‘State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: the hidden costs of World War I in Scotland’, *Journal of Family History*, 39:4 (2014), pp. 364-387; Rosemary Elliot, Annmarie Hughes, and Jeff Meek, ‘Working class family breakdown and the First World War in Scotland’, *Scottish Labour History*, 50 (2015), pp. 141-159; Eleanor Gordon, ‘Irregular Marriage and Co-Habitation in Scotland, 1855-1939: official policy and popular practice’, *The Historical Journal* 58:4 (2015), pp. 1059-1079; and the project website at <<http://workingclassmarriage.gla.ac.uk/>>.

³⁰ Michael Anderson, ‘Quantitative Indicators of Family Change’ in *Sociology of the Family* 2nd ed., ed. Michael Anderson (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 14; Eric Clive, *The Law of Husband and Wife in Scotland*, 4th edition (Edinburgh: Scottish Universities Law Institute, LTD, 1997), p. 367; Thane, *Happy Families?*, pp. 9-10.

³¹ Michael Anderson, ‘What is New About the Modern Family: a Historical Perspective’ OPCS occasional Paper 31 *The Family* (London: British Society for Population Studies, 1983), p. 4.

surprisingly high rates of illegitimacy in the history of the family have been covered in several studies on illegitimacy including Laslett *et al*'s *Bastardy and its Comparative History* as well as Andrew Blaikie's examination of the North-East of Scotland.³² In addition, while divorce rates can be seen as increasing from the 1970s that is not to say that family dissolution is a new phenomenon.

Within Britain high mortality rates during the nineteenth and early twentieth century meant that many marriages were broken by death.³³ Additionally, Anderson goes further, noting that it was only in the early 1770s that half of any married cohort could expect to experience 25 years of marriage.³⁴ The most notable change in family dissolution in the twentieth century, as identified by Natasha Burchardt, is that "marital stability can be seen as a transient pattern between the receding shadow of death and the opening door of voluntary dissolution."³⁵ The reconstituted family (the stepfamily) also has a long historical precedent. Figures from 1991 led some authors to claim that the growth of stepfamilies has been one of the most dramatic changes for the British family, with as many as 1 in 12 (8.6 percent) of children now living in a stepfamily.³⁶ More recent figures have estimated that the number of children living in a stepfamily is still growing with estimates now suggesting that as many as 11 percent of children now live in a stepfamily.³⁷ Given the aforementioned high mortality rates, it is not surprising to note that there are no shortages of references to stepfamilies in

³² Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (eds.), *Bastardy and its comparative history: studies in the history of illegitimacy and marital nonconformitism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan* (London: Edward Arnold for the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, 1980); Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: North East Scotland, 1750-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

³³ Natasha Burchardt, 'Structure and Relationships in Stepfamilies in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Continuity and Change*, 4:2 (1989), p. 294.

³⁴ Anderson, *What is New About the Modern Family*, p. 8.

³⁵ Burchardt, *Structure and Relationships*, p. 294.

³⁶ Bryan Rodgers and Jan Pryor, *Divorce and Separation: the Outcomes for Children* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1998), p. 35.

³⁷ Office for National Statistics, *Stepfamilies in 2011*, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_360784.pdf>, [Accessed 17.12.2016].

Britain as far back as 1500, as identified by Stephen Collins.³⁸ Burchardt points out that it is difficult to calculate the number of stepchildren resulting from remarriage in previous centuries. However, it is likely to be considerably high, given that a sample of parish registers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that half the widowers and a third of widows remarried within a year.³⁹ However, as with family dissolution, stepfamilies have also changed with historical context, many more now formed through remarriage after divorce, rather than death, and as such the modern stepfamily is arguably more complex and without a historical precedent.

Nevertheless, the assertion that there was a ‘golden age’ of marriage or family, where the majority of the population resided in stable, long-lasting, ‘nuclear’ families is both misrepresentative and inaccurate. Whilst the 1950s and early 1960s were the closest that Britain ever came to such a state of universal matrimonial stability, Thane highlights, given the likelihood that many of those rushing for divorce after reform in 1969 were likely those married during the 1950s and early 1960s, the extent to which these ‘golden age’ marriages resulted in harmonious marital and family life is highly questionable.⁴⁰ There is a question then, as to why the dominant discourse is often still related to the primacy of the nuclear family. This, as in the discussion above, is related to social constructions and meanings of family.

As childhood wellbeing and childhood outcomes have often been related to family life, more specifically the *breakdown* of family life, there has been a long-held interest in the effects of divorce, separation and the ‘broken home’ on experiences of childhood in

³⁸ Stephen Collins, ‘Ideological Assumptions in the Lives of Stepchildren’, in *Childhood and Parenthood: Proceedings of the International Sociology Association Committee for Family Research Conference 1994*, ed. Julia Brannen and Margaret O’Brien (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 1994) p. 85.

³⁹ Burchardt, *Structure and Relationships*, p. 294.

⁴⁰ Thane, *Happy Families?*, p. 67.

sociological research. Rodgers and Pryor offer a summary in their bibliographic work written for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1998, one of the only such summaries for UK based research. The effects of family breakdown on children were stated to include: poor academic performance and low educational attainment; lower levels of nutrition, mental and physical health; increased levels of smoking, drinking alcohol and drug abuse; to be more prone to deviance and crime and more likely, to themselves, have children outside of marriage, form a cohabiting partnership, and experience divorce.⁴¹ Interestingly, Rodgers and Pryor make the point that these negative effects on children are not nearly so severe in the case of the death of a parent, particularly in regards to educational attainment, mental wellbeing and socio-economic achievement in later life.⁴² More recent reviews of the international literature have also found that children with divorced parents exhibit more conduct problems, have more emotional problems, and have a lower educational performance and attainment than children with continuously married parents.⁴³

Nevertheless, despite an ever-increasing academic interest in the family, what many of the early studies on the history of the family failed to examine is the role and experience of the child within the family, of particular interest given the discussed concern over the effects of the ‘broken’ family on children. While scholars, such as Shorter and Ariès, argue that increasing affection for the child, or the ‘discovery of childhood’ is what led to the emergence of the modern day family, they devote very little time to examining the long-term effects of the family on childhood experiences. More recent studies have sought to correct

⁴¹ Rodgers and Pryor, *Divorce and Separation*, p. 5; Norman Dennis and George Erdos, *Families without Fatherhood*, 3rd ed. (London: Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2000), p. xiv-xv.

⁴² Rodgers and Pryor, *Divorce and Separation*, p. 6.

⁴³ Paul Amato, ‘The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children: an update’, *Društvena Istraživanja (Social Research)*, 23 (2014), pp. 5-24; Sinikka Elliot and Debra Umberson, ‘Recent Demographic Trends in the US and Implications for Well-Being’, in Jacqueline Scott, Judith Treas and Martin Richards (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Families* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 44-46; Ann Mooney *et al*, *Impact of Family Breakdown*; Pryor and Trinder, ‘Children, Families, and Divorce’, pp. 331-332.

this imbalance and have focused on the effects of differing family forms and parental marital status on children, as discussed below. However, the majority of these studies fail to take into account the experience of the child itself, in that the data examined is often collected from parents in reference to the child.

Of the differing family forms and parental marital status, the family structure that attracts the most attention is that of the lone parent family, particularly that headed by the lone mother.⁴⁴ Historically the lone parent family was most likely to be headed by a woman and lone parent families in the UK today are overwhelmingly headed by women (86 percent).⁴⁵ Academic and popular accounts argue that lone parent families are thought to be detrimental in the main due to the lack of appropriate role models, most often the father, arguing that the single mother cannot parent adequately.⁴⁶ Dennis and Erdos in 1993 for example, argued that the growth in juvenile crime could be attributed to the difficulty faced by lone mothers in controlling their adolescent sons.⁴⁷ This was echoed in 2011 with the popular discourse on the London Riots. In the aftermath of the riots, then Prime Minister David Cameron claimed, “We’ve known for years that a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society.”⁴⁸ Media outlets also focused blame on the family citing “absent fathers” while the official report on the riots stated that

⁴⁴ There is a growing body of historical research on the experience on the lone mother, although not her child. See: Kathleen Kiernan, Hilary Land, Jane Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth Century Britain: from footnote to front page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Janet Fink, ‘For Better or Worse? The Dilemmas of Unmarried Motherhood in Mid-Twentieth Century Popular British Film and Fiction’, *Women’s History Review*, 20:1 (2011); April Gallwey, ‘Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Warwick: University of Warwick, 2011; Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?: Unmarried Motherhood in twentieth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ Burchardt, *Structure and Relationships*, p. 300; Anderson, *What is New about the Modern Family*, p. 8; Office for National Statistics, *Families and Households* (2017), <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/familiesandhouseholds>> [Accessed 16/11/2017].

⁴⁶ Keir and Lewis, *Family Dissolution: Mothers’ Accounts*, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Norman Dennis and George Erdos, *Families without Fatherhood* (London: Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2000).

⁴⁸ David Cameron, *Troubled Families Speech* (December 15, 2011), <<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/troubled-families-speech/>>, [Accessed 12/04/2013].

many felt “poor parenting” was at fault.⁴⁹ Additionally the title of Dennis and Erdos’s study, *Families without Fatherhood*, also ascribed importance not only to the presence of a male role model but also the social convention of the father; the focus is not merely on children without fathers, but rather *families* without fathers, indicating a wider concern with the nuclear family ideal and male breadwinner ideology. However, as lone mothers are not a modern phenomenon neither are concerns about fatherless families. Historical research has indicated that particularly in periods immediately post-war, there were increasing concerns over the impact of absent fathers on family circumstances, women’s morality, and juvenile delinquency.⁵⁰

Historical attitudes towards lone mothers may also account for the perceived detrimental effects of single parent families on children. In the early twentieth century unmarried mothers were predominantly thought of as sinners, by the mid-century as psychologically damaged and in more recent years as ‘scroungers’.⁵¹ While lone parent households generally have lower incomes than intact families, those headed by a lone mother are particularly affected.⁵² It can again be argued, therefore, that it is not the family form that accounts for the negative effects on childhood experiences but rather socio-economic inequalities, as Thane and international studies have suggested. As such, researchers have argued that the establishment of the welfare state has made life for the family headed by the

⁴⁹ Cristina Odone ‘London Riots: Absent fathers have a lot to answer for,’ *The Telegraph* (August 9, 2011), <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/cristinaodone/100100154/london-riots-absent-fathers-have-a-lot-to-answer-for/>>, [accessed 12/04/2013]; Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, *After the Riots: the final report of the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel* (2012), <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Riots-Panel-Final-Report1.pdf>>, [Accessed 12.04.2013].

⁵⁰ Hughes and Meek, *State Regulation*, p. 379; Louise Jackson and Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain, 1945-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, ‘Lone Mothers’, *Women’s History Review*, 20:1 (2011), p. 7.

⁵² Graham Crow and Michael Hardey, ‘Diversity and Ambiguity Among Lone-Parent Households in Modern Britain’ in C. Marsh and S. Arber (eds.), *Families and Households: Divisions and Change* (London: MacMillan, 1992), 144; Rodgers and Pryor, *Divorce and Separation*, p. 5.

lone mother much easier.⁵³ Additionally, Walker and Zhu have attempted to separate the effects of the absence of the father and the absence of the father's money on outcomes for children.⁵⁴ However, Walker and Zhu's conclusions are unclear, stating that both the father's absence and income seem to have negative impacts on child wellbeing and educational attainment. Although, this must be questioned as, as above, countries such as Sweden have a higher incidence of lone parenthood and yet comparably higher outcomes for children. There is a necessity, therefore, to question the impact of the welfare state on lone parenthood and experiences of childhood within a lone parent family.

A comparison with single parent households headed by men may also be beneficial in order to contrast the lower economic status of lone mothers against lone fathers, who, while suffering from a drop in standards of living following divorce and separation, do not suffer as severely.⁵⁵ Interestingly, while lone mothers are at the centre of discourse on lone parent families, those headed by men are also maligned. While women are seen to be less able to financially support and control their children, men are seen as less capable carers.⁵⁶ This conception may stem from psychological attachment theories of the nature of the maternal bond and care, or, the notion that the father is a distant figure expected to play only a minor role in childcare on a day-to-day basis.⁵⁷ However, this has been countered in recent years with an interest in fathering and fatherhood, although it must be noted that these studies are

⁵³ Gorell Barnes, Paul Thompson, Gwyn Daniel and Natasha Burchardt, *Growing Up in Stepfamilies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998);

⁵⁴ Ian Walker and Yu Zhu, 'Do Fathers Really Matter? Or is it Just Their Money? Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey' (Warwick: University of Warwick, 2005), <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/walker/current_research/youth6.pdf> [Accessed 17.06.2012].

⁵⁵ Avner Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence: self-control and well-being in the United States and Britain since 1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 337

⁵⁶ Crow and Hardey, *Diversity and Ambiguity Among Lone-Parent Households*, p. 145; Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 220; Lynn Abrams, "'There was nobody like my daddy': fathers, the family and the marginalisation of men in modern Scotland", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 206:2 (1999), p. 241

⁵⁷ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (London: Pimlico, 1997); Hilary Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities' in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010)

often focused on the impact of fathering and fatherhood on masculinity and not their impact on family function and experiences of childhood.⁵⁸ The exception to this is Lynn Abrams's study on fatherhood in Scotland. In her analysis Abrams does look at some first-hand accounts of the experience of childhood and the role of the father within those, although her focus does still remain on the adult experience of fathering.⁵⁹ There is still a need, therefore, for a historical examination of experiences of childhood in lone parent families, particularly in order to address questions in regard the impact of gender and access to welfare on experiences of childhood in such family forms.

An interesting comparison for the effects of the lone parent family is the experiences of childhood in the stepfamily. Despite their historic and contemporary prevalence in society, the stepfamily has a comparative lack of political and popular attention as a family form. This could arguably be explained by the fact that they are rarely seen to be as contentious as single parent families; stepfamilies are often viewed, by both commentators on family life as well as parents themselves, as a return to 'normality' after a disruptive transitional period,⁶⁰ or even as a 'solution' to the problem of lone parent families.⁶¹ The idea being that by parents remarrying, children are less likely to suffer the negative implications of lone parent family life despite the loss of one of their biological parents. However despite this theory, children in stepfamilies are also said to suffer the detrimental effects of parental separation.

⁵⁸ See, for example: Laura King, *Family Men: fatherhood and masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Aimee McCullough, 'Working Class Fatherhood and Masculinity in central Scotland, c. 1970-1995' (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2016); Julie Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁹ Abrams, "'There was nobody like my daddy'", pp. 219-242.

⁶⁰ Margaret Robinson, 'Stepfamilies: a reconstituted family system', *Journal of Family Therapy* 2 (1980), pp. 67-68; Burgoyne and Clark, *Making a go of it*, p. 144; Lawrence Ganong and Marilyn Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships: Development Dynamics, and Interventions*, 2nd edition (Boston, Springer US, 2017), p.2.

⁶¹ Graham Allan, Graham Crow and Shelia Hawker, *Stepfamilies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p.3.

Of the existing research on British stepfamilies, as with that into single parent families, the vast majority has been conducted from a sociological and psychological standpoint.⁶² In addition, much of the existing historical research has focused on the gendered myth of the ‘wicked stepmother’ and the role of the stepparent and has often not fully explored the role and the experience of the *stepchild* within the stepfamily, particularly during the twentieth century.⁶³ Given the persistence of the notion of a ‘wicked stepmother’ and ‘neglected stepchild’, it is perhaps surprising that the stepfamily has not been the subject of more historical investigation.⁶⁴ The historical stepfamily is also of interest due to the differing nature of modern stepfamilies, with many being complicated by shared care arrangements with non-resident parents, which differs from the historical stepfamily often formed on the death of a spouse.

Burchardt countered popular misconceptions of the stepfamily being a new and increasing phenomenon in both Britain and the USA, highlighting the need for understanding modern day stepfamilies in parallel with their historical predecessors. In her study of the structure and relationships in stepfamilies in early twentieth century Britain, Burchardt analyses life-story interviews collected by Paul Thompson for his study of Edwardian life.⁶⁵ Burchardt’s analysis uncovers a range of differing emotional responses to stepfamily life as well as a range of experiences within these new familial forms in regards to parent and sibling relations. However, as Burchardt herself notes, Thompson’s research while offering

⁶² See: Burgoyne and Clark, *Making a Go of it*; Gorell Barnes *et al.*, *Growing Up*; Graham Allan, Graham Crow and Shelia Hawker, *Stepfamilies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

⁶³ Natasha Burchardt and Steven Collins have each written articles on the relationship between step-parents and their dependents, however, Collins research only extends to 1800 and Burchardt the early twentieth century: Stephen Collins, ‘Ideological Assumptions’; Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships’.

⁶⁴ The popularity of the ‘Cinderella’ story is slow to fade in the twenty-first century and the ‘wicked stepmother’ is still a common theme in children’s literature. Additionally, Jones also highlights that the stepchild has become a metaphor for inferiority and neglect and the “Cinderella Complex” is also used as shorthand for implying inferiority or victimisation: Jones, , ‘Reconstructing the Stepfamily’, p. 230. Indeed, all step relations, including stepfathers and stepsiblings, maintain negative connotations for many today: Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁵ Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships’.

insights into stepfamily experience was not designed with stepfamilies in mind and, therefore, a more directed study is needed.

In 1998 Burchardt with Gorell Barnes *et al.* studied the impact of growing up in stepfamilies, drawing on life histories from a sample drawn from the 1958 National Child Development Study.⁶⁶ The study was produced in contrast to the majority of pre-existing studies, which had not considered the long-term impacts of stepfamily life or the responses of children within those families. Like the findings of Burchardt's earlier study, the findings of Gorell Barnes *et al.* relate how gender plays an important role in stepfamily relations and experience. Stepmothers were often held to a higher standard than stepfathers, and children were therefore often more critical of their new stepmother. Furthermore, respondents were able to retrospectively analyse the role that the stepfamily played in their adolescent development (all interviewees having been selected as those who became stepchildren by the age of 16). Finally, Gorell Barnes *et al.* placed an emphasis on the transitions faced by children and the factors which help or hinder stepchildren in the long-term. In doing so, the study is perhaps more apt to inform those involved in dealing with difficult stepfamily transitions rather than providing a historical context for the experiences of children, despite making use of both sociology and social history in their analysis. More recently in 2011, Allan, Crow and Hawker took a sociological approach to examining the relationships within stepfamilies and their developments over time, concluding with a redefinition of family as a household rather than as kinship.⁶⁷ Although together these studies provide a useful historical perspective, the period from the early twentieth century until 1960 remains largely unexplored.

⁶⁶ Gorell Barnes *et al.*, *Growing Up*.

⁶⁷ Allan *et al.*, *Stepfamilies*.

As with existing literature on the stepfamily, studies on divorce and family dissolution are also heavily weighted towards the parental experience within historical research.⁶⁸ There has been little historical research into the long-term effects of divorce on either the couple in question or their child(ren). This is further compounded by the difficulty in identifying the breakdown of families through separation or desertion, where divorce was unobtainable through financial or social reasons. An understanding of the childhood experience of divorce is crucial within a historical framework to give context to the transitioning family from ‘intact’ to ‘broken’. In analysing the lone parent or stepfamily, the impact of parental separation needs to be considered, particularly in contrast to the nuclear family, as associated issues of poverty and family conflict obviously affected children within varying family forms. Further, in ascertaining the long-term effects of family form and parental marital status on childhood experiences a retrospective and historical perspective of the experiences of the child must be pursued.

The impact of the family on childhood in more general terms could also bear more historical research, especially given that childhood within a nuclear family is often used as a touchstone for comparison with varying family forms. Whilst the ‘discovery’ of childhood or the rise of the nuclear family has focused on intrafamilial relationships, particularly the parent-child relationship, these studies only extend as far as the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Indeed, Linda Pollock’s influential work on parent-child relations covers a similar period, finishing in each instance in 1900.⁷⁰ Harry Hendrick who takes Pollock’s work further and surveys

⁶⁸ Historical inquiries into divorce include: Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: a history of divorce in western society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Leah Leneman, *Alienated Affections: the Scottish experience of divorce and separation, 1684-1830* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Meagan Lee Butler, “‘Husbands without Wives, and Wives without Husbands’: divorce and separation in Scotland, c. 1830-1890.” (Unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2014).

⁶⁹ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*; Laslett, *Family Life*; Shorter, *Modern Family*.

⁷⁰ Pollock, *Forgotten Children*; Linda Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: parents and children over three centuries* (London: Fourth Estate, 1987).

parent-child relations from 1880-1990, only does so within an English context.⁷¹ Anthony Fletcher too, focuses his study on experiences of childhood, and parent-child relations, within England.⁷² Additionally, parent-child relationships are only one of many important intrafamilial relationships to consider in experiences of childhood, sibling relationships also play an influential role. However, the vast majority of existing literature on sibling relations also focuses on the period prior to 1900, focusing on complex patterns of kinship and family politics, facilitated by emerging literary discussions on Victorian brothers and sisters.⁷³ As with other aspects of this research there is a considerable body of research on sibling relations within the social sciences that can be drawn upon when seeking to bridge the gap in our understanding of sibling relationships in history.⁷⁴

Given the location of study, cultural and social contexts must also be taken into consideration. While many of the previous studies have looked at the effects of family diversity on children within Britain there are considerable social, cultural and legislative variances within Britain's nations. Scotland makes an interesting case in this instance. Scotland has a long history of family diversity, with divorce obtainable from the sixteenth century, high rates of illegitimacy, and the prevalence of the practice of irregular marriage

⁷¹ Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷² Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: the experience of childhood, 1600-1914* (London: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁷³ Historical enquires include: Giulia Calvi and Carolina Blutrach-Jelin, 'Sibling relations in family history: conflicts, co-operation and gender roles in the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. An introduction', *European Review of History*, 17:5 (2010), pp. 695-704; Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: share and share alike* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Christopher H. Johnson and David Warren Sabean (eds.), *Sibling Relations and the Transformations of European Kinship, 1300-1900* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).

⁷⁴ See: Dalton Conley, *The Pecking Order: a bold new look at how family and society determine who we become* (New York: Vintage, 2005); Rosalind Edwards *et al*, *Sibling Identity and Relationships: Sisters and Brothers* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006); Susan McHale, Kimberley Updegraff, and Shawn Whiteman, 'Sibling Relationships and Influences in Childhood and Adolescence', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74:5 (2012), pp. 913-930; Julie Mitchell, *Siblings: sex and violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Lala Car Steelman *et al*, 'Reconsidering the Effects of Sibling Configuration: recent advances and challenges', *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002), pp. 243-269.

and cohabitation.⁷⁵ Additionally, it has been stated that due to the “unparalleled intensity” of Scotland’s experience of urbanisation and industrialisation, the Scottish family suffered more than most in terms of poverty and destitution.⁷⁶ Despite this, however, there has been little research on the effects of the Scottish family on childhood experiences. Indeed, there is little literature at all on the history of childhood in Scotland, with many key texts focusing on the UK or western society as a whole.⁷⁷ Abrams has published a study of the distinct child welfare and protection provision in Scotland; however this study tracked the fate of children removed from their familial situations.⁷⁸ Abrams’ work is well supported by that of John Stewart and Linda Mahood who also look at the development of child guidance and ‘child-saving’ movements in Britain and Scotland through the mid-twentieth century.⁷⁹

Given Scotland’s variant cultural, social, and legal differences a directed study on the effects of differing family forms within Scotland seems appropriate in order to establish their impact within wider social and cultural contexts. In doing so, this thesis will place the Scottish experience within a wider historiography of the family and childhood in the west. Moreover, the focus of this research is the period from 1920 to 1970, an area that remains comparatively under researched historically in regards to the experience of childhood and family life.

⁷⁵ See: Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex, and Society*; Gordon, ‘Irregular Marriage.’

⁷⁶ Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland’s Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 2

⁷⁷ See: Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995); Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: children and childhood in the West from medieval to modern times* (Oxford: Polity, 2001); Paula Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁸ Abrams, *Orphan Country*.

⁷⁹ John Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-195: the dangerous age of childhood* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013); Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, ‘The “Vicious” Girl and the “Street-Corner” Boy: Sexuality and the Gendered Delinquent in the Scottish Child-Saving Movement, 1850-1940’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4:4 (1994), pp. 549-578; Linda Mahood, *Policing Gender, Class and Family: Britain 1850-1940* (London: University College London Press, 1995).

II. Methodology

Childhood, and indeed the family in general, is a notoriously difficult subject for the historian to gain insight into. Social historian Peter Stearns argues that this is a result of the “granddaddy issue”, which, he explains, is the almost unprecedented difficulty of obtaining information from children themselves, as opposed to information that has been created by adults.⁸⁰ Stearns, alongside Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner, states that, despite a burgeoning interest in the history of children’s play and material culture, a disproportionate amount of the current history of childhood is not only viewed through adult filters but is also focused on adult attitudes towards childhood at varying points in time, through social policy, law, and a history of education.⁸¹ Nonetheless, although sources that have been created by adults have been consulted in this thesis, in part to provide important context as well as an overview of family life during the period of study, the key component of this research is personal testimony, specifically oral histories and published memoirs.

The use of oral history carries its own issues of capturing the childhood experiences of a population aging at the time of interview. For example, the oldest oral history interviewee was born in 1931 and was 83 at the time of interview, and the majority of interviewees who came forward were born after 1940. Their experiences were augmented by the use of secondary oral histories and memoirs, discussed below, for the 1920s and 1930s. Though retrospective, and mediated by both historical and current discourses, these personal testimonies allow for an insight into the ways people understood and remembered their lived experience of childhood.

⁸⁰ Peter Stearns, ‘Challenges in the History of Childhood’, *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1:1 (2008), p. 34.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 35; Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner, ‘Hidden in Plain View: the history of children (and childhood) in the twenty-first century’, *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:1 (2008), pp. 43-44.

Oral history has, in the words of Paul Thompson, transformed the history of the family, allowing, arguably for the first time, for the discovery of the ordinary family's contacts with neighbours and kin as well as its internal relationships.⁸² In addition, the history of childhood has been transformed by the use of oral history. Indeed, Thompson claims that the use of oral history means "the history of childhood as a whole becomes practicable for the first time."⁸³ The internal relationships within families, as well as an understanding of the experience of childhood as it was lived, is essential for this thesis; as such the use of personal testimony and oral history interviews is integral. It is oral history, amongst other personal testimonies, that can uniquely reveal not just the memory of an event's occurrence but the meaning behind the event. As Alessandro Portelli contends, oral sources "tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did."⁸⁴ Oral history, therefore, has the potential to reveal not only the remembered experiences of childhood but also the construction of meaning behind the experiences as well as their lasting effect.

As briefly recounted above, we have the official statistics of childhood within non-traditional family forms, but, as Abrams and Brown have noted in their introduction to *A History of Everyday Life in Twentieth Century Scotland* although we can easily chart the everyday, particularly in the twentieth century, "statistics are only as good as the categories chosen, the questions posed".⁸⁵ Further, not everything can be counted and captured by

⁸² Paul Thompson, 'The Voice of the Past: oral history', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 25.

⁸³ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 8.

⁸⁴ Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 67.

⁸⁵ Lynn Abrams and Callum Brown, 'Introduction', in Lynn Abrams and Callum Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Twentieth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 11.

statistics, it is only through personal testimony that we can unveil the “richness and banality of everyday life” and the rise in oral history has allowed for an “even more extensive reach into the everyday lives and identities of the ‘ordinary people’”.⁸⁶ In relation to accessing the *experience* of childhood, Luisa Passerini in her pioneering paper on oral history focuses on its strength in subjectivity, urging its practitioners to look beyond the “literal narrations” contained within oral history testimony. Passerini refers to the subjectivity of the source material as an “area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects.”⁸⁷ The subjective nature of oral history is an advantage in this research as it is the individual nature of the family and the remembered experience of childhood therein, particularly in relation to the family’s impact on the constructions, memories, and narratives of childhood that are of prime interest. A further strength of the methodology and its particular usefulness here is that oral history is no longer the sole domain of the historian but has become a “composite genre”, transcending disciplinary boundaries, much like the study of childhood.⁸⁸

This thesis not only includes interviews carried out for this work but also interviews from other, pre-existing, oral history projects. Interviews from Thompson and Newby’s *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing, an Intergenerational Approach, 1990-1988* project and the *Scottish Women’s Oral History Project* have also been consulted.⁸⁹ There are of course considerations to take into account when using archived oral histories that have been carried out for another, or perhaps even unknown, purpose, as the context for each interview will

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Luisa Passerini, ‘Work, Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism’, *History Workshop Journal* 8 (1979), pp. 84-85.

⁸⁸ Alessandro Portelli, ‘Oral History as Genre’, in Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (eds.), *Narrative and Genre: Contexts and Types of Communication* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

⁸⁹ Paul Thompson and Harold Newby, *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing, an Intergenerational Approach, 1990-1988* available via the UK Data Service at < <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/guides/dataset/100-families>>; *Scottish Women’s Oral History Project* (Stirling: Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, 2007).

inevitably affect the resulting data.⁹⁰ Interviews from these two projects were used as the interview structure most closely resembled that which was used in the oral histories carried out for this thesis; both projects took life history approach during interviewing, which included questions ranging from the interviewees' childhood experience to having their own children.⁹¹ As with the interviews conducted for this research, the only criteria for inclusion was that interviewees spent some or all of their childhood in Scotland between 1920 and 1970.⁹²

By its very nature a self-selected group will most likely not be fully representative of the population, but every effort was made to recruit interviewees from as wide a pool as possible. From September 2013 until September 2014, advertisements for volunteers were placed in a variety of locations across Scotland, although a larger concentration of advertisements were throughout Glasgow and Aberdeenshire owing to familiarity with local businesses and places of importance to the local community. Additionally, Glasgow and Aberdeenshire were chosen as focal points due to their geographical nature, offering both a rural and urban experience. All of the places displaying the call for interviewees were chosen for their centrality in the community and the cross-sectional services they provided. These included: branches of local libraries in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow; doctors' offices and pharmacies in Glasgow and Aberdeenshire; park, community centre, and supermarket notice boards in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh, and Glasgow;

⁹⁰ This methodological consideration of a secondary analysis of qualitative data is a relatively new discussion within history, for a more in-depth discussion of the implications of this see: Joanna Bornat, 'A Second Take: Revisiting Interviews with a Different Purpose', *Oral History* 31 (2008), pp. 47-53; Joanna Bornat, 'Remembering and Reworking Emotions: the reanalysis of emotion in an interview', *Oral History* 38:2 (2010), pp. 43-52.

⁹¹ Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format, for an example of the interview schedule used in the interviews carried out for this thesis please see Appendix B.

⁹² In addition, for the purposes of this study childhood is defined as the period until the age of 18 or the age at which the individual left the family home, whichever occurred first. The age of majority in Scotland for most of the period under review here was 21, reduced to 18 by the Age of Majority (Scotland) Act 1969, however by 21 a large proportion of interviewees had left home and 18 was felt to be the more appropriate age for comparison.

and corner shop and post office noticeboards in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow. In addition, family history and local history groups were also approached across Scotland and an article on both the research aims of this thesis and its parent project was written for the e-bulletin of the Scottish Story Telling Centre in Edinburgh. The vast majority of interviewees were self-selecting volunteers who responded to the call for interviewees, however, a number were also recruited via 'snowballing' whereby they were approached on my behalf by a previous interviewee, and two interviewees volunteered after hearing a paper presented on the project during its early stages.

Recruitment, in all its forms, resulted in 24 interviews with 25 respondents (one interview was conducted with two brothers) being carried out between December 2013 and December 2014.⁹³ Of those interviewed, nine were male and 16 female. In addition, the eldest interviewee was born in 1931 and was 83 at the time of interview, and the youngest was born in 1959 and was 55 at the time of interview. This response allowed for the majority of the analysis for the years 1940 to 1970 to be concentrated on the oral histories conducted specifically for this thesis, the period from 1920-1940 being supplemented by additional interview data and memoirs, as further described below. Interviewees had experienced childhood in a range of areas across Scotland, including the cities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Glasgow and smaller areas such as Perth, Stirling and Wick. This resulted in a variety in the physical environments of childhood, with interviewees coming from remote rural farming areas and small villages as well as suburban and inner-city areas.

Of those interviewed, 22 spent some or all of their childhood within nuclear families, three in widowed families, two in lone parent families (one later entering a stepfamily), and

⁹³ A full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix C.

one in a divorced family. This is a particularly interesting result, given the research aims of this thesis, and that, as discussed above, parental divorce and separation, and lone parenthood did occur throughout the period under consideration. Whilst not necessarily indicative of general patterns, the interview testimony from those who grew up in lone parent and stepfamilies provide evidence of both continuities and differences in the impact of family form on experiences of childhood. It is also notable that children growing up in families with long-term cohabitating parents did not come forward for interview. Once more this could speak to self-selection bias amongst interviewees and the dominance of the *married* nuclear family model within popular discourses

In addition, the sample was also racially homogenous with all respondents being white, largely illustrative of the demographic makeup of Scotland during the period. The implication of this is revisited later in this thesis, specifically in the concluding reflections; however, this self-selection of interviewees is telling and is worth noting here. The lack of diversity in responses was anticipated at the time of advertising and the call for interviewees clearly stated that, “this research focuses on the memories and experiences of those who were brought up in different types of families,”⁹⁴ and two participants did come forward to talk about their lives as a result of feeling that they were not represented in the traditional family narrative.⁹⁵ Racial and religious diversity was not a primary factor in recruitment and the findings here are representative of those who came forward willing to be interviewed for this research. Additionally, during the interview, respondents were asked about their religious activity and whether they attended church regularly with their parents, but religion did not form a large part of any respondents’ narrative. Furthermore, race was also not an issue

⁹⁴ The call for interviewees poster is reproduced in full in Appendix A

⁹⁵ One is interviewee Maureen who was brought up within a conflict ridden nuclear family (discussed in more detail in chapter two), and the other is interviewee David who spent the majority of his childhood in Quarriers Homes in the Bridge of Weir, then known as the Orphan Homes of Scotland (discussed in more detail in chapter three).

brought up by any interviewee. However, this forms a part of Jackie Kay's memoir, *Red Dust Road*, where Kay talks of her mixed race heritage and its role in the circumstances of her adoption. Referring back to Passerini's plea to read beyond the "literal narrations" of interviews, the 'silences' here perhaps reveal a continuation of the contemporary discourse of the primacy and centrality of the nuclear family. Notions of what it means to belong to a family in Scotland from 1920 to 1970 are considered throughout this thesis and the focus here is on the impact of life within the dominant nuclear model, and experiences of children if that model breaks down. However, there is certainly a need for more targeted work to be done in order to reveal the varied racial and religious experience of family life in Scotland during and after this period which would further enrich the history of experiences of childhood and the findings presented here

As a result of utilising oral history, the interviews conducted for this thesis reveal a significant additional element to the experience of childhood in varying family forms; that is the way in which these lived experiences were explained by interviewees. Oral history testimony is 'composed' in such a way that it cannot be separated from external discourse. Narratives were presented within a wider understanding of the social world and cultural values. Important themes that resulted from interviewees' testimony include the roles of alcoholism, poverty, abuse, and neglect in their experiences of childhood. Recollections of childhood that touch on these themes were constructed in such a way that revealed a considerable amount about the ways in which they were understood in relation to discourses on these issues at the time of interview. Furthermore, the "subjective composure" of memories also revealed the way in which interviewees constructed their childhoods in a way that allowed for on-going equanimity, presenting a coherent story that made the most sense to the interviewee and was intended to make sense to the audience they were presenting it to, in

this case the interviewer.⁹⁶

The use of oral history, therefore, not only reveals the experiences of childhood within family forms but the ways in which these narratives have been impacted by recent discourse and cultural representations of family life. In recounting their memories of childhood, respondents drew on what they perceived to be a modern understanding of the family and they located their own experience within this, or in contrast to this. As Penny Summerfield notes, oral narratives “may contest as well as accept the public rendering but must relate to it and negotiate it.”⁹⁷ The results of the oral histories are therefore two-fold, they not only tell us about the ways the lived experience of family life is remembered but also perceptions of ideal family life, both during the period of study as well as the time of research. This links to a recurring theme throughout this thesis, the conception of a ‘good childhood’ and the need to consider the impact of nostalgia on oral history and narratives of childhood.

Within the fields of psychology and sociology nostalgia is an established concept.⁹⁸ More recently, longing for the past and engaging with nostalgia has been seen as a way in which people “struggle for a sense of continuity in a rapidly shifting landscape of their personal and social lives.”⁹⁹ Here, however, a distinct facet of nostalgia began to emerge, the idea of a ‘collective nostalgia’, which, unlike collective memory or public memory, is still an emerging concept.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 66

⁹⁷ Penny Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the subject: Intersubjectivities in oral history’ in Tess Cosslett, Ceila Lury and Penny Summerfield (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, theories, methods* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 95.

⁹⁸ See: Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: a sociology of nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: a psychological resource* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

⁹⁹ Krystine Irene Batcho, ‘Nostalgia: the Bittersweet History of a Psychological Concept’, *History of Psychology* 16:3, (2013), p. 173.

¹⁰⁰ Collective nostalgia is often used in studies of identity politics, see for example: Barbara Cassin, *Nostalgia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); A Brown and M Humphreys, ‘Nostalgia and the Narrativization of Identity: a Turkish case study’, *British Journal of Management* 13:2

Collective memory refers, most simply, to the awareness of the construction of memory within social and cultural concepts. That is, interviewees may construct their narrative in such a way that it emphasises and aligns with a recognised and shared view of the past. Collective nostalgia suggests that this is not necessarily a subconscious response to shared cultural knowledge, but rather a need and a desire for the past to have been a certain way. Sean Field, in his study of trauma and memory, argues that “nostalgia is an imaginative process of finding words to make sense of memories laden with uncomfortable images and feelings evoked in the present but linked to what has been lost from the past.”¹⁰¹ However, nostalgia is not always utilised as a way to process traumatic memories or, more recognisably, to ‘compose’ a narrative of the past; as Kate Douglas states, “nostalgia is more than a longing for a lost past; it is an overt longing for a past that may never have existed.”¹⁰² Thus, the impact of collective nostalgia is important to consider within oral history narratives as nostalgia “is used by a group of people in their efforts to recapture the idealized version of what has been lost to them [sic].”¹⁰³

In addition to oral history, this study makes significant use of memoirs as a primary source. Originally, memoirs were sought as a supplementary source to the primacy of oral history testimony in the analysis of experiences of childhood, expectation being that selected memoirs would fill the demographic gaps left by the self-selection of interviewees. Indeed, the memoir is used in this way, particularly to cover the first decade of the scope of the thesis

(2002), pp. 141-159. But its impact on the individual is still emerging, see the work of the nostalgia group based at the University of Southampton, <<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/nostalgia/publications.page>>, [accessed 29.11.2017], notably: Wildschut *et al*, ‘Collective nostalgia: a group-level emotion that confers unique benefits on the group’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107 (2014), pp. 844-863.

¹⁰¹ Sean Field, ‘Imagining Communities: memory, loss and resilience in post-apartheid Cape Town’, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd Edition, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 606.

¹⁰² Kate Douglas, *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 94.

¹⁰³ Vamuk Volkan, ‘Nostalgia as a Linking Phenomenon’, *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 1:2 (1999), p. 170.

as the eldest person interviewed was born in 1931, over a decade after the start of the period of study. In addition, memoirs are used in a more concentrated manner in chapters where there is not significant representation by interviewees, for example, five memoirs are used in the fourth chapter on lone parent families as only four interviewees detailed an experience of childhood within a single parent family, compared with 19 in the second chapter on nuclear family childhoods.¹⁰⁴ Despite initial assumptions of their supportive role, the memoir and the written testimony therein has become a central part of primary source material analysed as a part of this thesis.

Whilst oral history is now a largely accepted methodology within social history research, the autobiography or memoir is still considered somewhat contentious – despite its long use in academic research to uncover “hidden spheres” of society and culture, particularly amongst feminist researchers within feminist epistemology.¹⁰⁵ Much in the same way as oral history was heralded as ‘history from below’ feminist history and historians have made extensive use of autobiographical writings as a way of “letting silenced voices speak out.”¹⁰⁶ In addition, owing in part to the work of John Burnett and the archive of working-class autobiographies, autobiographical writing has been mostly accepted as a legitimate source for researching the lived past that lies outside of living memory, particularly the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ However, in recent years the popular autobiography or memoir is still arguably undervalued and under-utilised by historians, despite arguments that autobiographical writing provides historians with “greater complexity and personalised experiences.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ For a full and complete list of the memoirs used see Appendix D.

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Harrison and E Stina Lyon, ‘A note on ethical issues in the use of autobiography in sociological research’, *Sociology* 27:1 (1993), p. 101.

¹⁰⁶ Lucy Bland and Angela John, ‘Editorial’, *Gender & History* 2:1 (1990), p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ John Burnett, David Vincent, and David Mayall (eds.), *The Autobiography of the Working Class: an annotated, critical bibliography, Volume I 1790-1990* (London: Harvester, 1984).

¹⁰⁸ Abrams and Brown, ‘Introduction’, p. 11.

Firstly, it is best to outline what exactly constitutes a memoir before further discussing their use. Paula Fass, a historian of childhood, has attempted to define the memoir within her own work and states that memoirs are, for her, “significant expressions of the need to make a personal note, to share a memory, to leave a memento”.¹⁰⁹ Philippe Lejeune also attempted to distinguish the memoir from other forms of autobiographical writing, arguing that the memoir is a statement on something both outwith and part of the self, in contrast to the autobiography which is a ‘chronology’ of the self.¹¹⁰ For the purposes of this research and the analysis of memoirs therein, the memoir is more usefully thought of as a method of self-reflection and representation, as Gore Vidal states in the opening of his own memoir, “A memoir is how one remembers one’s own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, [and] facts double-checked.”¹¹¹ Whilst Vidal would seem to claim the autobiography is a much more traditional source in its historical function and significance, it is the very subjective nature of the memoir that makes it so useful in this instance. As James Young states in his study of Holocaust diaries and memoirs, “even if narrative cannot document events, or constitute perfect *factuality*, it can document the *actuality* of writer and text.”¹¹² Much like in oral history, the study of the memoir is, in this case, not undertaken to ascertain the facts of childhood but rather feelings, emotions and remembered personal experiences; it is important to understand therefore, “not just *what* is said, but also *how* it is said, *why* it is said and *what* it means.”¹¹³

The inclusion of memoirs in this study has been made possible by the recent “democratisation” of the genre, so lamented by those who have argued that it has led to the

¹⁰⁹ Paula Fass, ‘The Memoir Problem’, *Reviews in American History*, 34:1 (2006), p. 109.

¹¹⁰ Philip Lejeune as discussed by Fass in ‘Memoir Problem’, *ibn.*, p. 122.

¹¹¹ Gore Vidal, *Palimpsest: A Memoir* (London: Random House, 1995), p. 5.

¹¹² James Young, ‘Interpreting Literary Testimony: a preface to reading Holocaust diaries and memoirs’, *New Literary History* 18:2 (1987), p. 420.

¹¹³ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 25.

publishing equivalent of Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame.¹¹⁴ This democratisation of the genre has led to a "British flowering" of autobiographies and memoirs in recent decades, which have "taken it as axiomatic that all lives are intrinsically interesting".¹¹⁵ Of course, within this research all lives are considered interesting, particularly those which have until now remained largely hidden; not only as another method of attempting to understand history from "the bottom up" but also as a way in which we can access that private life of the home and the missing *lived* experience of the child in history. Despite assertions that publications which deal at length with childhood are often written by authors whose early lives were unhappy ones,¹¹⁶ childhood is a particularly popular site for the memoir; arguably for several different reasons, which have in turn manifested into three broad categories of childhood memoir.

Firstly, childhood is a period of general interest that many authors enjoy reflecting on and reminiscing over, often hoping to establish a shared connection with their reader. For example, George Rountree, author of *A Govan Childhood: the 1930s*, explains that,

an urge to learn about my family history and a desire to find out what conditions were like in the world they lived in made me realise that sometime in the future someone, descendant or other interested people, might be curious about what life was like in the Govan of the 1930s.¹¹⁷

This motivation that stems from a desire to preserve one's memories and history appears frequently; similar reasoning can be found in other publications such as *Middens, Mansions and Madens: a Glasgow Memoir* by C.H. Maden. Maden explains that he took the decision to

¹¹⁴ William Grimes, "We All Have a Life. Must We All Write About It?", *New York Times*, March 25, 2005, p.B25 as cited in Fass, 'The Memoir Problem', p. 107.

¹¹⁵ L. Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Neil Sutherland, 'When you listen to the winds of childhood, how much can you believe?', *Curriculum Inquiry* 22:3 (1992), p. 239

¹¹⁷ George Rountree, *A Govan Childhood: the 1930s* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1993), p. 1.

write his memories so that his children do not come upon the difficulties he had when trying to locate his family's past.¹¹⁸

Moreover, the memoir can often tell us much about the lasting effects of childhood. The focal point, voice, title, beginning and ending point that are chosen by the adult narrator often reveal as much as the actual content of the memoir in question. Helen Buss, in her attempt at defining the separate forms of life writing has argued that "traditional autobiography makes the individual life central, while memoirs tend to focus on the times in which the life is lived and the significant others of the memoirist's world."¹¹⁹ In looking at childhood and the family, and more importantly the effect of the family on childhood, Buss' definition holds particular relevance as she places an emphasis on the setting of the memoir as well as the significance that is often placed on other figures within its pages, in this case the family. Several of the memoirs that I have drawn on for this study, for example, whilst broadly writing on the topic of childhood, are centrally focused upon the relationship between a significant other and the author themselves. This focus tells us much about the effect of the family on childhood, revealing more about family function and experience than is often realised. For example, Robert Douglas and Meg Henderson have each centred their publication on a formative figure prominent in each of their childhoods. Douglas' *Night Song of the Last Tram* focuses on the very different relationships that he shared with each of his parents; he opens his memoir with,

If my father, Robert John Douglas, had been killed in North Africa or Italy during the Second World War, I know that for the rest of my life I would have looked at the few photographs of him and mourned our lost relationship. Unfortunately he survived and came home.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ C. H. Maden, *Middens, Mansions and Madens: a Glasgow Memoir*. (Glasgow Caledonian University Research Collections: Glasgow, 2009).

¹¹⁹ Helen M. Buss, 'Memoirs', in M. Jolly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, Vol. 2 (London: Fitzroy and Dearborn, 2001), p. 595.

¹²⁰ Robert Douglas, *Night Song of the Last Tram* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005), p. 1.

Henderson focuses her *Finding Peggy* around her relationship with her formative aunt, the eponymous Peggy, and her search to find the truth surrounding her sudden death when Meg was only 11 years old. Henderson's book explores the relationship between her extended family and the impact that her aunt's death had on the family as well as her childhood in Glasgow.¹²¹

Douglas' and Henderson's memoirs are closely related to the third and final category of childhood memoir which is alluded to by Sutherland's assertion that it is trauma which prompts authors to focus on their childhood: the 'inspirational' or 'misery' memoir. The memoir has become a hugely popular field in recent decades. Initially the memoir appeared to be confined to those who had survived a particularly traumatic or culturally significant event; memoirs of the Holocaust still being some of the most popular today whilst tales of surviving physical and sexual abuse, particularly during childhood, have become increasingly popular since the late 1980s. Accounts of traumatic childhoods are particularly successful and this can be attributed to both an increasing focus on challenging the family as the traditional sanctuary from the threat of the outside world as well as considering the writing of the memoir as a therapeutic act. Additionally, given that the memoir often seeks a shared connection between author and reader, the 'misery' memoir could be relatable to a wider audience who also feel that their experiences of childhood fall outside the dominant idealised narrative of a 'good childhood'. These 'misery memoirs' are still of considerable scholarly value, their study providing a dual analysis: a narrative of the lived experience of traumatic childhoods as well as acting as an important source for the study of such narratives and the influence and reception of narratives of trauma in popular culture.¹²²

¹²¹ Meg Henderson, *Finding Peggy: a Glasgow Childhood* (London: Corgi, 1994).

¹²² Victoria Bates, "'Misery Loves Company': Sexual Trauma, Psychoanalysis and the Market for Misery", *Journal of Medical Humanities* 33:2 (2012), p. 61.

Of course, as with oral history there are some methodological considerations that accompany the extensive use of memoirs in historical research. As with the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, analysis of any autobiographical writing must take into account the performance of the author, the very act of writing presupposing an audience. Furthermore, as with oral testimony, the role of memory needs to be considered. Whilst recalled conversations and detailed events are constructed in retrospect they still demonstrate important points of interpretation and understanding for the individual. Nevertheless, these issues are far from unique to the use of memoirs. Every source has gone through some degree of selection and refinement and should be approached with an awareness of its provenance.

Moreover, Rodney Beecham has argued that,

Obviously, a novel or a play or a poem does not present actual events as they happened but, if an informed audience feels a powerful sense of recognition of what is portrayed, it is unlikely that historical truth has been fundamentally compromised.¹²³

The memoir's integrity as a source is similarly demonstrated; the 'boom' of life writing has highlighted a degree of commonality of experience that is being found within these pages, a brief glance at the sales figures of memoirs about childhood as well as the reviews left on popular book-selling sites reveals that there is a connection between the lived experience of the author and the reader. It has also been argued, that the on-going success of the memoir can be viewed as an expression of the increasingly widespread engagement with history in contemporary society.¹²⁴

¹²³ Rodney Gerald Beecham, 'Fiction and Memoir of Britain's Great War: disillusioned or desperate?', *European Review of History*, 22:5 (2015), p. 796.

¹²⁴ Fass, 'The Memoir Problem', p. 108.

Finally, this thesis also draws on archival material from a variety of different sources: the Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (SCUMC), now known as One Parent Families Scotland; the Women's Help Committee (WHC); and the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC), or Children 1st as it was renamed in 1995.¹²⁵ As previously asserted, the main focus of this research is the personal testimony, be it written or oral, of those who experienced childhood in a variety of different family forms. The archival material is used here to provide crucial social context and an insight into the wider contemporary discourse on family forms and marriage and their resultant effect on childhood. Each of the organisations above was chosen for examination owing to the relative prominence that they played in family life during the period of study, impacting policy and contemporary social concern as well as directly affecting the lives of families from 1920 to 1970.

The SCUMC began as a branch of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (NCUMC) and was founded in 1942. However, the need for a distinct body was identified owing to the differences between English and Scots law and the SCUMC came into being as a separate but affiliated body in 1945. Thane and Evans have undertaken a systematic analysis of attitudes towards unmarried mothers in England and made extensive use of the records of the NCUMC in their research. However, no such comprehensive project has been undertaken in relation to the SCUMC.¹²⁶ Archival holdings for the SCUMC are focused on the last decade of study here, with surviving minutes, annual reports, and records of mother and baby homes starting in the 1960s. The records reveal the extent of

¹²⁵Records of One Parent Families Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University [GB 1847 OPFS]; Records of the Women's Help Committee, Glasgow University Archive [GB 0248 DC260/5]; Records of Children 1st, Glasgow Caledonian University, [GB 1847 C1ST].

¹²⁶ Thane and Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?*; Thane, 'Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England'; Tanya Evans, 'The Other Woman and her Child: extra-marital affairs and illegitimacy in twentieth-century Britain', *Women's History Review* 20:1 (2011), pp. 47-65.

contemporary political and social concerns over the fate of the unmarried mother and her child as well as the continued efforts of the SCUMC in aiding mothers and their child(ren), most particularly in financial and legal matters.

The WHC, established in Glasgow in 1922, is similar in vein to SCUMC, although operating on a more local level. Pre-dating the SCUMC by two decades, the WHC originally conceived themselves as the fore-runner to the SCUMC, acting as the NCUMC's Scottish contact and counterpart prior to the establishment of the SCUMC. A women's welfare group, the WHC aimed to promote and further "the moral and social conditions of women and children."¹²⁷ To this end the WHC worked with 'delinquent' girls, wives separated from their husbands, and the unmarried mother and her baby. Having preceded the SCUMC, the WHC's annual reports allow for an examination of public and welfare agency attitudes towards unmarried mothers at the beginning of the period under consideration in this thesis. The WHC also played an important role for unmarried mothers, once more focusing their efforts on legal and financial matters as well as establishing their own mother and baby home in 1946 and contributing significantly to the Illegitimate Children (Scotland) Act 1930.

The last archive consulted in-depth was that of the RSSPCC. The archive of Children 1st is held at Glasgow Caledonian University Archives and Special Collections and includes national annual reports, as well as referrals, case records, prosecutions, and petitions for Glasgow, Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire from the mid-1940s until 1976. Despite the extensive nature of the Children 1st archive there has been limited research into their holdings and there is unfortunately unlikely to be much more, at least concerning the

¹²⁷ Glasgow University Archive [GB 0248 DC260/], Women's Help Committee, *Annual Report 1926*, p. 2.

case files, in the near future.¹²⁸ For this research an examination of a selected number of case files was undertaken; however, these case files have since been removed from the archive by Children 1st and are no longer available for research. Permission to include them here has been retained. At the time of investigation, the archive held over 6,600 case files for the west of Scotland and a decision was made, for sampling purposes, to search the database for case files relating specifically to the ‘non-traditional’ family forms under examination, namely: single parent families, divorced families and stepfamilies, resulting in the analysis of 209 case files in total. Given the scope of the holdings of the archive, these case files were selected due to their comparatively limited number. This allowed for a more in-depth analysis of these particular groups, given the comparatively small number of personal testimonies available, in particular an examination of the reasons behind their referral.

Furthermore, these files revealed contemporary conceptions of family life and perceptions of familial ‘success’ or ‘failure’. The format of the case files written by the RSSPCC inspectors reveals contemporary attitudes towards familial responsibilities during the period under review; the case files were constructed in such a way that the children were the object of record and the subject was often the mother and an evaluation or judgement of her performance of motherhood, caring for the family and providing for her children. The extensive case notes taken by RSSPCC inspectors, therefore, offer an insight into official expectations of families, lived family conditions, individual family function, and the complex relationship between families and welfare agencies during the period of study.

¹²⁸ Existing analysis of the RSSPCC archives can be found in: Anna Christina Mary Robinson, “‘Children in Good Order’: a study of constructions of child protection in the work of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in the West of Scotland, 1960-1989” (Unpublished PhD thesis, Stirling: University of Stirling, 2002); Sue Innes and Linda McKie, “‘Doing What is Right’: Researching Intimacy, Work and Family Life in Glasgow 1945-1960”, *Sociological Research Online* 11:2 (2006); and Gary Clapton, “‘Yesterday’s Men’: the Inspectors of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1888-1968.”, *British Journal of Social Work*, 39 (2009). For a self-styled “documentary” insight into the RSSPCC see Brian Ashley, *A Stone on the Mantelpiece: a centenary social history of the RSSPCC* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985).

Overall, the sources consulted here are largely concentrated in the latter half of the period under review covering the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Whilst adding to the analysis and potentially speaking to the impact of the continued dominance of the nuclear family in current discourses on family life, the individual personal testimonies featured in the last chapters of this thesis, focusing on lone parent families and stepfamilies, are not only suggestive of the experiences of childhood within these ‘non-traditional’ family forms but also continue to question the idealisation of the nuclear family model.

III. Chapter Overview

The first chapter of this thesis serves as an introduction to the location of study. As outlined in the literature review above, Scotland and studies of the Scottish people, are often collated into studies of the United Kingdom, obscuring Scotland’s distinct culture, society, politics and law. For the purposes of this work, an overview of Scotland’s variation in housing, welfare, and education is particularly important in providing a contextual framework to better allow for a full analysis of experiences of childhood. As such, this first chapter provides a brief introduction to Scotland’s housing history, from the typical urban tenement homes of the early century to the various corporation and council homes built throughout Scotland in the inter- and post-war years. These homes and housing traditions are distinct to those experienced within the vast majority of the districts of England and Wales and a familiarity with these homes, which housed the majority of Scotland’s population, is integral to an understanding of the environmental landscapes of childhood. The family home was an important grounding in both the recollections of lived experience and the subsequent analysis and understanding of such accounts. Discussion of these environmental circumstances is then followed by an outline of Scotland’s welfare history, with a specific focus on the

development of family law, child welfare and support, as well as general welfare reform with the introduction of the welfare state. In addition to the environmental circumstances of childhood, the social and political constructions of family and family support are vital to an understanding of experience, especially given claims of the beneficial impact of the welfare state on certain family forms, and arguably living standards in general, in the post-war decades under review. Finally, a brief outline of Scotland's education system in the twentieth century is included as, as before, this is in some aspects distinct to that of England and Wales and education formed a large part of interviewee narratives. Combined, these overviews, whilst no means exhaustive, will provide a necessary frame of reference for the discussion in the following chapters.

Chapter two is the first of the four analytical chapters that each consider a different family form: the nuclear family followed by the 'broken' family, the lone parent family, and the stepfamily. Starting in the 1920s these chapters examine these earlier decades in order to establish a narrative of a 'good childhood' to fully evaluate the impact of the welfare state on families and childhood through the larger source bases covering the post-war decades. Informed by the original oral histories carried out for this thesis and supported by additional material from published memoirs of childhood, chapter two explores the lived experience of childhood within a nuclear family. In doing so, this chapter begins to problematise the nuclear family, questioning what we mean by family through a consideration of both the physical and emotional boundaries of the meaning of family. The roles of housing, community, parental and intrafamilial relationships and their impact on experiences of childhood are explored. The effects of gender and generation are also considered in the analysis. An examination of the oral and written testimony reveals the importance of external factors, such as housing and education, on experiences of childhood and life chances, as well

as the key role (positive and negative) of extended family and community in childhood. Understanding is deepened with consideration of problems caused by alcohol, poverty and family dysfunction and the way in which these shaped memories and narratives of childhood. This examination allows for a mapping of the emotional terrain of childhood onto the physical landscapes, producing a complexity and fluidity to the experience of childhood within a nuclear family form. Furthermore, the testimonies considered in this chapter also reflect on the wider social discourses of alcoholism, poverty, and neglect in order to situate and compose narratives of individual experience; their impacts on the construction of a ‘good childhood’, revisited in the conclusion, allows for an examination of the ways in which retrospective understanding acts to shape the narratives of experiences of childhood. Finally, in exploring the lived experience of childhood within this context and considering its complexity, this chapter also questions the predominance and preconceptions of, as well as the primacy accorded to, the nuclear family in current social and political discourse, policy and practice.

Building on the complexity of the experiences of family within community and extended families, alongside diverse emotional landscapes, chapter three focuses on the transient nature of the family in examining the lived experience of childhood families experiencing parental separation or loss through bereavement. While making use of both oral and written testimonies, this chapter also examines the case files of contemporary welfare agencies, namely those of the RSSPCC. An analysis of the RSSPCC case files here brings about an additional gendered element to the analysis of the experience of the ‘broken’ family with their continued emphasis on the quality of the mothering and the perceived success of the mother in caring for her family and child(ren). Blending the remembered experience of childhood with archival evidence, this chapter builds a picture of experiences of childhood

within what are often called ‘broken’ families. The chapter focuses on the processes of ‘breaking’ or transition, highlighting the transient nature of this process for many families – the resulting forms being considered distinct in and of themselves in later chapters. Housing, education, and intrafamilial relationships continue to play a prominent role in the analysis. However, distinct to the previous chapter, this evaluation also highlights the individual coping mechanisms of family and the individuals therein, and the significance of parental agency in familial survival during transition. Continuing the themes and building on the arguments of the previous chapter, the focus here is once again on the impact of external and internal family dynamics on experiences of childhood and importantly the interrelationship between the two.

Chapters four and five take a more detailed case study approach in examining experiences of childhood within lone mother and stepfamilies respectively. Each chapter continues to combine oral and written testimonies with supplementary archival evidence to explore experiences of childhood within family forms resulting from the fracturing explored previously. The flow of the chapters from nuclear to broken, lone mother and stepfamily has been chosen to deliberately echo the potential pathways of a family.¹²⁹ As such, the lone mother focus of chapter four considers the prevailing notions of the negative impacts of lone motherhood on experiences of childhood, drawing on and developing the arguments from previous chapters in examining the implications of the family form on experiences of childhood. Whilst the focus remains on the role of housing, education and internal family

¹²⁹ For example, according to a report generated by One Parent Families Scotland in 2013 – 49 percent of lone parents are separated from marriage, divorced or widowed, <http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/One_Parent_Families_Scotland.pdf> [Accessed 12.06.2017] and in 2015 23.7 percent of women who married in 2015 were previously either widowed or divorced, <<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/vital-events-ref-tables/2015/section7/15-vital-events-ref-tab-7-4.pdf>>, [Accessed 12.06.2017].

dynamics, the role of support networks rises to the fore and the influence of the welfare state is explicitly interrogated.

Moving on to chapter five, the thesis concludes analysis with a consideration of the lived experience of life within a stepfamily and the supposed 'return to normality' that the form offers. As aforementioned, a popular view of stepfamily life is that it is a return to the 'normality' of family life with the presence, once more, of two parents. However, this is contested and explored with a contrast of the experience of childhood within a stepfamily to that in the two prior family forms, notably the 'normal' nuclear family and the lone mother family. In addition to the continuing themes of the importance of the emotional and physical landscapes of childhood, the individual nature of the analysis of this final chapter also develops definitions of neglect and abuse within the lived experience of the family. This analysis builds on the exploration of the role of emotions in the experience and definition of family life, as well as encompassing a modern understanding of childhood emotional neglect in addition to the contemporary definitions of abuse. Throughout both final chapters the individual complexity of family life and experience is examined. The methodology used throughout this thesis serves to highlight the crucial element of subjectivity within the research, necessary to reveal the everyday details of family life culminating in an understanding of the lived experience of childhood. This emphasis on the individual underscores the importance of the way in which the family functions and the role of interpersonal dynamics within a family as a more accurate indicator than family form and parental marital status on experiences of childhood in twentieth century Scotland.

The thesis concludes with a reflection on method, discussing the interplay between experience and memory and the dynamic of retrospect and nostalgia on recollections of

childhood. Throughout the thesis there is an implicit consideration of the retrofitting of childhood and the role of popular and collective memory in recalling experiences of childhood. As outlined in the second chapter, and developed throughout, retrospection coloured accounts of childhood; interviewees drew on their awareness of current discourses on issues such as alcoholism, poverty, abuse, and neglect, in the construction of their narrative. This resulted in a changing definition and understanding of a ‘good childhood’ within interviewee testimonies.

Drawing together the themes and arguments explored throughout the preceding chapters, the thesis finishes with a discussion of the meanings of family for those that experienced childhood in Scotland between 1920 and 1970. Here the dominant discourse of the nuclear family is questioned as well as the meanings and boundaries of the ‘family’ itself. Moreover, the point at which organisations came into contact with families is examined alongside an evaluation of their impact on social and individual constructions of family throughout the period. In assessing the impact of family form on experiences of childhood, the final portion of this thesis also reflects on the revealed importance of the home and the role of education in interviewee testimonies. Finally, the key nature of intrafamilial relationships is considered in a final evaluation of whether it is family form or individual family function that has a larger impact on the experience of childhood.

Chapter One: The Scottish Context, Environment and Welfare c. 1920-1970

I. Introduction

This chapter draws on archival research, personal testimony and existing literature to provide the contextual framework for the experiences of childhood analysed in later chapters of this thesis. Scotland had a distinct social, cultural and legal framework that needs to be considered. Given this, it is important to have an overview of housing, education, and welfare policy in Scotland as these were key themes that emerged from personal testimony. In addition to the physical circumstances of childhood, the definitions of family by welfare agencies and their impact on family support are also vital to understanding the ways individual experience is expressed, especially given claims of the beneficial impact of the welfare state on certain family forms, and arguably living standards in general, in the post-war decades. Combined, these overviews of Scotland's housing, education system, and variations in welfare for both families and children specifically, whilst no means exhaustive, will provide a necessary frame of reference for the discussion in the following chapters.

II. Housing in Scotland c. 1920 - 1970

The family home is an important aspect of any recollection of childhood, as it locates the socio-economic position of the family, as well as providing a physical background for the emotional aspect of many accounts and important biographical detail. As this thesis will show, recollections of and references to housing were an indicator of the geographical, material and environmental landscapes of childhood. A familiarity with Scotland's distinct,

and often tumultuous, housing history is necessary for a full understanding of experiences of childhood within Scotland.

In contrast to the ubiquitous terraced housing in the industrial cities of England and Wales, Scotland's urban housing stock was dominated by tenements in the early twentieth century, usually rows of connected sandstone multi-occupancy buildings divided horizontally into self-contained units around an internal common stairwell. Many Scottish tenements also featured distinctive bay windows in the living space at the front of the property. There are multiple theories as to why Scotland's city planners favoured the tenement over the terraced house; these range from Scotland's rapid industrialisation and population growth¹ to the higher land prices and cheaper sandstone prices making the tenement the best financial option for Scottish builders.² The disparity between the two housing styles offered throughout England and Wales and Scotland was noted in 1908 in a report on working-class living conditions:

There is little in common between working-class houses in Scotland and those in England. The typical residence of the working man, whether labourer or skilled mechanic, is, in England, a cottage of three, four or five rooms; in Scotland it is a flat of one, two or three rooms. ... In Scotland the cottage disappears and its place is taken by blocks of flats of two, three and four storeys; in Edinburgh, for example, the most usual type of tenement house is that of four storeys, each with four flats or sixteen in the block. As regards the flats themselves the rooms are generally much larger than those in an English cottage, and moreover, in nearly all tenements additional accommodation is afforded in one or two of the rooms, according to the number in the flat, by a 'bed recess', or space sufficient to contain a large bedstead.³

Inside, the tenement flats could vary from large middle-class five-apartment offerings to a single-end (one-roomed flat, figure 1.1). The most common tenement had multiple flats on

¹ Miles Horsey, *Tenements and Towers: Glasgow Working Class Housing 1890-1990* (Edinburgh: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, 1990), p. 2.

² M. J. Daunt, 'Housing' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 198-199.

³ *Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working-Class Rents, Housing and Retail Prices 1908*, as cited in Daunt, 'Housing', p. 197.

each storey, often three two-apartment, or two two-apartment flats bookending a single-end on each floor.⁴ The flats themselves were perfectly adequate homes; indeed they remain some of the most desirable properties today. However, in the early twentieth century, they were often overcrowded leading to poor conditions inside.

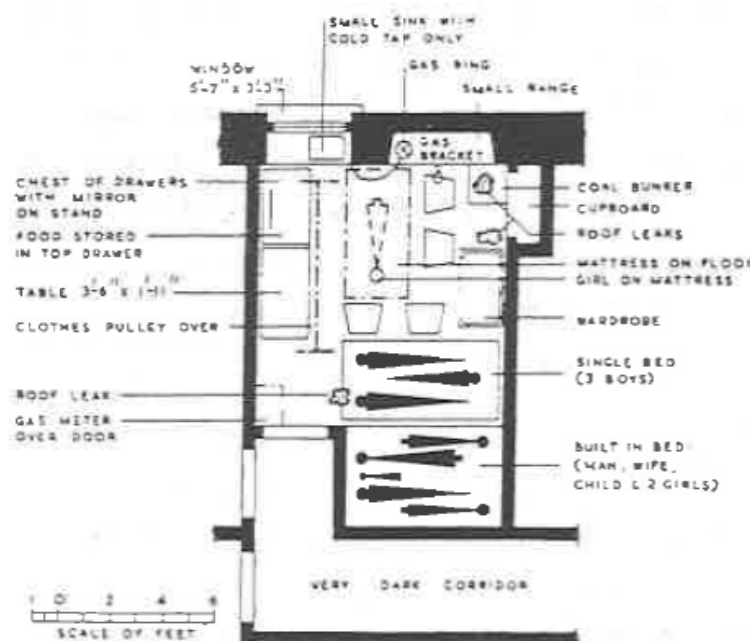


Figure 1.1: Plan of typical single-end, prepared by Housing Department (c. 1945).⁵

While there is little doubt that overcrowding still occurred in the English “cottage of three, four or five rooms”, the situation was notably worse in Scotland throughout much of the twentieth century.⁶ At the start of the First World War, 53.2 percent of Scottish housing consisted of one or two-roomed houses, whereas in England these homes only made up 7.1 percent of housing stock. As a result, 45.1 percent of Scots lived at a density of more than two people per room compared with only 9.1 percent for England.⁷

⁴ Horsey, *Tenements*, p. 3.

⁵ As reproduced in Horsey, *Tenements*, p. 13.

⁶ Callum Brown, ‘Charting Everyday Experience’ in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 34.

⁷ Richard Rodger, ‘Crisis and confrontation in Scottish housing, 1880-1914’, in Richard Rodger (ed), *Scottish Housing in the Twentieth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989), p. 29.

Due to the often overcrowded nature of Scotland's traditional housing, many memoir authors dedicate a portion of their book to regaling the reader with vivid descriptions of the cramped conditions of their childhood, either as an evocative reminder for Scottish readers or to inform those brought up elsewhere. George Rountree, born in 1930, spent his first decade living with his parents in two different 'room and kitchens' in Govan. Rountree describes his early homes in minute detail in his memoir *A Govan Childhood*, even providing two self-produced plans of the premises (figure 1.2). Dick Lynas, born in 1942, in his light-hearted description of a single-end in his own memoir, compares the experience to caravanning years later: "It was a large area that compromised cooking facilities, heating facilities, living room, lounge, extra sleeping space ... and given that there was only a shared toilet ... the living area also served as a toilet in the early hours of the morning."⁸

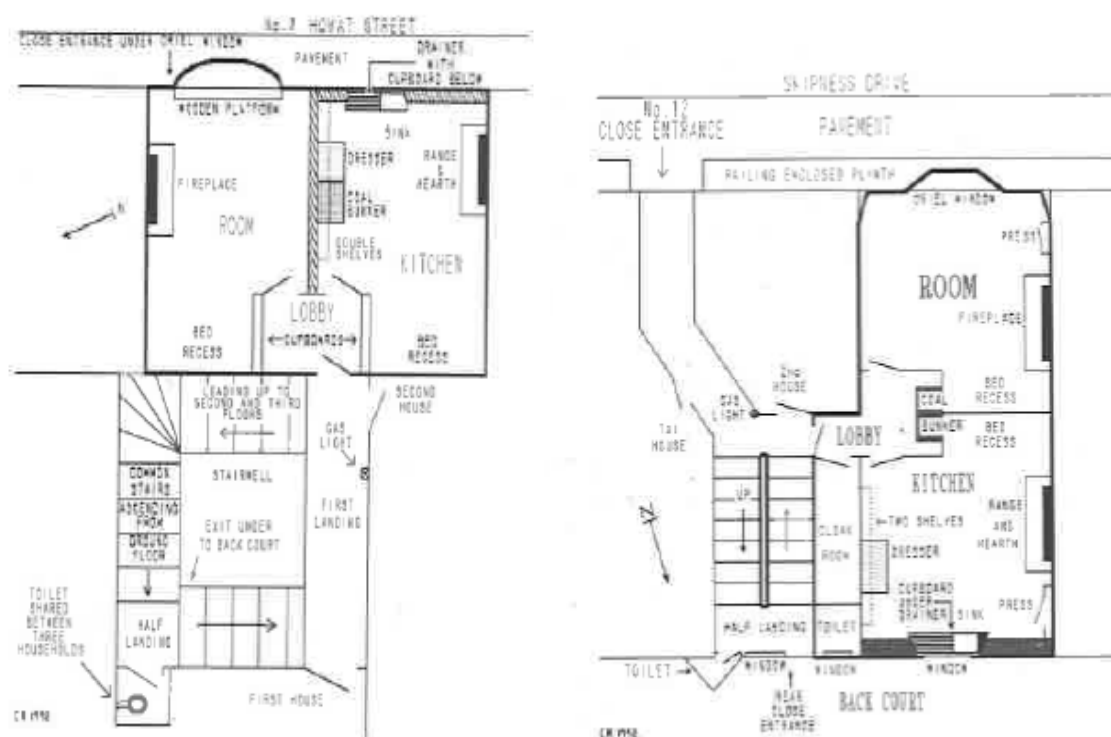


Figure 1.2: Plans (not to scale) of the two room and kitchen homes of George Rountree's youth in 1930s Govan, Glasgow.⁹

⁸ Dick Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays: tales from an ordinary east end childhood* (Milton Keynes: Authorhouse, 2010), pp. 63-64.

⁹ George Rountree, *A Govan Childhood: the 1930s* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1993).

Of those interviewed for this thesis, six respondents spent some (if not all) of their childhood in a home of one or two rooms. These respondents were born between 1931 and 1947, and recollections of shared beds were not uncommon. While there was no suggestion of anything untoward occurring in these circumstances, the prevalence of overcrowding in Scotland's urbanised areas led to official concerns about the morality of the nation, associated with ideas of "decency" and the adequate separation of the sexes, and the negative impact of overcrowding on mortality and morbidity, infant mortality rates and child development.¹⁰ Studies at the beginning of the century found that the infant mortality rate for children living in one-roomed homes was over twice that of children in four roomed homes, and that this pattern continued for child mortality up to age five.¹¹ As well as succumbing more often to fatal disease, children in typical Scottish housing stock were also at increased risk of rickets and other skeletal deformations, as well as bronchial conditions, ear, nose, throat and glandular defects.¹² In 1925, the Annual Report of the Glasgow Medical Officer of Health made a comparison of infant deaths in varying city wards from the most residential areas (ward I) to the most industrial (ward IV), with the density per room increasing from ward to ward. The report found that when the cause of death was compared for each ward group, death from respiratory, digestive, or infectious disease increased significantly the higher the ward (figure 1.3).¹³ Higher infant mortality rates in Glasgow, as compared to Edinburgh, persisted until the 1960s, with poor housing stock and overcrowding, alongside associated poverty, remaining significant contributing factors.¹⁴

¹⁰ Rodger, 'Crisis and Confrontation', pp. 27-30.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ R. A. Cage, 'Infant Mortality Rates and Housing: twentieth century Glasgow', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 14:1 (1994), p. 86.

¹⁴ R. A. Cage and John Foster, 'Overcrowding and Infant Mortality: a tale of two cities', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 49:2 (2010), p.147.

Table 7. Infant Deaths, by Disease Type and Ward Group, 1925 (per cent)

Disease	Ward group			
	I	II	III	IV
Respiratory	3.7	12.2	18.7	23.0
Digestive	3.7	6.2	10.5	12.3
Infectious	2.7	7.1	13.2	15.1

Source: *Annual Report, MOH, 1925*, p. 41.

Figure 1.3: Infant deaths by disease type from 1925 Medical Officer of Health Report, Glasgow.¹⁵

Scottish officials were all too aware of the adverse effects that tenement living was having on health, hygiene and family conditions and, in an attempt to counter these, they embarked on an ambitious and contentious redevelopment plan in 1919. The Housing and Town Planning Act (Scotland) Act was passed that year and, Devine argues, had a singular contribution to the shape and development of urban Scotland in the twentieth century.¹⁶ The act introduced state subsidies for housing and gave more authority to local councils, in effect ending the dominance of the private landlord in Scotland.¹⁷ Gone was the old tenement style and instead two-storey, semi-detached and terraced cottage styles became the norm until a return to high density housing in the post-war decades.¹⁸ The passing of the 1919 Act and a further six Acts by 1938 resulted in a total of 344,209 new houses in Scotland, a total of 70 percent of which were owned by local authorities.¹⁹ The extent to which the most needy Scots benefitted from these is debatable.²⁰ Many of the first tenants to move into the new council homes in Glasgow were high-income earners, meaning that many of those displaced by the

¹⁵ Cage, 'Infant Mortality', p. 86.

¹⁶ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 347.

¹⁷ Tom Begg, *Housing Policy in Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1996), p. 21.

¹⁸ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 347.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Horsey, *Tenements*, p. 13; Begg, *Housing Policy*, p. 26; Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 349.

slum clearance moved into further inadequate housing.²¹ Moreover, local authority policies were designed in such a way that they allocated housing to more desirable tenants who would be able to pay the high rents and ensure the success of the new social housing areas.²²

Housing development in Scotland after the Second World War led to the controversial concentration of high-rise living in 1960s Glasgow. Between 1961-1968 high-rise flats accounted for three quarters of all Housing Committee completions, while the building of new ‘overspill’ developments such as Castlemilk and Drumchapel were intended to rehouse those displaced by slum clearance and city redevelopment.²³ These new suburban developments saw a return to the old tenement style housing in three or four storey buildings that had been abandoned decades earlier, albeit with smaller rooms, lower ceilings and smaller windows (figure 1.4). Concerns over the effects of high-rise living on family life were expressed as early as 1971 when social researcher Pearl Jephcott published her study of the effects of high-rise living, *Homes in High Flats*.²⁴ In addition, social and gender historians in recent years have been hesitant to condemn the tenement lifestyle in Scotland and endorse the slum clearances in post-war Glasgow, noting the benefits that tenement communities provided, especially for women.²⁵ Although many of the new homes offered an improvement in material living conditions with improved standards inside the home, the long-term effects of enforced relocation to high-rise living and overspill developments such as the new town of East Kilbride have most recently been explored by Abrams and Fleming who focus on the detrimental effects of the loss of support networks for families as well as a

²¹ Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 68.

²² Ibid., pp. 68-69; Nicholas Sharrer, ‘The Impact of Social Housing on Health in Glasgow and Baltimore, 1930-1980’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2016) p. 134.

²³ Horsey, *Tenements*, p. 49.

²⁴ Pearl Jephcott, *Homes in High Flats: Some of the human problems involved in multi-storey housing* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1971).

²⁵ Lynn Abrams and Linda Fleming, ‘Everyday Life in the Scottish Home’ in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 51.

lack of local amenities and facilities, particularly for young children.²⁶ None of the respondents or memoirists considered in this thesis had any experience of life in a high-rise flat during their childhood, but many experienced family life in houses in the new purpose-built estates or towns on the periphery of Scotland's largest central belt cities – namely, Glasgow and Edinburgh.



Figure 1.4: Example of a suburban tenement in Castlemilk (picture taken in 1989).²⁷

In detailing their childhood memories of moving in and out of these new schemes and estates, respondents revealed the impact on their material and environmental conditions, as well as the effect these relocations had on their family life and function, particularly with reference to the role of the local community and extended family and kin networks. This accords with research that has shown the division of extended families and long existing communities was one of the lasting effects of housing redevelopment and one of the most

²⁶ Abrams and Fleming, 'Everyday Life in the Scottish Home'; Lynn Abrams and Linda Fleming, "Long Term Experiences of Tenants in Social Housing in East Kilbride: an oral history study", 2011, available at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_218813_en.pdf> [Accessed 10.102016].

²⁷ Horsey, *Tenements*, p. 37.

lamented. There were people who refused to be relocated or even returned to their old homes.²⁸ Indeed, the family of one memoir author discussed later in this thesis moved from a newly allocated local authority house back into the overcrowded grandparental home after a year.²⁹ As I will argue in this thesis, meanings attached to houses in recollections of family life blur the definition of both ‘home’ and even ‘family’ within recollections of experiences of childhood.

Despite official attempts to address Scotland’s overwhelmingly poor standard of housing, a quarter of Scotland’s population were still living in two rooms or less in 1951 and there was only an 18 percent reduction in one- and two- roomed homes by 1961.³⁰ The housing charity Shelter employed photographer Nick Hedges in the last years of the 1960s to document the “oppressive and abject living conditions being experienced in poor quality housing in the UK”.³¹ As a part of this, Hedges took numerous photos of the poor living conditions in Glasgow, highlighting the continuing need for housing (re)development in Scotland into the early 1970s (figures 1.5 and 1.6). Furthermore, despite the fact that tenement housing was not unique to Glasgow, Glasgow retained the negative associations of such living conditions much longer than other cities within Scotland. Sensationalist publications such as *No Mean City* meant that the memory of Glasgow’s slum districts was, and remains, slow to fade; as late as 1982 surveys revealed that Glasgow still evoked grim impressions of the Gorbals and tenement slums.³²

²⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁹ Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays*, p. 125, p. 132.

³⁰ Abrams and Fleming, ‘Everyday life’, p. 50.

³¹ ‘Make Life Worth Living: Nick Hedges’ photographs for Shelter, 1969-1972’, available at <<http://www.shelterscotland.org/lifeworthliving/>> [Accessed 10.10.2016].

³² Irene Maver, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 281.



Figure 1.5: Mother living with her children in an overcrowded single-end tenement flat Glasgow 1971 (Nick Hedges, 1971).³³

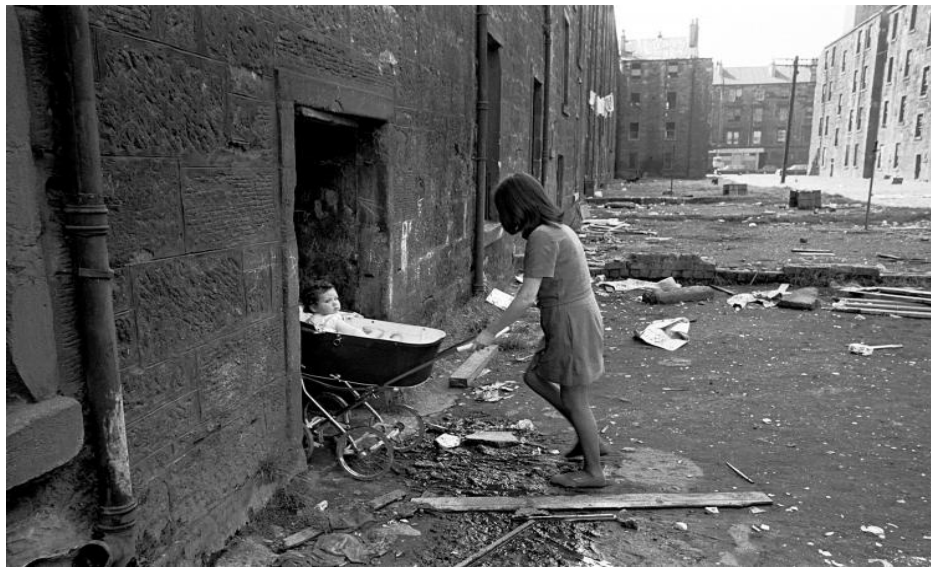


Figure 1.6: Mother takes her baby inside her condemned tenement block, Gorbals (Nick Hedges, 1970).³⁴

The majority of the interviewees included in this thesis experienced childhood, at least in part, in a home similar to one of those detailed above. Understanding the formation and

³³ Photographer's notes: Mr and Mrs K lived with 2 children in a single roomed tenement flat. The flat was exceptionally damp and its fabric was in very poor condition. The family was rehoused by Christian Action Housing Association, <<http://www.shelterscotland.org/lifeworthliving/mother-living-with-her-children-in-an-overcrowded-single-end-tenement-flat-glasgow-1971#content>>, [accessed 10.10.2016].

³⁴ Photographer's notes : Mr and Mrs G lived with their 4 children in a ground floor tenement flat. Their bedroom floor was covered in pools of rainwater. At night they sleep with the light on, to keep the rats away. One night they counted 16 rats in the room, <<http://www.shelterscotland.org/lifeworthliving/mother-takes-her-baby-inside-her-condemned-tenement-block-gorbals-1970#content>>, [accessed 10.10.2016].

layout of these houses helps explain family circumstances, economically and socially, as well as the geography of daily family life. The experiences of housing related by both interviewees and memoirists discussed in this thesis is thus arguably indicative of that experienced by a significant proportion of the urban Scottish nation between 1920 and 1970.

III. Welfare

Welfare provision in various forms undoubtedly played a role in the survival of families and individuals during the period considered in this thesis. Welfare provision did not often form an explicit part of interviewees' narratives, but the majority of interviewees would have lived in families that received some form of official financial support. For example, 19 interviewees experienced childhoods in families with two or more children and were thus eligible to receive Family Allowance. The absence of discussion of welfare support in most of the interviewees' narratives is most likely explained by the fact that none of the interviewees recounted a significant period of unemployment for their breadwinning parent and thus no resulting financial struggle. Those who did recall specific details about welfare provision were from families with a lone mother. This obviously indicates state support for lone parent families, but also childhood awareness of parental financial difficulties in the lone parent families studied here, the impact of which is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Scotland's welfare history has some important distinctions from that of England and Wales, most notably in its provision for children. Firstly, as with England and Wales, welfare provision was in its infancy during the first two decades covered here and most relief was primarily obtained through the infamous Poor Law. The Poor Law System of relief had been largely in place in Scotland since the reform with the Scottish Poor Law Amendment Act of

1845. With the amendment to the Poor Law in 1845, a Board of Supervision was created as a central authority that would oversee the newly created parochial boards, located in each parish. Despite this central authority, however, relief for the poor differed on a parish-by-parish basis, meaning that parish resources, individual circumstances and local traditions all affected relief practices.³⁵ In Scotland, as in England, entitlement to aid was often based on a hierarchy of 'deservedness' with a clear distinction between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving'.³⁶ This distinction that the Poor Law placed between the deserving and the immoral is important to consider as its statutes remained largely in place until the National Assistance Act of 1948.

The nature of applying for relief under the Poor Law meant that it remained the last resort for many. Unlike the English system, the Scottish Poor Law did not offer statutory aid to those who were both unemployed and able-bodied. Relief in these instances was dependent on provisions made by individual parishes, compounded in 1859 when the definition of pauper was confined to those who were disabled and destitute. Due to these restrictions the majority of those entitled to relief were widows with or without dependent children, deserted wives with dependent children, single women with illegitimate children, orphans, or deserted children, and disabled men. Indeed, under the Poor Law a mother could only obtain relief if she belonged to one of the following four categories: she was unmarried, a widow, or a wife whose husband had deserted her for a lengthy period of time, or a wife whose husband was destitute and disabled. A married woman living with her able-bodied husband was classified as a dependent and as such was not eligible to apply for relief in her own right.³⁷ In failing to acknowledge women as potential earners within the family, the Poor Law operated on the

³⁵ David Englander, *Poverty and the Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 50.

³⁶ Ewen Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 94.

³⁷ Thomas Ferguson, *Scottish Social Welfare, 1864-1914* (Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1958), p. 249.

belief that a stable, nuclear family unit headed by a responsible male breadwinner was the norm. In doing so, the Poor Law severely restricted any access to non-charitable welfare to any family seen as falling outside this norm.

There is extensive research into the treatment of lone and unmarried mothers under the English Poor Law but the treatment of women under the Scottish Poor Law remains under researched. Pat Thane's study of the English Poor Law reveals the notably punitive treatment of lone and unmarried mothers, including an increased likelihood to be sent to the workhouse amid fears that the receipt of outdoor relief would diminish a father's sense of responsibility towards his family, once more reflecting a focus on the breadwinning nuclear ideal.³⁸ Although Thane's study is of the English Poor Law, there is little doubt that the Scottish Poor Law was as retributive in its application. Levitt recounts the case of one mother with eight illegitimate children in 1920 that was in receipt of 86s. a week from the parish, on the inspection of records the Board urged the parish to send the woman to the poorhouse.³⁹ Additionally, Hughes and Meek found that in the years immediately following the end of the First World War, Poor Law officials in Scotland were influenced by perceptions of a woman's respectability in determining how relief was dispensed to deserted wives.⁴⁰ Local boards were also encouraged to refuse outdoor relief to unmarried mothers and many unmarried mothers were institutionalized under the Mental Deficiency Act 1913, which allowed for these women to be classified as 'mental defectives' owing to their pauper status.⁴¹

³⁸ Pat Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop*, 6 (1978), pp. 32-33.

³⁹ Ian Levitt, *Poverty and Welfare in Scotland, 1890-1948* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p.187.

⁴⁰ Annmarie Hughes and Jeff Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: The Hidden Costs of World War I in Scotland', *Journal of Family History*, 39:4 (2014), p. 378.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

For the first four decades of the newly amended Poor Law in the mid-nineteenth century the emphasis was on keeping families together, the courts had ruled in 1853 that the Poor Law could not “violently sever domestic relationships”.⁴² At the start of this new era for the Poor Law in Scotland, children should not be separated from their parents, even if their parents were deemed ‘worthless’; it was only with the parents’ permission that a child could be sent out of the poorhouse and into foster care. This is one of the most important distinctions between Scottish and English welfare provision, the boarding out of healthy children. Boarding out was felt to be more beneficial to children, removing them from the perceived corrupting influence of others in the poorhouse and allowing their parents, particularly unmarried mothers, to find stable employment, free from the concerns of child care.⁴³ From its enthusiastic beginnings in the nineteenth century, the practice of boarding out maintained its popularity in Scottish childcare provision well into the twentieth century. Abrams, in her study of the children of Scotland’s broken homes, suggests that between 1845 and 1914 up to 90 percent of children who were dependent on poor relief were boarded out, and that this did not change significantly throughout the inter-war period.⁴⁴

The early provisions made for children under the Poor Law were based on the belief that the parishes were only responsible for those who had applied for relief. The 1894 Child Cruelty Act placed additional responsibilities on parishes, defining the poorhouse as a “place of safety” for children deemed to be suffering from neglect.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this act also stipulated that children could be neglected, or abused, by “any person cohabiting with the

⁴² Levitt, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland’s Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 39.

⁴⁵ Levitt, *Poverty*, p. 33.

parent of the child”, including stepparents.⁴⁶ However, neglect was still thought of, in the main, as a lack of material provision for children and definitions of physical and emotional abuse were vague in public practice until the mid-twentieth century with the widespread acknowledgement of Battered Baby Syndrome.⁴⁷ Indeed, it is only in 2017 that Scotland is introducing legislation to criminalise the emotional abuse and neglect of children.⁴⁸

In particular, the role of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC) is important here as they were the only welfare agency in Scotland that dealt with the family – and not exclusively mothers and their children – for much of the twentieth century, and its leading role in child welfare was only halted by the passing of the Social Work (Scotland Act) in 1968.⁴⁹ Prior to and throughout the period of this thesis, the main concern of the RSSPCC was the material provision given to children. In 1909, for example, a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) circular detailed the areas for attention by inspectors on following up a case:

The following points should be specially noted about the family: - a) state of their health, conditions of their clothing, beds and bedding, their personal cleanliness – state of vermin present and where; b) the appearance and condition of the home – cleanliness, furniture, fire and food; c) the character of the parents or guardians and the earnings of the family should be reported.⁵⁰

Inspectors employed by the RSSPCC expected complete access into the family home and made notes on the furnishing, overall cleanliness, the state of the bedding, as well as the appearance and attire of any children present. This inspection of the material conditions of the home often outweighed any concern over the physical (or emotional) wellbeing of the

⁴⁶ Pat Thane, *Happy Families? History and family policy: A Report Prepared for the British Academy* (London: The British Academy, 2010), p.27.

⁴⁷ Abrams, *Orphan*, p. 202.

⁴⁸ ‘New Law to Protect Children’, *Scottish Government* 02.03.2017, available at <<https://news.gov.scot/news/new-law-to-protect-children>>, [accessed 16.10.2017].

⁴⁹ Gary Clapton, “‘Yesterday’s Men’: the Inspectors of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1888-1968,” *British Journal of Social Work*, 39 (2009), p. 1046.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Clapton, ‘Yesterday’s Men’, p. 1047.

children, which was rarely noted above “well clad and appear well-nourished”.⁵¹ What is revealed by the cases filed is the gendered nature of the investigations undertaken by the RSSPCC; what was being inspected here was the quality of the mothering. This is no more evident than when a case was referred to a woman visitor. Woman visitors were employed by the RSSPCC from 1955 to help families, in the main mothers, with domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting. An Annual Report of that same year notes:

It was realised that many children are neglected and many homes as bad as they are, not because of any evil intention on the part of the parents, but because of complete ignorance and incapacity, mainly on the part of the mother.⁵²

In their detailed analysis of RSSPCC case files Robinson and Clapton conclude that for most of their time, the RSSPCC’s intervention was mainly in the form of providing material aid for families, including: bags of coal, vegetables for soup, firewood, cooking pots, fire guards, prams, clothes, mattresses and linens;⁵³ in addition to intervening with landlords, employers, welfare agencies, and public utilities on behalf of parents, most usually mothers.⁵⁴ Indeed, despite ‘neglect’ being the principal reason for contact with the society from 1899 to the beginning of the 1980s, ‘neglect’ at this time focused on standards of welfare, food, accommodation, clothing and health of the children and was defined in the RSSPCC’s Annual Report for 1969 as:

This (neglect) can involve many factors including unemployment and poverty, debt and threatened eviction; bad home conditions and marital difficulties; single parent families (because of death, desertion or separation) and overcrowded conditions. These and other circumstances can and do affect the parents’ standard of care for their children and that is the stage when the Inspector may be contacted by a member of the public or, more frequently than is sometimes realised, by a member of the family itself.⁵⁵

⁵¹ RSSPCC case files

⁵² As cited in Clapton, ‘Yesterday’s Men’, p. 1051.

⁵³ Robinson, ‘Good Order’, p. 163.

⁵⁴ Clapton, ‘Yesterday’s Men’, p. 1049.

⁵⁵ Robinson, ‘Good Order’, pp. 131-2.

Both Robinson and Abrams argue that physical abuse, as we perhaps think of the purview of the RSSPCC today, did not come to the RSSPCC's attention until the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵⁶

What the above means in practice for welfare and the family in this early period is difficult to quantify. The Scottish Poor Law's effect on the family is hard to measure for a number of reasons, not least because it co-existed with other forms of charitable provision, and because there is a limited amount of historiography on the matter – particularly in comparison to the amount of literature covering the English Poor Law. Focusing on the north-eastern county of Aberdeenshire in Scotland between 1855 and 1925, Blaikie highlights the often complicated and inconsistent nature of the Poor Law; he discusses the moral economy that underpinned the dealings between applicants and local Boards, revealing that the outcome of application for relief could often depend on the inspector himself. If the inspector was local, they would often have an understanding and sympathy for the claimant and Blaikie cites instances where they could be supportive.⁵⁷ Blaikie's study of the north-eastern county, which has a long history of illegitimacy; the pattern of young unmarried mothers working locally as farm or domestic servants whilst their children were raised by their maternal grandparents was regarded as normal within the community. Nevertheless, Blaikie argues that the authorities still operated on, and were driven by, a central belief in the importance of "nuclearity".⁵⁸

During the inter-war years, there was little real change in the provisions made for families in terms of welfare. New state legislation such as the National Insurance Act failed

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 139-140; Abrams, *Orphan*, p. 228.

⁵⁷ Andrew Blaikie, 'Accounting for Poverty: Conflicting Constructions of Family Survival in Scotland, 1855-1925', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 18:3 (2005), p. 204.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 221.

to provide for dependents and instead only covered the earner. Additionally, poor relief was still heavily stigmatised and utilised as a last resort only. However, private and charitable concern over the welfare of those missing vital support grew over this period with the establishment of further charitable committees that sought to advance the position of the unmarried mother and her child, alongside increasing provisions for mothers and children generally. Scotland was somewhat behind England in this regard where the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (NCUMC) was established in 1918. This was partly in response to the sharp rise in illegitimacy during the First World War, which was attributed to the effects of ‘khaki fever’ and the declining morals of young women in the face of the excitement of war and the proximity of uniformed soldiers.⁵⁹ Hughes and Meek argue that facing an uncertain future meant soldiers were more likely to engage in extra- and pre-marital sex.⁶⁰ However, this increase in illegitimacy was not as significant in Scotland as it was for the rest of the UK. The percentage of illegitimate births of the total only rose from 7.09 percent in 1913 to 7.93 percent in 1919, an increase of less than one percent, compared with a rise from 4.3 percent to over 6 percent in England.⁶¹ The comparatively small rise in illegitimacy in Scotland may account for the lack of an official Scottish branch of the National Council (SCUMC), dedicated solely to the unmarried mother and her child, until after the outbreak of the Second World War. The established pattern of the increased incidence of illegitimacy in Scotland also did little to induce the widespread introduction of services to aid the illegitimate child and its mother. Additionally, rural areas of Scotland that

⁵⁹ Angela Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’ and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2 (1994).

⁶⁰ Hughes and Meek, ‘State Regulation’, p. 369.

⁶¹ Registrar General of Scotland, *Annual Report*, 1913; Registrar General of Scotland, *Annual Report*, 1919; Registrar General of England, *Annual Report*, 1913; Registrar General of England, *Annual Report*, 1919.

had a high rate of illegitimacy already had many local and familial support mechanisms in place for illegitimate children and their mothers.⁶²

During the inter-war period, concern over the falling birth rate, and the steady infant mortality rate in Scotland, meant that children benefitted much more than their parents as regards welfare provision. Attitudes to parents were somewhat complex and still tied up in ideas of ‘deservedness’, but children were consistently seen as the innocent victims of their circumstance. Dwork cites a direct causation between the population concerns of post- First World War Britain and the increasing provisions made for young children; “war is good for babies” she asserts in her assessment of the beginnings of the child welfare movement in England.⁶³ Medical advances such as ante-natal care and increased medical consultations for pre-school children, alongside the milk and meals provided for toddlers and nursing mothers meant that, for the most part, many mothers and children were in better health in the inter-war years than they had been in the previous century, although maternal mortality rates were still high.⁶⁴ Together with the Midwives (Scotland) Act of 1915, the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 meant that children, illegitimate or not, were considered in equal measure, which in turn led to the increased professionalization of social support services and increasing state intervention into family life.

Although the RSSPCC was the only agency that dealt with children’s welfare in Scotland for much of the period from 1920-1960, smaller organisations and charities did have a hand in child welfare. Of particular note are residential institutions such as Quarrier’s Home, a ‘children’s city’ built in the Renfrewshire countryside by William Quarrier in the

⁶²Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993); Blaikie, ‘Accounting for Poverty’.

⁶³Deborah Dwork, *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), p. 209.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 211.

last decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ As alluded to above, many of the children who found themselves in one of Scotland's residential homes were not orphans at all but rather children in receipt of poor relief, children who were the victims of family crisis or neglect, as well as the children of lone parents who were ineligible for poor relief.⁶⁶ As well as residential care, organisations such as the Salvation Army also offered short breaks for children known as 'Fresh Air Fortnights,' which were established in the nineteenth century as a way to provide poor inner-city children with a holiday in the restorative country air but continued well into the mid-twentieth century and are recollected by a number of interviewees.⁶⁷

The Second World War heralded yet more change for welfare and the family. The process of evacuation during the war brought about a clear realisation of the poor physical condition of many urban children, leading to a slew of reports on evacuation and the health of the nation's children. Evacuation had made it clear that many parents simply could not afford to adequately provide materially for their children and that many children were lacking staples such as adequate clothing and shoes. Moreover, the poor physical health of many of the urban evacuees indicated deficiencies in the urban working-class diet and acted as a catalyst to the reform of existing policy allowing for the provision of school meals and milk that took place in the early 1940s.⁶⁸ However, despite the concern shown by many parents throughout the process of evacuation, highlighting the emotional care and support offered to

⁶⁵ Abrams, *Orphan*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83. The role of residential homes is considered in more depth with the discussion of interviewee Robert's recollections of his time at Quarrier's Home in chapter 3.

⁶⁷ Jenny Cronin, 'The Origins and Development of Scottish Convalescent Homes, 1860-1939' (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Glasgow, 2003), p. 204.

⁶⁸ John Welshman, 'Evacuation and Social Policy During the Second World War: Myth and Reality', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9:1, (1998), p. 40, 48.

children, officials still tended to blame the state of the nation's children on a materially poor home life amongst the working classes rather than poverty and inadequate social provision.⁶⁹

The Second World War signalled the beginning of a shift from the idea of a 'social problem group' to a 'problem family', an idea that was to dominate much of the 1940s and '50s.⁷⁰ Although the label of 'problem family' was new, the circumstances to which it was attached was not. Poor domestic management and maternal failure had been held responsible for Britain's military and industrial inadequacies earlier in the twentieth century.⁷¹ The 'social problem group' of the inter-war years was considered to consist of about 10 percent of the population and could be identified through low standards of housewifery and childcare, the social upheaval that resulted from evacuation only compounded the stigma placed on poor families. This theory led neatly to the conclusion that family distress was merely being enhanced by poverty and not caused.⁷²

The Second World War also increased welfare provision for Scotland's war widows. Two interviewees included in this thesis experienced childhood, for some period of time, in families widowed during the Second World War, and one memoirist's mother was widowed during the First World War. Widow's pensions after the First World War were varied, based on the rank of the recruit; however, the minimum allowance was 10s. a week in 1915, increasing to £1 for a childless widow under 40 after the war in 1919. Widows with dependent children were given 26s. and 8d a week, plus children's allowances.⁷³ Widow's

⁶⁹ J Macnicol, 'The effect of the evacuation of schoolchildren on official attitudes to state intervention', in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 20-21.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Pat Starkey, 'The feckless mother: women, poverty and social workers in wartime and post-war England', *Women's History Review*, 9:3, (2000) pp. 540-542.

⁷³ Janis Lomas, 'Delicate Duties': issues of class and respectability in government policy towards the wives and widows of British soldiers in the era of the great war', *Women's History Review* 9:1 (2000), p. 128, 134.

pensions were heavily regulated based on a woman's perceived respectability in attempts to guarantee their "good behaviour."⁷⁴ Widow's pensions did not increase for childless widows after the Second World War until the 1960s, remaining at £1 a week.⁷⁵ In 1940, the widow's pension ranged from 15s. and 6d per week to 30s. a week, rising to a minimum of 32s. a week for widows with children in 1944 with an additional 11s. for each child.⁷⁶ However, Shaw and Millgate detail how, for many families, this was an inadequate allowance in the wake of the loss of a breadwinner, especially when war pensions were still being taxed and could influence assistance from other government bodies such as National Assistance.⁷⁷

The post-war era brought about a significant change in the broader provision of welfare in Scotland with the establishment of the Welfare State and the passing of legislation such as the National Insurance Act of 1946 and the National Assistance Act in 1948. These acts expanded provision for insured workers and their dependents as well as a means-tested National Assistance scheme to cover all those that were not covered by National Insurance. Whilst the National Insurance Act made provisions for widows it did not cover the deserted, divorced or unmarried mother as it was decided best not to "fish in the murky waters of matrimonial disputes."⁷⁸ The introduction of Family Allowance in 1945 also impacted the family, although arguably marginally. Family Allowance was limited to families with two or more children and was only 5s. per week, much less than was recommended and needed to help lift many children and families out of poverty.⁷⁹ Family Allowance did increase

⁷⁴ Ibid.; Hughes and Meek, 'State Regulation', p. 365.

⁷⁵ Maureen Shaw and Helen D. Millgate, *War's Forgotten Women: British widows of the Second World War* (Stroud: History Press, 2011).

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 32, 44.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Kathleen Kiernan *et al.*, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 151.

⁷⁹ Pat Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State: Social Policy in Modern Britain* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 243.

throughout until the 1970s; it was raised from 5s. to 8s. in 1952 and then again in 1967 to 15s. for the second child and 17s. for each subsequent child.⁸⁰

Access to universal healthcare with the National Health Service (Scotland) Act of 1947 meant that all families and all children benefitted from free healthcare. Unmarried mothers also became eligible for a maternity grant and as a result they need not be so reliant on charities such as the NCUMC, and its Scottish counterpart. As such these charities shifted their main focus to providing information on the state benefits mothers were eligible for, rather than providing information on charitable funds.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Wilson argued that, whilst the 1948 National Assistance Act had heralded the end of the Poor Law, the punitive nature of the old system undeniably remained.⁸² The shame and stigma attached to means-tested benefits available under National Assistance – applications to which would encompass a large amount of unmarried, lone and deserted wives – added to the continuing insistence that unsupported mothers look to men, the child(ren)’s father or a new husband, for maintenance in the first instance led to “punitive attitudes being retained in respect of their moral status.”⁸³ Furthermore, by the end of the 1960s, attitudes towards those needing assistance outwith the nuclear family unit, whether they were unmarried, lone, deserted or divorced wives, changed yet again. Crow and Hardey confidently declared, “Moralistic distinctions between different types of lone parents broke down in the 1960s under the weight of social change from pressure groups and social researchers.”⁸⁴ However, Thane claims that the alleged, although much disputed, shift in sexual attitudes that took place in the 1960s did

⁸⁰ Kiernan *et al*, *Lone Motherhood*, p. 170.

⁸¹ Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? : Unmarried motherhood in twentieth century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 107.

⁸² Elizabeth Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2002) p. 153.

⁸³ *Ibid*.

⁸⁴ Graham Crow and Michael Hardey, ‘Diversity and Ambiguity Among Lone-Parent Households in Modern Britain’ in C. Marsh and S. Arber (eds.), *Families and Households: Divisions and Change* (London: MacMillan, 1992), 145

not apply to unmarried mothers, particularly those that lacked support from their family or partner.⁸⁵ This is borne out in the experience of unmarried mothers considered here. The RSSPCC files discussed in-depth in chapter four highlight the suspicion of official agencies dealing with lone mothers seeking relief in 1960s Scotland, as well as the lack of community support networks available to unmarried mothers.

When considering the role of the RSSPCC in child welfare and the welfare of the family, the use of inspectors both during the lifetime of the National Assistance Board (NAB) and the new Department of Health and Security in the later 1960s further demonstrates that attitudes towards applicants for relief had not really changed since the years of the Poor Law, when Boards cautiously approached all claimants, believing them to be forming stratagems to obtain relief. Suspicion and surveillance of unmarried, single and divorced mothers arguably only intensified over the course of the 1950s and 1960s as a result of this.⁸⁶ The inspectors of the RSSPCC, and its counterpart in England and Wales the NSPCC, were arguably one such method of surveillance. Furthermore, the RSSPCC's preoccupation with the material wellbeing of the children in the cases examined highlights that the consideration of the neglect and abuse of children to be, in the main, a result of the lack of provision rather than malicious maltreatment, physical abuse or emotional neglect. The evolution of child neglect and abuse and the ways in which this is both experienced and defined is expanded upon throughout the later chapters of this thesis.

Official attitudes and responses towards neglect are of considerable interest here as throughout the thesis many interviewees reflect on the changing concept of a 'good childhood' within their own construction of an experience of childhood. Furthermore, in

⁸⁵ Thane and Evans, *Sinners?*, p. 139

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

detailing official definitions of neglect, this account provides a useful base for the analysis of the RSSPCC cases considered later in this research. Combined with the reliance on the ‘nuclear ideal’ detailed above, the approach of societies such as the RSSPCC reveals some of the wider challenges facing many families who did not conform to such a type as well as allowing for the beginning of a questioning of this ideal in a lived reality.

A final point to consider is child support and divorce reform. Throughout the century, whilst divorce was obtainable, it remained heavily stigmatised and expensive, directly impacting parental ability to separate. Grounds for divorce were expanded with the passing of the Divorce (Scotland) Act in 1938 allowing for a divorce on the grounds of cruelty in addition to desertion or adultery.⁸⁷ Despite the comparative ease of divorce in Scotland when compared with England and Wales in the immediate post-war decades, the official dissolution of marriage remained relatively rare with fewer than 2,000 cases annually until the 1960s, potentially owing to the cost of divorce, and ensuing financial and social difficulties for many mothers.⁸⁸ “Child support” is a modern iteration of the idea of child maintenance throughout the mid-twentieth century. Prior to the passing of the Maintenance Orders Act in 1958 the enforcement of maintenance orders was “patchy”, and arguably remains so. The amounts awarded by magistrates’ court were normally small, reflecting both the working-class background of many of those involved and the pragmatic view that a man’s second and current family was also in need of support.⁸⁹ Furthermore, despite maintenance orders being in place these were often unfulfilled: organisations such as the Women’s Help Committee (WHC) in Glasgow, as well as the NCUMC and the SCUMC, would often approach the putative father on behalf of the mother and come to a private arrangement about

⁸⁷ Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, p. 214.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215

⁸⁹ Nicholas Wikeley, *Child Support: Law and Policy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 109.

financial support for the child rather than further involving the courts.⁹⁰ Indeed, even after the establishment of the Maintenance Orders Act in 1958, the RSSPCC, as shall be seen in later chapters, dealt extensively with fathers (both apart and married) failing to provide for their families and children. This suggests that the nuclear ideal, encompassing breadwinner ideology, was not a lived reality for a large proportion of people, problematising the reliance on this nuclear ideal in the development of welfare.

Family welfare provision and support was by no means universal in the post-war period, exemplified by the ‘rediscovery’ of poverty in the mid-1960s, which highlighted the relative poverty levels amongst the most vulnerable, including children.⁹¹ As this brief discussion highlights, there was great variation and difficulty in accessing welfare provision between 1920 and 1970, particularly for families considered to be outside the ‘traditional’ nuclear family model. In addition, the continued belief amongst officials that the nuclear family unit was the central unit of society is important when considering the latter chapters of this thesis and the divergent family forms therein, especially when analysing the records of agencies such as the RSSPCC.

IV. Education

A further provision to consider in the experiences of childhood in Scotland is education, which had been state-funded up to age of 15 since 1947. All the respondents discussed in this thesis left school at 15 or older and over half went on to higher education. This does not necessarily speak only to Scotland’s educational tradition, but is likely also to

⁹⁰ DC260/5, *Annual Report of the Women’s Help Committee, 1926-7*, p. 4.

⁹¹ John Veit-Wilson, ‘The National Assistance Board and the Rediscovery of Poverty’, in Rodney Lowe and Helen Fawcett (eds.), *Welfare Policy in Britain: the Road from 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 116-157.

be due to interviewee self-selection and the recruitment methods used, as discussed in the earlier methodology section. Of 25 interviewees, 13 went on to university or college to obtain a degree or diploma - although not all remained long enough to do so. This is a much higher ratio than the national average; in 1950 only four per thousand people were enrolled as students obtaining a first degree or diploma in higher education in Scotland, increasing to 4.5 by 1960 and 10 per thousand in 1970.⁹² Furthermore, of those 13 interviewees who obtained some level of higher education, eight were female. Even given the gender disparity of respondents interviewed, this is an unusually high proportion given that only 27 percent of those attending Scottish universities in 1950 were women, rising to 33 percent by 1970.⁹³ It is unsurprising then, that education formed a large part of interviewee narratives. This was not only in terms of practical time spent in education, but also could be read as an indicator of family relationships and dynamics and the value placed on education compared to work or marriage.

There is a long-standing belief that Scotland has long offered a distinctly high-quality and equal opportunity education system, especially in contrast to England and Wales. However, the myth of the 'lad o' pairts' (whereby a poor, but clever and dedicated boy, could use Scotland's open education system in order to affect his own social mobility) has been challenged in recent decades, not least whether this mobility was open to young women and girls.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the 'lad o' pairts' ideology was still evident throughout the twentieth century, most notably with the effects of the Second World War on education reform in Scotland.

⁹² Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2003), p. 156.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 157

⁹⁴ For a full and detailed account of the history of education in Scotland alongside some of the most recent work on challenging the 'lad o' pairts' myth see Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman and Lindsay Paterson (eds) *The Edinburgh History of Education* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) and Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

The school leaving age was raised to 15 in 1947 and by 1951 around 93 percent of Scotland's children aged five to 14 were in some kind of schooling. This figure was much higher than the northern European average of around 75 percent and greater than the 90 percent found for the world's richest countries in 1950.⁹⁵ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Scottish secondary system was two-tiered, featuring senior secondary courses that lasted five years and resulted in a Leaving Certificate, and a chance at a place at university, and junior secondary courses that lasted only three years and resulted in no Leaving Certificate. The issue of allocation to these post-primary education courses was contentious and often quite haphazard, a result of a mixture of attainment tests, intelligence tests, recommendations from primary teachers, as well as parental preferences.⁹⁶ In reality, this meant that only around a third of pupils were selected for senior secondary and only an estimated four percent of these went on to university with another five percent going on to some other form of higher education.⁹⁷

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, there was further educational reform with the introduction of the 'Ordinary Grade' certificate in 1962; comprehensive secondary education introduced in 1965; the almost complete absence of fees in the public sector, and the raising of the school leaving age to 16 in 1973. As a result, four years of secondary education were available to all children for the first time and the more structured nature of the 'Ordinary Grade' meant that more children were encouraged to stay on at school and attempt to enter further education.⁹⁸ As such, across the century, educational attainment in Scotland was

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 131

⁹⁷ Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, p. 224.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

higher than England and Wales amongst all classes.⁹⁹ Finally, although nineteenth century Scotland had seen the highest proportion of people in Europe attending university, the country had lost its lead by the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ The percentage of working-class school leavers who were entering full-time higher education in Scotland remained considerably lower than that of the middle-classes, regardless of the continuing prevalence of the ‘lad o’ parts’ ideology, through the period of this thesis.¹⁰¹

Moreover, from 1944 with the introduction of the Education Act, schools were taking on a much larger role in child welfare, not least of which was the provision of adequate nutrition for children with the provision of school meals and milk, discussed above. The 1944 Act also ensured that Child Guidance services were provided by each local authority in Scotland and were based on the principle that guidance should be pastoral not mainly medical. Speaking to the Clyde Committee on Homeless Children in 1945, a leading Scottish child psychologist stated that all children in the care of a local authority should be assessed by a Child Guidance Clinic as, “I see a great deal of trouble arising in the personality of children who have had broken homes of one kind or another.”¹⁰² Indeed, from 1948 in Glasgow alone over 3,000 children a year were referred to the Child Guidance Service in order to treat so called ‘emotional disturbance and maladjustment’ as a preventative measure against juvenile delinquency.¹⁰³

Across the twentieth century, education in Scotland was still popularly held to the ‘lad o’ parts’ myth, however, in practice this did not come to being for those whom the ideology

⁹⁹ Lindsay Paterson and Christina Iannelli, ‘Social Class and Educational Attainment: a comparative study of England, Wales, and Scotland’, *Sociology of Education*, 80:4 (2007), p. 342.

¹⁰⁰ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 410.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 158.

¹⁰² As cited in Abrams, *Orphan*, p. 181.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

chiefly concerned. This is due to a number of reasons, not only the practicalities of education and the opportunities offered, but also those relating more directly to individual family workings, as this thesis will demonstrate. For many interviewees considered here, memories and experiences of education add to a detailed understanding of the impact of family on experiences of childhood. Education was not experienced in isolation and many recollections of school and educational aspirations reveal a rich and detailed addition to the emotional landscapes of childhood, as discussed in later chapters. The key stages in Scottish educational reform outlined here provide valuable context for understanding these experiences.

V. Going Forward

The following chapters build upon the discussions of housing, education and welfare here, to locate and examine the relative role of family in experiences of childhood. Understanding the ways in which narratives of childhood are reconstructed, shaped by and embedded in the lived environmental, educational and welfare circumstances allows for the distinct nature of personal experiences and intrafamilial relationships to be drawn out. As such, the interplay of relationships within families can be considered in detail in regards to the distinct role of family form and family members in the experiences of childhood in twentieth century Scotland. This is done firstly for nuclear families, followed by so called ‘broken’ families (which includes an experience of institutional childhood), leading into lone parent families and finishing with a consideration of experiences of childhood in stepfamilies.

Chapter Two: Nuclear Families

I. Introduction

The nuclear family is often heralded as the ‘traditional’ family form and therefore the most stable and conducive to a positive childhood experience. Many early historians of the family, Peter Laslett and Edward Shorter amongst them, state that the nuclear family form – “confined for the most part to the parents and children themselves” – is the historically prevalent family form in the west.¹ Many contemporary commentators and policy makers accept this stance, particularly when seeking to correlate social breakdown with familial breakdown in Britain. However, more recent scholars of family history have noted that family forms have been much more complex and varied in history.² Despite this, the functioning of nuclear families has not been problematised within a historical context, although the rising interest in the history of marital breakdown, marital violence, and child abuse, by implication, do challenge inherent assumptions of the unproblematic nature of nuclear family life.³ Nonetheless, whilst such studies have introduced a more nuanced consideration of the complexities and circumstances of nuclear families, none have offered an explicit interrogation of the lived experiences therein. There is room, therefore, to develop an

¹ Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 13.

² These debates are covered in more depth in the introduction, authors include: Michael Anderson, Andrew Blaikie, Natasha Burchardt, Eleanor Gordon, and Pat Thane.

³ Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Foyster, *Martial Violence: An English Family History, 1660-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marianna Muraveya, *Domestic Disturbances, Patriarchal Values: violence, family and sexuality in early modern Europe, 1600-1900* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016). Studies on child abuse in recent history are still focused on child sexual abuse, see: Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (Oxon: Routledge, 1999); Carol Smart, ‘Reconsidering the recent history of child sexual abuse 1910-1960’, *Journal of Social Policy* 29:1 (2000), pp. 55-71; Adrian Bingham *et al*, ‘Historical Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: the role of historians’, in *History of Education* 45:4 (2016), pp. 411-429.

understanding of experiences of childhood to provide a contextual basis from which to begin to compare and contrast the differing experiences of childhood in varying family forms in a historical context. The first question to address is what childhood was like in the nuclear family between 1920 and 1970.

In answering this question, this chapter seeks to explore the factors shaping lived experiences of childhood within a nuclear family in a holistic manner. It examines the ways in which environmental and emotional aspects of childhood interrelated and, in mapping the emotional onto the environmental aspects of childhood, this chapter demonstrates the relevance of considering multiple factors in an inclusive manner. The environmental factors of childhood considered here are housing and education. Housing allows for an analysis of an important physical context of childhood and formal education was experienced by all of those interviewed, and, as this chapter will show, had a significant influence on childhood. The discussion of housing in particular raises questions about the configuration of the nuclear family, in relation to the ways in which the family was understood and interpreted by respondents in both practical and emotional terms. In order to view the impact of the *family* itself on experiences of childhood, this contextual framework is followed by discussions on the impact of intrafamilial relationships, including and beyond that between the parent(s) and child. Here, education becomes important in revealing the intricacies of parent-child relationships. Additionally, the complexity of the lived experience is drawn out of the ways in which gender, birth order, and generational positions affected narratives of childhood.

Firstly, it is important to define what is meant by a ‘nuclear family’. Dictionary definitions for what comprises a nuclear family are not hard to come by and are often some variant on that offered by the Oxford English Dictionary: “the basic family group consisting

typically of father, mother, and their dependent children, regarded as a social unit.”⁴ When talking about a nuclear family, the focus is on the supposed insular and self-sufficient nature of the unit, a dual parental unit and their dependent children. Within history, the nuclear family and more specifically the rise of the nuclear family, has often been linked with modernity. Laslett’s aforementioned definition of a nuclear family allows for a considerable amount of ambiguity, “confined *for the most part* to the parents and children themselves” [emphasis mine]. This ambiguity within Laslett’s definition is something that needs to be addressed. “For the most part” may simply refer to the close relationships that are often formed with frequent interaction with members of the immediate extended family, grandparents and aunts and uncles being the most common. However, whilst the role of the immediate family is often one of considerable importance, especially in the formative years of childhood – Laslett’s definition could also arguably encompass the idea of community parenting, a concept which had a significant impact on a number of respondent’s experiences of childhood. As the chapter progresses, the definition of nuclear family will be addressed in more detail.

For the purposes of this thesis, interviewees have been classified as belonging to a nuclear family if they were born into a family consisting of two married parents. Of the 25 interviewees, 22 were born into a nuclear family form. Of these 22, 18 spent their entire childhoods within a nuclear family unit. Jacqueline, the only child of her father’s second marriage, has also been included here owing to her own definition of her family unit; although part of a stepfamily, Jacqueline did not regard herself as such – the implications of which are discussed in more detail below. Testimony from Isabelle Eddington, interviewed

⁴‘Nuclear Family’, *OED*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128926?rskey=gGfSPI&result=1#eid34375747>>, [Accessed 06/07/2015]

for Paul Thompson's 100 Families Project and born in Glasgow in 1946 will also be considered,⁵ in addition to a number of memoirs (table 2).⁶

Table 2.1: Interviewees from nuclear families

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Birth**
Irene	1931	Lanarkshire (village)
Patricia	1937	Aberdeenshire (rural)
Sandra	1938	Aberdeenshire (village)
Ken*	1939	Aberdeen
Dorothy	1942	Dunbartonshire (town)
June	1942	Aberdeen
Peter*	1943	Aberdeen
Jacqueline	1945	Midlothian (town)
Alex	1946	Fife (town)
Eileen	1946	Fife (town)
Gordon	1946	Glasgow
James	1946	Caithness (town)
Isabelle***	1946	Glasgow
Stuart	1947	Aberdeen
Joyce	1952	Stirling
Christina	1953	Edinburgh (village)
Brenda	1954	Edinburgh
Maureen	1957	Aberdeenshire (village)
Alan	1958	Lanarkshire (town)

* Ken and Peter are brothers who were interviewed for this research together.

** In order to allow for the anonymity of interviewees their place of birth has been restricted to a county and an explanation of the geographical setting.

*** Isabelle's interview is a secondary analysis of an existing oral history interview.

Table 2.2: Memoir authors from nuclear families

Name	Memoir	Year of Birth	Place of Birth
John McKenzie	<i>A Mallaig Boyhood</i>	1918	Mallaig
Elizabeth Wheeler	<i>Growing up in Cowie and Bannockburn</i>	1924	Cowie
Jenny Chaplin	<i>Tales of a Glasgow Childhood</i>	1928	Glasgow
George Rountree	<i>A Govan Childhood: the 1930s</i>	1930	Glasgow
Meg Henderson	<i>Finding Peggy: a Glasgow Childhood</i>	1948	Glasgow

⁵ Interview with Isabelle Eddington, interview number 54 in Paul Thompson and Howard Newby, *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing, An Intergenerational Approach* (2005) [data collection] UK Data Service. SN: 4938, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4938-1>.

⁶ George Rountree, *A Govan Childhood: the 1930s* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1993); John Alexander McKenzie, *A Mallaig Boyhood* (Oxford: Isis, 2008); Meg Henderson, *Finding Peggy: a Glasgow Childhood* (London: Corgi, 1994); Elizabeth Wheeler, *Growing Up in Cowie and Bannockburn* (Stirling: Stirling Council, 2006); Jenny Chaplin, *Tales of a Glasgow Childhood* (Beaulieu: Buisnesslike, 1994).

What the following discussion will do, therefore, is not only answer what was childhood like in a nuclear family but also examine the often complex nature of what we consider ‘nuclear’ or ‘traditional’ families. In order to do so, the following two sections of this chapter will examine the effects of the family on the material circumstances of childhood and indeed the effects of the environmental context on the family with a detailed discussion of housing and education. The second half of this chapter will then focus on the inner workings of individual families, highlighting the role of the parental relationship as well as sibling relationships (where applicable).

II. Housing

The topic of housing was used as entry point in the interview process, serving as a relaxed way in which interviewees could both ground their experience and locate the rest of the interview. Additionally, descriptions of Scotland’s housing during the period were also sought from interviewees in order to contextualise their narratives within an environmental framework, seeking to understand how the characteristic nature of Scotland’s housing impacted on experiences of childhood.

As expected, the ‘room and kitchen’ or ‘single-end’ homes that prevailed amongst Scotland’s housing stock were recounted by a number of interviewees, five of whom spent some period, if not all, of their childhood in a home of two rooms or less. This figure aligns with the national average in 1951 when a quarter of Scotland’s population were living in homes of one or two rooms, which would have most likely been either tenement homes or council houses.⁷ Irene, born in Rutherglen in 1931, lived in a two-roomed ‘four in a block’

⁷ Lynn Abrams and Linda Fleming, ‘From Scullery to Conservatory: Everyday Life in the Scottish Home’, in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 50.

house with her mother and father until she left home to get married at the age of thirty in 1961:

The house itself, erm, I suppose when they were building them ... to them it was all right because they were nearly, there were loads of young families in them. And yet, they were only two rooms, or there were a few houses that were three rooms, but they were families and so you had to organise yourself what you were going to do. . . Well I obviously slept in the same room as my parents until I was, presumably, 13? 13, 14. And then the solution was that I slept on a bed settee in the main room while they had the bedroom. It was a very nice little house.⁸

Irene's assertion that she "obviously" slept in the same room as her parents until she was a teenager does suggest a degree of commonality in her experience, the fact that she shared with her parents was beyond question to her. Irene did reference one friend whose family arranged themselves so that the parents slept on a bed settee in the kitchen while her friend had a room to herself. Nevertheless, this arrangement was characterised by Irene as "very noble" further confirming that this was not the standard practice for most known families in her community.⁹

Similar experiences of crowded housing and limitations of space were recollected by a number of interviewees. Stuart (b. 1947) also recalled how his parents slept on a bed settee in the living room of their one-bedroomed council house in Aberdeen, "my parents slept, as was common for Aberdonian families at that time, my parents had a bed settee which they put down in the living room at night that was standard."¹⁰ Even on moving to a larger council property when Stuart was 10 in 1957, he recalls how his parents continued to sleep on the bed settee in the living room so that he and his elder sister could each have their own room.¹¹ June, the eldest of two daughters born in 1942 in Aberdeen, spent the first 11 years of her childhood in a two-roomed attic home with an outside toilet, in the top floor of a house

⁸ Irene, interview with author, 16.01.2014/30.01.2014.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Stuart, interview with author, 28.11.2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

owned by the University of Aberdeen.¹² Brothers Ken and Peter also born in Aberdeen, in 1939 and 1943 respectively, lived in a one-roomed home with their parents until their sister was born in 1947.¹³ Finally, Gordon, born in 1946 in Glasgow, also lived for some time in a small tenement home.¹⁴

Whilst interviewees were asked about their family home in order to give clear material and physical framework for their childhood memories, as in the above, the topic of housing also revealed much more than the environmental and socio-economic context of respondents' experiences of childhood. Recalling the physical spaces of childhood often brought up more complex details of family life and aspirations. Indeed, Irene described the new, inter-war local authority housing scheme that she lived in as "actually quite a good quality area to be living in at that time, and erm, we were all striving working-class, wanted to be better."¹⁵ The area being of good quality, in addition to the community's shared social-economic status, and the sense of belonging, arguably impacted on Irene's own sense of belonging and her security in this "good quality area." Her friends lived in the same housing stock with little difference - her friend's family's solution to the overcrowding problem differed only in that she had the bedroom whilst her parents slept in the kitchen. Stuart too, in defending his family's sleeping arrangements to an audience in 2014, emphasises that his parent's bed being in the living room was "common" and "standard", speaking to a shared experience and a sense of commonality.

June also remembered her first home fondly, "I think we were really happy there, my sister and I really liked it." Unlike Irene, June was not surrounded by people who lived in

¹² June, interview with author, 26.08.2014.

¹³ Peter and Ken, interview with author, 17.07.2014.

¹⁴ Gordon, interview with author, 20.10.2014.

¹⁵ Irene, interview.

similar circumstances to herself; her father was a wool-sorter who worked in the local mill and rented the flat from the university, as many other families appeared to do. June recounts that, “as well as having working-class kids as friends we had a lot of the lecturer’s children as well ... we used to go into these huge houses, they were like mansions to us...”¹⁶ June’s recollections of happiness and belonging in this instance can be seen to relate less to a sense of community homogeneity and more to the wellbeing of her immediate family. The family moved from their two-roomed attic home to a new council house in Aberdeen in 1953 when her male cousin came to live with them and their old home was no longer suitable. Despite moving to a three-bedroomed flat, a considerable change in living conditions for the family, June remembers that her mother “hated it. She absolutely loathed it.”¹⁷ Her mother’s attitude to their new home, in an area she did not know or like, affected June’s sister whom June also describes as having hated the family’s move and who consequently left home as soon as she could at 16 to get married. June stayed in the family home throughout her education and university career, but a sense of familial happiness was not repeated in her descriptions of her time in her new home. That June no longer referred to her family’s enjoyment or emotional experience in the home is telling in its revelation of June’s experience of the family’s disintegration at her mother’s emotional withdrawal and her sister’s leaving home.

The use of space within an oral history narrative is not all that unusual, especially when constructing a collective memory or memory of belonging or community. However, what is revealed in these examples is more than a recollection of environmental and physical circumstance. To have a sense of space, it is claimed, “is to have an empathy and

¹⁶ June, interview.

¹⁷ Ibid.

identification with that place, a mental attitude towards it, an appreciation of it.”¹⁸ The family home is an undeniable evocative space for many, ‘home’ itself is an emotionally loaded term, and recollections of the home are therefore particularly revealing. Sociologically, the home is where “relationships are lived ... it locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space” and as such, whilst a sense of community and belonging was important to the experience of childhood, the recollection of a family home often revealed much about the family itself.¹⁹ For example, when Sandra refers to her family home as “nice and cosy and it was good at home, it was nice, warm...” her recollection is less to do with the physical surroundings of her childhood and instead reflects her sense of security and belonging, and a memory of affection within her family.²⁰

Furthermore, Gordon goes beyond a sense of shared experience or familial wellbeing in describing the feeling of security that his first home offered him during his time in inner-city Glasgow:

If you went out on to the street, every woman in the street was your mother and every woman in the street knew your mother and if you did something wrong your mother got to know about it, so there was a lot of community parenting went on. I just remember, erm, a lot of warmth in what was quite a poor physical environment and what was also quite a poor erm, in terms of material things.²¹

Gordon refers directly to one of the most oft cited elements of tenement living, the idea of “community parenting”. The impact of certain housing structures on parental support structures, particularly for mothers, has been well documented, the focus being on the easing

¹⁸ Richard Rive as cited in Sean Field, ‘Imagining Communities: memory, loss and resilience in post-apartheid Cape Town’, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd Edition, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 603.

¹⁹ Shelley Mallett, ‘Understanding Home: A critical review of the literature’ *Sociological Review*, 52:1 (2004), p. 63.

²⁰ Sandra, interview with author, 12.09.2014.

²¹ Gordon, interview.

of the demands of motherhood with neighbours often sharing the role of child care.²² Gordon also highlights the impact of community living on experiences of childhood; in doing so, Gordon brings together the wider recollections of community and wellbeing that Irene expressed and unites them with the feelings of safety, security and affection that Sandra recalled. Gordon frames the watchful eyes of the community in terms of endearment; his use of “mother” reflects an overall fondness and closeness with the women who would look out for the neighbourhood children. The warmth that Gordon experienced as a child is not restricted to his own home or his own family, but rather the wider community he grew up in. Living in a small Midlothian town during the 1940s and 1950s, Jacqueline too refers directly to the feelings of safety that resulted from living in such a close-knit area: “you trusted, everybody knew each other and you trusted everybody to keep an eye out and everybody did, so everybody knew what you were up to, if you happened to get into trouble everybody knew, and it was very safe, very safe.”²³

Both Gordon and Jacqueline cast the local community in a parenting role; the safety and security that they associated with their family home was a result of people outwith the four walls of their own homes. Whilst informal, the local communities were described as playing a familial role in these recollections of childhood and call into question the meaning and definition of family. For both Gordon and Jacqueline the idea of family security has a much more fluid boundary and the sense of security that they both recall is much more than the result of having a stable nuclear family, or even a supportive extended family, but rather a network of neighbours and friends.

²² Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (Routledge: London, 1996), pp. 152-154; Abrams and Fleming, ‘Everyday life in the Scottish Home’, pp. 51-52; Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: an oral history, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 199-211; Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: motherhood in outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 155-158.

²³ Jacqueline, interview with author, 25.08.2014.

Of course, the argument can be made that due to the emotive nature of the subject of childhood homes, the role of nostalgia and sentiment regarding the family home is, perhaps, outweighing that of memory. Published recollections of the quintessentially Glaswegian one or two-roomed homes vacillate between the overly lurid and the overtly sentimental and nostalgic. The impression of Glasgow's typical tenement life is also maintained in social history museums such as the People's Palace in Glasgow who have recreated "a typical single-roomed house that a 1930s working-class family would have lived in..."²⁴ Furthermore, memoirist George Rountree included photographs of Govan Reminiscence Group's recreation of a single-end home in his memoir, *A Govan Childhood: the 1930s* (figure 1.1). Indeed, many authors go to great lengths to defend their childhood homes and counter the negative associations of life in the single-end or room and kitchen. Jenny Chaplin, a self-described "slum child", born into a single-end in Govan in 1928 assures the reader that she still counts her blessings for such a favoured start in life, rejecting the notion that she had a deprived childhood.²⁵

All right, so we were dirt poor! But as we eked out an existence in oor wee single-end in Govan, we had warmth, love, affection in abundance and usually enough parritch, stovies or mince-n-tatties with which to fill an empty belly.²⁶

Interviewees too, evidenced a strong sense of nostalgia. However, the ways in which this is expressed by interviewees also hints at a wider discourse on the loss of local communities. Later in the interview, Gordon stated:

I mentioned earlier about community parenting – as communities have grown even larger, you know, these were all very small, very, very, small communities. As they've grown larger, so people have been less neighbourly.²⁷

²⁴ 'Highlights at People's Palace', <<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/peoples-palace/highlights/pages/default.aspx>>, [Accessed 03/03/2017].

²⁵ Chaplin, *Glasgow Childhood* (Beauly: Buisnesslike, 1994), 5

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁷ Gordon, interview.



Reconstruction in heavy-duty card of a tenement kitchen by Govan Reminiscence Group in 1989. Note dresser and coal bunker with bunch of sticks. The frieze would have been higher up and the shelving deeper and heavier, and would have extended farther (Page 4).



A realistic impression of the window and its outlook. Observe the boxed-in sink with cupboard and crane tap, kitchen press (cupboard), minus door for convenience of viewing, Singer sewing machine and range. The single-leaf table was a common feature — often a product of the SCWS furniture factory at Shieldhall (Page 2).

Figure 2.1: Reconstruction of a single-end by Govan Reminiscence Group.²⁸

In evoking a popular myth of Scottish childhood and the halcyon days of the mid-twentieth century, authors and interviewees are drawing on a collective memory of mid-century living conditions and community life. Whilst Joanna Bourke argues working-class cultures and communities are often romanticised and that “the neighbour who was never seen is neglected in favour of the neighbour who always shared”,²⁹ Ben Jones argues that the use of nostalgia “needs to be seen as a critique of contemporary stigmatising representations of

²⁸ Rountree, *Govan Childhood*.

²⁹ Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, p. 137.

working-class people, cultures and communities as deficient.”³⁰ There is a clear element of defence in some accounts of experiences of working-class housing, particularly amongst memoir authors; however, there is also an engagement with the narratives of loss of ‘traditional’ working-class communities, and particularly the impact that this had on experiences of childhood. Even accounting for nostalgia, the way in which the community is represented reflects the overall experience of childhood, much in the same way that recounting a “cosy” overcrowded home indicates the emotional tone of the memory of childhood.

Nonetheless, occasionally an overly nostalgic and idealised narrative of childhood did result in a disconnect in assertions over childhood safety, as with Jacqueline’s discussion of her local community.

So, yeah, happy childhood ... it was very secure and freedom, freedom to go out by yourself without your parents because everybody knew us in that small community and I think there was certainly one man, if not two, that we were just told, if you see him don’t go near him, so we didn’t know why and nobody ever explained why but we were, I think later found out that maybe that he exposed himself once or twice, maybe just not, it wasn’t quite right and maybe we just had to keep away from him just in case but, no, there was never any, kind of, danger in the place ...³¹

There is an obvious inconsistency in Jacqueline’s assertion of the security of her childhood juxtaposed with the presence of sexual danger within the local community. This disconnect was repeated by other respondents and the implications of nostalgia on memories of childhood are returned to in the concluding section of this thesis. However, in this context these narratives can also be seen to be a comment on the loss of local communities.

³⁰ Ben Jones, ‘The Uses of Nostalgia’, *Cultural and Social History*, 7:3 (2010), p. 369.

³¹ Jacqueline, interview.

Jennifer Helgren found a similar phenomenon of nostalgia's influence on recollections of safety in her oral history of girls growing up in 1950s and 1960s America. Helgren suggests that these overtly nostalgic and idealised recollections were a way in which interviewees assuaged their later loss of freedom and innocence of youth, particularly within reference to the gendered constructions of respectability and sexual vulnerability.³² Interestingly, the majority of respondents to reflect specifically on the 'freedom' of youth throughout this thesis were also women. Helgren also found that the persistent idealisation of childhood also acted as a critique of the loss of protective institutions including youth groups, and the "unified and neighborly [sic]" communities of the past.³³ Similarly in his study of working-class communities, Jones stated that nostalgic memoirs and autobiographies were a way in which authors critiqued perceived extant inequalities in society.³⁴

However, not all respondents reminisced about their family homes in purely positive terms; several interviewees recalled the physical discomfort and associated health risks of overcrowding. Eileen (b. 1946) lived in a two-bedroomed flat with her maternal grandmother, parents and younger brother. Her grandmother had a room to herself and her father and brother shared a room, leaving Eileen to share a bed in the kitchen with her mother. Living at home to the age of 17 when she left for college, Eileen recalls forever being tired due to her mother keeping her up with the light, reading in to the night.³⁵ George Rountree (b. 1930) also recounts the negative effect of tenement living on his health in his early childhood experience. Living in a room and kitchen in 1930s Govan, George recalls that the first six

³² Jennifer Helgren, 'A "Very Innocent Time": Oral History, Nostalgia and Girls' Safety in the 1950s and 1960s', *Oral History Review*, 42:1 (2015), p. 69.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³⁴ Ben Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia', p. 369; Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth Century England: community, identity and social memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 128-130.

³⁵ Eileen, interview with author, 30.10.2014.

years of his life were plagued with chest complaints and doctors feared that he had contracted one of the most feared and common diseases associated with overcrowding, tuberculosis.³⁶

As recounted in the previous chapter, the adverse effects of overcrowded and poor tenement living on health and hygiene were well known to officials and Scotland's particular redevelopment plan is perhaps one of the most infamous. None of the interviewees considered in this chapter were forced to relocate as a result of Scotland's controversial slum clearance; however, memoirist Meg Henderson describes the experience in *Finding Peggy*.³⁷ In her memoir, Meg describes the collapse of her inner-city tenement home in 1951. This resulted in Meg, along with her immediate family – mother, father and younger brother, Laurie – as well as the rest of the tenement, being relocated to a new council estate in Blackhill in the North-East of Glasgow. Despite her mother's horror at the relocation, owing to the disreputable reputation that Blackhill had already acquired in its short twenty-year history, Meg recalls that Blackhill “gave me a feeling of security and safety that I have never regained and as a child I was supremely happy there.” Compared to her previous home, the house in Blackhill was “luxury”, featuring two bedrooms, a kitchen, sitting/dining room and an inside toilet.³⁸ Despite revelling in the increased space of the new home, it is not the improvement in the material conditions of her surroundings that caused Meg to experience such an unparalleled sense of stability and wellbeing. The collapsed tenement's move *en masse* to Blackhill meant that her aunt and cousin lived only a few doors down from Meg and her grandparents and eponymous aunt Peggy lived close enough to visit every day. Not only that, but other familiar faces, the remaining rehoused tenants of the original tenement, also surrounded her in Blackhill. Despite a physical change in location, Meg's emotional circumstances had not altered; she was still surrounded by the caring network of extended

³⁶ Rountree, *Govan Childhood*, pp. 71-73.

³⁷ Meg Henderson, *Finding Peggy*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51, p. 44.

family and friends that were essential to her childhood sense of wellbeing, as they were in Gordon and Jacqueline's earlier accounts. The wider community can be seen to contribute to her sense of wellbeing, even on upheaval and relocation.

Meg and her family moved once more, five years later, this time to Drumchapel. Despite the fact that the house in Drumchapel was once again a step up for Meg's family, coming, as it did, with an additional bedroom so that nine year old Meg would now have her own room instead of sharing with her younger brother, she "didn't think much of the deal" and does not remember her time there with the same level of warmth as that spent in Blackhill. The move to Drumchapel was only undertaken by Meg's immediate family and the effect of her removal from the support of her extended family becomes even more evident with the disintegration of her parents' relationship. On moving to Drumchapel, her father's drinking became more apparent and her mother was diagnosed with epilepsy, both resulting in a reversal of caretaking roles between Meg and her parents. By the time she was 11, with no one else around to help, Meg had taken over running the house and looking after herself and her mother.³⁹ Meg's experience again highlights the role of community and extended family in the functioning of the immediate nuclear unit to which she directly belonged. For Meg, as before, the security and experience of her immediate family was related to the surrounding community and the boundaries of her family went far beyond her household, parents, and siblings.

Within the interviews conducted for this thesis, seven interviewees experienced life in the new council houses that were built in the wake of the Second World War. Three of the youngest of which, all born in the 1950s, spent their entire childhoods in a council owned

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 51-165.

home. The themes brought out in Meg's memoir, of the interaction of the family's functioning and living environment, are further evident in some of these interviews. Gordon, whose father left the navy when Gordon was six in 1952, moved to a housing scheme in the outskirts of Edinburgh, his description revealed how fortunate he felt to move to a new home:

Three large bedrooms, a very large sitting room, a bathroom, a big kitchen. It was on the third floor, a three storey flat, we had a big balcony out from the kitchen where we could sit in the summer it was super. Again we had super neighbours and a lovely neighbourhood.⁴⁰

The positive nature of Gordon's description is not just owing to the physical nature of his new home; Gordon's memories of his new home were associated with a positive shift in his childhood experience and he remembered it fondly as an improvement in the fortune of his family. Despite leaving the wider community he had so fondly recalled, Gordon experienced a sense of continuity with his feelings of security within the family unit.

In contrast, Maureen's (b. 1957) experience of living in a council house in a small village in Aberdeenshire in the 1950s was acutely tied with the dysfunction of her parents' relationship, regardless of space:

FC: it was two bedrooms you said? So did you share a room with your sister then?
Maureen: Eh, no. My parents did not get on and I was, well forced I suppose is the word; my father slept in the front bedroom and my sister and I slept with my mum in a double bed in the back. So not, not brilliant.⁴¹

The youngest interviewee, born in the late 1950s, Maureen's recollections are not of an overcrowded single-end or two-roomed home. Instead she spent her entire childhood in a modern two-bedroomed council house, which theoretically would have suited the family in the absence of marital discord and it may be natural to assume that Maureen thus shared a room with her elder sister, however, as recounted earlier, the home is where relationships are lived and it is where the family dynamics are both played out and revealed. As with the

⁴⁰ Gordon, interview.

⁴¹ Maureen, interview with author, 08.08.2014.

“luxury” of Meg’s home, Maureen’s experience of housing and of ‘home’ is inextricably linked with her experience of family life and more specifically both her parents’ relationship and her own relationship with her parents. In contrast to Irene and Stuart above, Maureen made no assurances that this was a ‘common’ arrangement. For Maureen, her family’s sleeping arrangements were a point of difference and a physical manifestation of her parents’ dysfunction. In the case of Meg and Maureen, idealised notions of the family home obscure the lived reality of their experience, specifically their experience of housing and of life within the family home as a lived space of childhood. It is not only social homogeneity within communities that led to a sense of belonging within interviewees’ narratives but also a sense of homogeneity amongst families within the community. Indeed, Sandra (b. 1938), whose father worked for the prison service and lived in a series of tied houses across Scotland stated:

Sandra: We were poor, but I never felt poor.

FC: No?

Sandra: No. No, I can’t ever think, I can’t ever remember when I was little wanting something that somebody else had, because we were all, basically, yes, there were people who were much better off but they didn’t seem to be any happier than we were.⁴²

The physical circumstances of childhood were undoubtedly impactful on the nature of recollected experiences of childhood and housing is one way in which material and socio-economic circumstances can be measured. Whilst some family homes were undoubtedly small and overcrowded, a sense of commonality in this experience was important. The idea of “you didn’t know any different” appeared to lend a sense of comfort to many interviewees, some of whom were more aware of this mitigating factor than others. Peter recalls that living in a small two-roomed house led to:

Very cramped conditions, like, you know, you get a two-bedroomed place or something and there’d be four kids and dad and mum and, you know, you grew up

⁴² Sandra, interview.

with it, you didn't know any different. But looking back now, you think, gosh, you know.⁴³

Interviewed in 2014, it is only in “looking back” that Peter expresses any sense of negativity about his overcrowded living conditions. Unlike Maureen, as a child Peter did not ‘know any different’, he did not express any awareness of variation either, in contrast to Irene who noted the differences in her own sleeping arrangements to that of her friend.

In order to understand the full effect of housing on experiences of childhood, it is necessary to consider what was taking place within the home; an idealisation of ‘home’ as an inherently safe space containing loving and full relationships can obscure the complex nature of child abuse and neglect, addressed later in the thesis, as well as more general experiences of childhood. The family home is a revealing topic as it is the physical embodiment of the feelings of safety and security that the family traditionally holds. Discussions of the home therefore, often revealed much more than the physical bricks and mortar of the interviewee’s upbringing, shedding light on the more emotional experiences of childhood and the complex ways in which many families functioned. The environmental and material surroundings and trappings of childhood were likely to have an effect; however, what has been made clear is that the sense of security and emotional support and affection that children received was much more important and lasting. Changes in material circumstances on moving to a new, often roomier property with better facilities did not necessitate that there would be a similar upswing in the experience of childhood within these homes. An examination of housing also calls for a questioning of the boundaries of the nuclear family as it is both lived and understood by respondents. When speaking of the home, what became apparent was that a familial sense of security and belonging was also applied to the immediate surrounding area

⁴³ Peter and Ken, interview.

by interviewees discussed here, neighbours acting as safeguarding parental figures and wider community homogeneity offering a sense of security.

III. Education

Education, much in the same way as housing, is an environmental factor of childhood that, when recounted, tells us much about the emotional experiences of childhood and reveals the intricacies of familial relationships. The ways in which interviewees recollected their parents' attitudes towards educational attainment highlighted the often complex internal relationships within the family. Interviewees' accounts navigated both gendered and generational, and occasionally gendered generational, expectations of educational attainment that in turn also demonstrated the way in which they themselves negotiated perceived gender roles within the family. Additionally, whilst housing and the family home represented a literal mapping of the emotional landscapes on to the environmental, the role of education, whilst less tangible, was equally revealing. The inter- and post-war periods were one of great change in regards educational reform and these changes played out within the family home and impacted familial relationships in a number of different ways: for several respondents, education served as a conduit for perceived parental affection and approval, whilst for others education became a source of tension and caused strained relationships.

At the beginning of the period considered here, access to education could often be affected by traditional gender roles, particularly in the wake of material constraints. Elizabeth (b. 1924), aware of the financial and emotional constraints of her parents who had just had their fourth child, decided at aged 15 that she was “rather a burden” and decided to start

looking for a job, leaving school if she found one.⁴⁴ Due to the traditional gender roles within the family, many children often found themselves as nominal heads of the family fulfilling the primary caretaking role. It was also not unusual for children to be called upon to help their parents look after both themselves and younger children. The experience of leaving school at a young age to either help contribute to the family income or take on a substitute mothering role to younger siblings was so widespread that stories about these “little mothers” appeared frequently in young girls’ magazines throughout the 1920s and continued on in to the 1930s and beyond.⁴⁵ Even in the immediate post-war decades, it was noted that elder daughters were more likely to leave school at the end of their compulsory education in order to either care for younger siblings or contribute to the family economy.⁴⁶

Jacqueline, born in 1945 and schooled during the rise of the welfare state, recalls her own parents’ encouragement alongside her personal ambition to do better:

You could do a bit better and the only way I took that I could see was education and because I was very lucky my parents did back me because I was an only child as well, they couldn’t have afforded to send me or to keep me... There were a lot of girls who were clever and could have made something of themselves but had to leave to earn money to help with the family expenses and that still existed then but because of grants we were extremely lucky.⁴⁷

Despite being able to continue on in education, Jacqueline does make note that she was unusual in this regard compared with many of her female peers. Although Jacqueline directly engages with the benefit of educational grants, she also makes note of the importance of her parents’ support. Whilst Jacqueline’s parents were both supportive of her decision to continue her education, she made particular note of her father’s encouragement. The paternal element to the support that many respondents referred to could be due, at least in part, to the stronger

⁴⁴ Wheeler, *Growing Up*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁵ Penny Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing up in England* (Taylor and Francis: Oxon, 1995), pp. 123-124.

⁴⁶ Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 71.

⁴⁷ Jacqueline, interview.

tradition of male advancement in education as well as the links between education and the labour movement.⁴⁸ Their mother's position on the matter, revealed in absence or as a source of conflict as below, may arguably reflect the experience of the previous generation, for whom it was not uncommon for educational opportunities to be sacrificed in the wake of familial responsibility.

A post-war shift in education ideology led to changes in education policy that were aimed at increasing access to further and higher education.⁴⁹ However, while local authority grant schemes benefitted some, the cost of higher and further education, both in terms of the expense of keeping a child on at school and the loss of an extra pair of hands at home, meant that staying on at school or entering an higher education establishment was out of the reach of many working-class children in Scotland throughout much of the twentieth century, despite the concentrated efforts to broaden access.⁵⁰ From the post-war years up to 1970, the percentage of working-class school leavers who were entering full-time higher education in Scotland was still considerably lower than that of the middle-classes.⁵¹ While the issue of finance clearly had an effect, as Jacqueline notes amongst her own classmates, Eileen noted that while her parents were always supportive of her desire to go to training college:

they weren't middle-class parents, they were happy to do what the school said and did. But they didn't think, "right we're going to fight for our daughter" – maybe, there was nothing to fight for – you know, to get the best education possible. There's definitely a line between middle-class families and working-class families with regards [that].⁵²

⁴⁸ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working-Classes* (London: Yale University Press, 2010); Tom Woodin, 'Working-Class Education and Social Change in Nineteenth- and Twentieth – century Britain,' *History of Education*, 36:4-5 (2007), pp. 483-496.

⁴⁹ Robert Anderson, 'Education', in Anthony Cooke, Ian Donnachie, Ann McSween and Christopher Whately (eds.), *Modern Scottish History 1707 to the Present. Volume 2: the modernisation of Scotland, 1850 to the present* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), p. 250.

⁵⁰ Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 158; T. C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950* (London: Collins, 1986), p. 212, pp. 223-225.

⁵¹ Paterson, *Scottish Education*, p. 158

⁵² Eileen, interview.

As such, between 1950 and 1970 there remained a dominant idea that, in the words of Ken (b. 1939), staying on at school for many “wasn't the done thing so much in that days”.⁵³ Although there was an increase in the opportunity for working-class children to attend university, at least in theory, passage into university was still seen as a predominantly middle-class phenomenon during this period,⁵⁴ and arguably remains so.⁵⁵ As such, many working-class scholars found themselves estranged from their friends and neighbours, and, for those who valued social mobility, educational policy had failed to convince the majority of working-class parents that education was the key.⁵⁶ Many parents themselves had encountered no such guarantee in the relationship between a higher level of education and increased wages after leaving school.⁵⁷

Both Ken and Peter (b. 1943) left school, and in the case of Ken home, and went directly into work at the age of 15. Neither interviewee particularly enjoyed school, nor were they encouraged to stay on past the legally required stage; leaving at 15 “was just standard practice” to them.⁵⁸ Both their peer group and immediate family stressed the importance of learning a trade and placed an emphasis on working to get ahead in life. Describing their mother as wanting more from life, Peter was encouraged to leave school at 15 to start an apprenticeship with a welder. Ken, who struggled with his relationship with his disciplinarian father left home to a “good job” found by one of his friends.⁵⁹ Whilst both men proclaimed to have not really liked school, it was clearly never an expectation of theirs, or their parents on their behalf, that they would stay on past the mandatory age and continue their schooling.

⁵³ Peter and Ken, interview.

⁵⁴ Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1998), p.27.

⁵⁵ Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel, *Higher Education and Social Justice* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, p.120.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Peter and Ken, interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

However, it is important to highlight that throughout their narrative there was a consensus between their own aspirations and their parents' expectations.

Patricia (b. 1937) felt that in not continuing on at school she missed out on an opportunity available to her, a feeling that she carried into adulthood:

Well you know what happened with me, looking back I am still slightly upset about it but of course there's no point being upset, but I mean I was actually pretty bright at school and no one said you mustn't do that Patricia, you must go and do your Highers ... nobody said you must continue you must do your Highers, so I did a commercial course for a year so I never took my Highers. Which sort of stayed with me so that when I grew up I always had this desire for the education which I didn't get so I went back and took my Highers and retrained and became a chartered accountant and when I retired when I was 66 I went to Edinburgh University and took a degree. So all the things that should have happened when I was 16, 17 or 18 – I've gone back and done since.⁶⁰

Patricia had been eligible for a small bursary to enable her to attend the local academy, and she was unsure as to why her parents had not encouraged her education further. Her elder sister, she notes, attended senior secondary and then went on to become a nurse, suggesting a disparity in the way the siblings were treated. The fact that Patricia states that she was "upset" about the state of her education and the lack of support she received indicates a wider dissatisfaction with her family life. Whilst Patricia's parents' attitude aligns with that of Peter and Ken's, what alters the impact of not continuing on in education for Patricia's experience of childhood is the lack of acknowledgement of her own ambitions and expectations. Moreover, Patricia's experience, similar to Eileen, highlights the need for parents to be actively involved in their children's education.

Nevertheless, despite class expectations, parental approval and involvement in children's education could still heavily affect familial relationships. Once again, an agreement between parents and children is key. Dorothy (b. 1942), whose father was a head

⁶⁰ Patricia, interview with the author, 04.04.2014. .

teacher and later a childcare provision inspector, always knew that there was an expectation that she would go on to higher education:

Oh no, I wanted to be a teacher. I knew that. All the grandchildren, all would be at school until they were 17 because it was expected that we would go on to higher education of some kind. And we were clever enough to do so, and there was also enough money for us to do so. Whether you were a boy or a girl. No, it was always expected and I always expected to do so.⁶¹

Dorothy makes note that not only was she “clever enough” to go on to university, but that her middle-class upbringing meant that there was also enough money to do so. Interestingly, Dorothy also engages with gender expectations, noting that boys and girls were treated equally in regards to higher education; there was no echoing of the ‘little mothering’ role that Jacqueline alluded to. Indeed, Todd notes that whilst gender still influenced the allocation of education in the post-war period family income was more influential.⁶² Coming from a middle-class family, Dorothy was arguably not subject to the same familial pressures to contribute to the family income as experienced by Elizabeth and that Jacqueline notes of her peers. However, even though Dorothy clearly emphasised the mutual accord between her and her family over the status of her education, her schooling was still a source of discord between her and her father.

Dorothy presented her father’s support in a controlling light, the familial expectations weighing heavily and negatively influencing their relationship. Due to his own background, Dorothy’s father put a lot of emphasis on her education, which became the source of tension as he was quite strict about her homework, standing at her shoulder and “supervising”.⁶³ Her father’s scrupulous observation of her education meant that her time would be spent doing twice the usual amount of homework, first in pencil for her father to correct and then again in

⁶¹ Dorothy, interview with author, 10.09.2014.

⁶² Todd, *Young Women*, p. 68.

⁶³ Ibid.

pen once corrected. Despite her own expectations, the onus placed on her schoolwork was detrimental to Dorothy's extra-curricular activities, she recounts having to quit the Guides in order to dedicate more time to her education.⁶⁴ Whilst Dorothy's aspirations to continue in her education aligned with her father's expectations, her father's focus on her education was a source of tension between the two in what was otherwise a reportedly harmonious family atmosphere; despite a general agreement between the two, a lack of acknowledgement and support of individual desires continues to cause lasting strain.

Conversely, Irene (b. 1931) recalls her father (b. 1896) "was more talented than his education had allowed him." Seeking self-improvement his entire life he was "thrilled to bits when he discovered that I [Irene] was quite bright."⁶⁵ Irene did well at school and was one of only two children from her primary school that progressed to the local secondary high. Encouraged in her education by her father who was "really thrilled to find that he had this bright little daughter who was doing what he would have loved to have done", Irene became dux and eventually went on to university.⁶⁶ Her mother, however, was not so encouraging of her education. Despite asserting that she was never expected to do anything within the house, Irene recalls that a lot of the tensions that existed between her and her mother stemmed from her lack of involvement in domestic work and her mother's subsequent fears that she was "lazy". Irene's prioritisation of schoolwork and reading over housework led her mother to be "scared that I would grow up to be a lazy, feckless kind of person [that] couldn't run a family."⁶⁷ Her mother's emphasis on domesticity aligned with the prevalent gender ideology of the immediate post-war years, as well as her own personal experience a generation previously: "well mother was a, you know, the typical pattern. She was a housewife and so

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Irene, interview.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

she stayed at home and, erm, did all the housework and cooking and cleaning and what have you...”⁶⁸

Born in 1897, Irene’s mother would have been educated in the early twentieth century when the Scottish school curriculum focused heavily on domestic training for most working-class girls.⁶⁹ In addition, having moved into their newly built council home in the 1920s, Irene’s mother would also have been subject to the increasing rhetoric of the ‘good tenant’ through her role as a housewife.⁷⁰ Irene’s mother would have likely been subject to unabating social pressure to marry and have children, combined with an increased policing of her own role as a housewife and a mother in the inter- and post-war era.⁷¹ Thus, education served to widen the gap between the generations and could impact the way in which children interacted with their parents in diverse ways. Irene noted that throughout her teenage years she experienced a growing distance between herself and her mother as a result of her educational opportunities: “I was getting all sorts of intellectual stimulation, I could see how illogical my mother was in the way she thought and when she, poor soul, tried to argue her corner I was not very understanding.”⁷² In contrast, her relationship with her father was only strengthened

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Jane McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Victorian Scotland: Gender, education and identity* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 13.

⁷⁰ Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), pp. 73-75. Furthermore, the use of ‘housing inspectoresses’ to rank the cleanliness of social housing homes throughout the 1930s was not unusual, see: Nicholas Sharrer, ‘The Impact of Social Housing on Health in Glasgow and Baltimore, 1930-1980’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2016) pp. 114-115.

⁷¹ Although working-class motherhood has long been subject to surveillance, the increase in welfare agencies in the twentieth century, alongside the introduction of the welfare state and the emergence of the ‘problem family’ in the post-war years led to an increased surveillance of working-class motherhood, particularly from middle-class ‘women visitors’ and new social work departments. John Macnicol, ‘From “Problem Family” to “underclass”, 1945-1995’, in Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe (eds.), *Welfare Policy in Britain: the road from 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 69-94; Linda Mahood, *Policing Gender, Class and Family: Britain 1850-1940* (London: University College London Press, 1995); Pat Starkey, ‘The Feckless Mother: women, poverty and social workers in 1940s England’, *Women’s History*, 9 :3 (2000), pp. 539-557; Pat Starkey, *Families and Social Workers: the work of Family Service Units, 1940-1985* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); Additionally, perceived rises in juvenile crime and delinquency as well as the introduction of social work in the post-war era led to an increasing scrutiny on motherhood, particularly in regards to the role of mothers within the problem family, see Louise Jackson and Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 1, p. 152.

⁷² Irene, interview.

by her educational success. Seeking self-improvement throughout his life, education was an area of common interest for Irene and her father and served as both a source of connection and affirmation of affection between the two:

with my father, I knew I was special and I knew I was doing well. But with my mother, she never said it. And it wasn't 'til much later talking to friends and relatives, "how proud your mother was of you." *Never* said it to me.⁷³

Irene's account of her performance at school and her overall educational attainment reveals much more than a measure of her natural intelligence, social mobility, or the opportunities offered to her as a young child – it reveals a close relationship with her father and a missed connection between her and her mother. This association between education, parental approval, and feelings of affection is repeated by Sandra (b. 1938). Unlike Irene, Sandra did not go along with her father's encouragement and chose not to advance to further education and instead left school to get a job at the age of 16. Sandra expressed a lingering feeling of having disappointed her father and having wasted the opportunities presented to her:

FC: You left school at 16, but your dad wanted you to stay on a bit longer?

Sandra: Yes. Because he [pause] dad would have liked to have gone to university, he was quite clever at school my dad. But obviously his parents couldn't afford that ... And he was right I did waste my time, you know. To him if you were quite clever you should make the best of what you were given, you were really lucky. I think I was lucky that they wanted me to stay on at school... So, I think, looking back it was a great disappointment to my dad.⁷⁴

The notion of praise is important here as Sandra noted that her father was proud of her sister, Betty, who had done "all the right" things and gone to university, whilst Sandra only recalled her father telling her he was proud of her when she got married at 31. Additionally, Sandra noted throughout the interview that her family was not particularly emotionally

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Sandra, interview.

demonstrative, and she casts this as a particularly Scottish trait stating that, “Scots are not good at praising their children.”⁷⁵ Irene too, noted that,

they [her parents] had a feeling, you don’t praise your children, ‘cause they might get big headed and then what would they do? And so you were never told you were doing well and you were never told you were loved, I mean that vocabulary wasn’t there at all.⁷⁶

Generational notions of parenting and displays of affection will be returned to below, but these are important here in regards to education’s direct influence on familial relationships within the family. At a time when interviewees recollected few physical demonstrations of affection and rare declarations of pride, educational success was one way in which several interviewees perceived parental love. Thus, the impact of education is particularly noteworthy from a generational perspective, not just in highlighting how the shifts in education policy in the welfare state era affected children’s outcomes but also their daily lives and lived emotional landscapes. Testimonies considered here have also indicated the importance of generational changes in educational expectations, particularly in the wake of the welfare state and growing access to further education.

Outwith considerations of generational and class expectations and aspirations, intrafamilial relationships and broader family dynamics also played an explicit role in deciding whether to continue in further education. Maureen (b. 1957), expressed a wish to continue on to university after she finished school:

FC: Did you enjoy school?

Maureen: I was good at school. [pause] I didn’t go to university and I do regret that, I definitely do. And I think part of that was my lack of confidence, but also I didn’t feel as though I had any support. I felt as though I had to go and get a job and bring some money into the house.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Irene, interview.

⁷⁷ Maureen, interview.

Maureen's parents had a notably strained relationship. In addition to being away for the working week, Maureen's father occasionally worked at a pub on the weekends and drank considerably, keeping her mother "quite short of money". When her father was at home, which Maureen notes was not very often, her parents were always arguing and the atmosphere in the house was strained. Despite feeling quite close to her mother and secure at home in her company, as soon as her father returned home Maureen no longer felt secure, unsure of when her parents would "kick-off" arguing.⁷⁸ As evidenced above, parental support and encouragement is widely recognised as a determining factor in fulfilling academic potential. For Maureen, whose parents did not offer a sense of continuity and security at home, continuing on in education was not something that she could perceive of as an option. In addition, familial circumstances and financial stability also played a part in furthering education. Financial considerations in continuing schooling were clearly experienced by other interviewees, particularly in their constructions of class expectations. Maureen, however, did not reflect on either class or gender expectations in regards to education and financial constraints, but rather the impact of her family's function and dynamic. In doing so, Maureen's educational experience reflects a wider narrative of her experience of childhood.

Childhood education and the effect that this has on experiences of childhood, like housing above, is a much more complex and revealing topic than often thought. Whilst this research has also highlighted that parental encouragement and financial support is important in educational achievement and attainment, the effect both of and on emotion also came to light through the above analysis. Education and time in school constitutes a considerable portion of childhood and it is perhaps unsurprising to note its effect on family life and familial relationships and *vice versa*. Whilst the development of education policy outlined in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

the previous chapter is important, an understanding of the full influence of education on experiences of childhood is only uncovered alongside an examination of family life. Respondents not only recounted changing generational attitudes towards education and employment, but their testimonies also indicated an intricate relationship between this and class, gender, and expectations of educational attainment. Importantly, personal testimonies also uncovered a complicated interaction between education and parent-child relationships.

Education emerged as a clear way in which generational tensions manifested within parent-child relationships, and in these instances recollections of childhood agency were crucial. Parental aspirations for children sometimes caused a rift in familial relationships, particularly when there were conflicting attitudes between parents. Narratives which perceived a generational divide in parental practices also led to educational success being viewed as a way in which interviewees understood parental warmth and care; praise over doing well at school was translated into displays of pride and affection, resulting in feelings of emotional security and comfort for several respondents. Conversely, an overemphasis on education led to tensions between parents and children, particularly when educational aspirations did not align between generations, pressure to achieve and to please caused strain and stress in parent-child relations. Finally, the retrospective nature of the testimony also revealed a class framework in perceptions of parental support and approval, particularly for Dorothy, Eileen and Patricia, with class being interpreted as a deciding factor in parents' responsiveness to interviewees' own ambitions and desires.

IV. Parental Discord

Recollections of housing and educational experiences have highlighted the influential nature of intrafamilial relationships on experiences of childhood within nuclear family forms.

Addressing these more directly demonstrates the ways in which these relationships not only affected the ‘objective’ environmental experiences but also the subjective emotional experiences of childhood. In both our discussions of housing and education one of the recurring themes was a feeling of safety and security – both within the physical environment of the home and within the parent-child relationship. Relationships between parents were also important, as we have seen. The relationship between parents and its resulting impact on experiences of childhood has been discussed to great extent within sociological contexts but has not been overly explored in a historical context.⁷⁹

Most parents undeniably argued occasionally, indeed all interviewees recollected even brief arguments between their parents when asked. Given the nature of the housing experienced by many interviewees, there would have been considerable constraints on privacy within the family home, meaning that parental conflict would have been hard to conceal. Additionally, Grych and Fincham have argued that discord is difficult to hide from children who are seen to be highly sensitive to their parents’ relationship from a young age, a point borne out in interviewee testimony.⁸⁰ Gordon recalls how, “we never heard them arguing; we just knew there was a strain.”⁸¹ Despite perceptions of tension in some homes, most childhoods were not reportedly impacted in an overwhelmingly negative manner, as Brenda (b. 1953) notes, whilst her parents argued like all parents, “the good times outweigh

⁷⁹ See: E. Mark Cummings and Patrick Davies, *Children and Marital Conflict: the Impact of Family Dispute and Resolution* (Guildford Press: New York, 1994); E. Mark Cummings and Patrick Davies, *Marital Conflict: An Emotional Security Perspective* (Guildford Press, New York, 2010); Caroline McGee, *Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000). In her 2005 study *Marital Violence*, historian Elizabeth Foyster does dedicate a chapter to the impact of marital violence on children. Ginger Frost also looks at male violence towards wives and children during the nineteenth century in her chapter, ‘I am master here’: Illegitimacy, Violence, and Masculinity in Victorian England’, in Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, and Abigail Wills (eds.), *Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 27-42.

⁸⁰ John H. Grych and Alan D. Fincham, ‘Marital Conflict and Children’s Adjustment: A Cognitive-Contextual Framework’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 108:2 (1990), p. 272; McGee, *Childhood Experiences*, p. 96.

⁸¹ Gordon, interview.

the bad, so I don't really remember anything.”⁸² Whilst periods of parental tension were recalled, the retrospective nature of the respondents' testimony revealed that the impact on memory of times of familial stress was mitigated by the infrequency of these events – although it must be noted that this is, of course, in hindsight and that feelings of distress may have been more acute at the time. Nonetheless, the lasting impression of a harmonious parental relationship amongst many interviewees indicates the degree to which the parental relationship impacted experiences of childhood.

When periods of parental discord were recalled, respondents noted that the resolution of these arguments was crucial to their sense of security. When recounting the only two occasions he can remember when his parents argued, Gordon went on to state:

FC: And did you feel quite secure at home?

Gordon: Oh, aye. There was never any sense of...never any sense of threat. The only time, I think, I ever felt uneasy – and I can think of maybe two occasions I can remember – my parents had clearly had an argument, and the atmosphere in the house changed.

FC: Yeah?

Gordon: Now, we never heard them arguing; we just knew there was a strain. And I felt very, very unhappy; very, very uncomfortable. I felt very uneasy; I felt insecure because of that. But then you actually saw your parents making up; they were sitting cuddling on the settee, and then you wouldn't...and then they would be fine; the atmosphere changed, then it was back to normal.⁸³

It was important for Gordon to know that the argument had passed. Alan (b. 1958) also recalled that whilst his parents argued he knew that an argument would not last more than a day before everyone was “back to where we were and carrying on.”⁸⁴ Gordon, Alan and Brenda, whilst each remembering instances of their parents conflict causing them some level of distress and discomfort as children, also each make note of the consistency of their parents' relationship offering them a sense of stability. This contrasts sharply with the

⁸² Brenda, interview.

⁸³ Gordon, interview.

⁸⁴ Alan, interview by author, 09.07.2014.

aforementioned lack of emotional security that Maureen described in her home that stemmed from the uncertainty of when her parents were going to “kick-off”. It was the unpredictable nature of her parents’ relationship that led to Maureen’s continued discomfort.

Regarding parental discord, one of the recurring themes was the effect of alcohol on the family, particularly the occurrence of alcoholism amongst respondents’ fathers. Interestingly, this was often framed as a Scottish trait. Alan explained his father’s drinking as typical Scottish, indeed typical Glaswegian, behaviour. Alan described his father as an “old school, old school Glaswegian”; he did “the typical Glasgow thing, pub after work on a Friday.”⁸⁵ Additionally, Isabelle also recounted her father’s weekend drinking:

Isabelle: My mother struggled. My father did nae. He used to go out on Friday night and Saturday night and a Sunday. He’d go to the match on the Saturday afternoon and that would be him – ‘til late Saturday night.

Interviewer: Did he come back drunk?

Isabelle: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: What was he like when he got drunk?

Isabelle: It sounds terrible when you say it but, you know, it was – it was normal – for where we lived.⁸⁶

Undoubtedly affecting her into her later life, Isabelle later goes on to explain that she never wanted to marry a Scotsman:

Isabelle: Well, I always thought I would never marry a Scotsman.

Interviewer: So you knew the Englishmen were perhaps a bit different?

Isabelle: Yeah. I knew that there must be more to life than - a Glasgow weekend, when the men go out drinking on Friday, they go to the match on Saturday and if the team loses, they come home and throw the wife and the telly through the window. There's more to life than that. And I did nae want it.⁸⁷

It was not unexpected to find references to parental drinking by interviewees; it was considered a corner stone of working-class culture, particularly in relation to a working-class

⁸⁵ Alan, interview.

⁸⁶ Isabelle, transcript, p. 15

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Scottish masculinity.⁸⁸ What is of interest here is the way in which this parental drinking was framed and constructed by respondents.

The reputation of Scottish, particularly Glaswegian, men and fathers as heavy drinkers has been linked to Scotland's poor housing record, with early twentieth century commentators arguing that, in a small two-roomed house, men simply had no room within the home and preferred the pub and social drinking than spending time with their family.⁸⁹ Research into popular and official discourse affirms Alan and Isabelle's belief that their father's drinking being "the typical Glasgow thing" during the mid-twentieth century. Isabelle also considered the alcohol-induced violence that she witnessed in the home as 'normal', an opinion reinforced through much of the twentieth century with a continued correlation between domestic violence and male working-class culture.⁹⁰ Whilst historical research is beginning to discount this seemingly prevailing view of Scottish masculinity,⁹¹ the association of drinking with Scottish working-class masculinity was evident amongst respondents who sought to reconcile their father's drinking through a normalisation of their behaviour. Alan's coding of his father's drinking as "typically Glaswegian" further removes the possibility of any troubling revelations that might disturb his narrative; accountability is

⁸⁸ Andrew Davies, 'Leisure in the 'classic slum' 1890-1939', in Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (eds.), *Worker's Worlds: Communities and Cultures in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 107; Annmarie Hughes, 'Representations and Counter-Representations of Domestic Violence on Clydeside Between the Two World Wars', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004), pp. 169-184.; Hilary Young, 'Hard Man, New Man: Re/composing Masculinities in Glasgow, c. 1950-2000', *Oral History*, 35:1 (2007), p. 72.

⁸⁹ Lynn Abrams, "'There was nobody like my daddy': Fathers, the Family and the Marginalisation of Men in Modern Scotland", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 78:2 (1999), p. 225.

⁹⁰ Hughes, 'Representations and Counter-representations'; Annmarie Hughes, 'The 'Non-Criminal' Class Wife-Beating in Scotland, c1800- 1949', *Crime, History and Societies*, 14:2 (2010), pp.31-54.

⁹¹ Abrams, "'There was nobody like my daddy'", p. 225; Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Ewan (eds.), *Nine Centuries of Man: manhood and masculinities in Scottish history* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Oliver Stockman, 'Work, Play and Performance: masculinity and popular culture in central Scotland, c. 1930-c.1950 (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011), Hilary Young, 'Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities' in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 131-152.

removed from his father and Alan's construction of his father as a good provider remains safe and unchallenged.

Beyond Glasgow, Patricia's father was employed as a groundskeeper on an estate in Aberdeenshire and the family would live in fear of her father receiving tips from visitors to the estate as he would go to the pub afterwards and drink; "we never liked the end of the week, because once my father got a tip he went to the pub, so Saturday nights were pretty miserable times for us." After having had a drink, "he became quite nasty, quite violent. There was always a lot of trouble in the house when my father was drunk." Patricia recalls hating Christmas because New Year came after it and "you always knew you'd have all the unpleasantness."⁹² Also in a small village in Aberdeenshire, Maureen also recalls her father's drinking and describes her father as a "bit of a drunk to be honest."⁹³

Maureen and Patricia's recollections of their father's drinking are much different in tone to Alan's. Notably, Alan made sure to point out that his father's drinking "never, ever led to violence or, you know, anything like that. He just liked to drink."⁹⁴ In addition to the fact that Alan's father's drinking reportedly had no adverse effect on his behaviour towards other family members his drinking did not prevent him from fulfilling his traditional parental role as a provider. This was similar to Peter and Ken who, when asked if their father ever went to the pub, asserted that he was not a drinking man and Ken went on to explain:

Again, I think [pause] again, he wasn't a drinking man, but also, I think he'd been [pause] due to the lack of funds, I think. You cannae have half a dozen kids and go boozing and all that. And he was mair [a] family man. I know when his guys went to the boozer on the pay night, and the wife got what was left sort of thing, but no, he wasn't a man like that ...⁹⁵

⁹² Patricia, interview.

⁹³ Maureen, interview.

⁹⁴ Alan, interview.

⁹⁵ Peter and Ken, interview.

The attitude reflected by Ken and Peter highlights the continuing strength of the breadwinner ideal into the twentieth century and perhaps indicates at least one reason for Maureen and Patricia's alternate framing of their father's drinking. This is further demonstrated by James who described his father as a "good drinker" who always made sure to hand over his wages to his wife.⁹⁶ The handing over an unopened pay packet was a clear sign of a respectable working-class man and a good husband and father.⁹⁷ Furthermore, in her analysis of Victorian and Edwardian working-class autobiographies, Julie-Marie Strange found that authors would often "reimagine" breadwinning and a father's fulfilment of being a 'good provider' as evidence of his devotion to family life and care and affection for his children.⁹⁸

Stuart recalled that during his childhood in Aberdeen respectability was constructed as when:

your wife didn't work, very much so, if your wife worked, if she had a part time job or my pal [redacted], his mother worked in a bakery half the day and my mother would tut about this wasn't quite right, that's because Mr [redacted] spent too much in the boozers that she went out to work, if he was a proper husband she'd be able to stay home all the time.⁹⁹

Stuart's recollection was likely due in part to what he perceived his parents expected from their marriage. Focusing on his mother Stuart stated that,

my mother had an expectation of my father that he would provide for the family and he wouldn't fail to do that, and he didn't, he was never unemployed and he didn't drink so he always handed over his pay-packet ...¹⁰⁰

Alan, however, was aware that his father skirted this line of respectability in his casting of him as a typical Glaswegian, never handing his mother an unopened pay packet, and yet he

⁹⁶ James, interviewed by author, 18.07.2017.

⁹⁷ Arthur McIvor and R. Johnston, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004), p. 143; Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and political identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 143-144.

⁹⁸ Julie-Marie Strange, 'Fatherhood, Providing, and Attachment in Late Victorian and Edwardian Working-Class Families', *The Historical Journal*, 55:4 (2012), pp. 1007-1027.

⁹⁹ Stuart, interview.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

made it clear that they never went without “food or, you know, clothes or anything like that.”¹⁰¹

For Patricia, her father’s drinking was a much bigger problem and source of resentment. She felt that her father’s drinking held her family back, spending money on alcohol meant that the family could not afford a car and she could not travel to join a local Brownie or Guide troop.

Even as a child you realised that there’s not very much money in the house, so someone drinking the money and smoking took away money from the household. I don’t know what age you realise that, but certainly by the time you reach secondary school you absolutely realise . . . We were realising we can’t do various things because there’s no money in the house.¹⁰²

Alan and James’ fathers’ drinking was not as big a source of tension within the home as it was not seen to interfere with their roles as a father and provider to Alan’s and James’s families. Whereas some respondents asserted that they never wanted for anything and did not feel poor because they did not know any different, Patricia clearly identified the cause of her lack of opportunity with her father’s drinking and smoking. Of course, there is no way of knowing when Patricia did realise that her father’s drinking was taking vital resources away from the home and preventing her and her siblings from engaging in the activities that their peers were partaking in. Unlike Alan and Isabelle, Patricia and Maureen never sought to normalise their fathers’ behaviour. They clearly demonstrated how it framed their remembered experience of childhood and impacted their construction of a ‘good’ father and a ‘good’ childhood.

Alcohol played a large part in many recollections of childhood, as we have seen. For Isabelle and Alan it was a seemingly inevitable part of their Scottish experience; for Maureen

¹⁰¹ Alan, interview.

¹⁰² Patricia, interview.

and Patricia the cause of childhood unhappiness and familial strife. Nonetheless, Alex (b. 1946) was the only respondent who openly referred to his father as an alcoholic:

My father was an alcoholic, he was one of those sorts of alcoholics who [pause] would go for a year and not touch a drop and you could feel the tension building and then he would explode and he could drink a bottle of whisky a day without any problem whatsoever.¹⁰³

A consequence of Alex's father's drinking was this feeling of tension within the house that would slowly build and come to a breaking point when his father took another drink. Describing his father as a "difficult chap" and his mother as "not particularly warm", Alex found that he had more time for his grandparents than his own parents.¹⁰⁴ His maternal grandfather, who was warm and affectionate towards Alex, was the paternal figure with which he bonded and had common interests. Whilst his mother and father continued to support him financially and, as a middle-class school teacher and solicitor respectively, encouraged him to go to university, the strain between his parents led him to find comfort and emotional engagement with his "very couthy" grandfather.¹⁰⁵ In addition to his continued providing for the family, the impact of Alex's father's drinking was lessened in Alex's account due to the supportive role of his extended family, once more highlighting their role in the blurring of the boundaries of the 'nuclear' family. Furthermore, being middle-class, the family was arguably not as financially constrained by Alex's father's drinking, thus the family's socio-economic circumstance meant that Alex's father maintained his breadwinning role alongside his heavy drinking.

Furthermore, Alex describes a clear watershed moment when he realised that not all was as it should be amongst his parents:

¹⁰³ Alex, interview with author, 07.07.2014.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. ("Couthy" is a Scottish adjective meaning warm and friendly).

How can I describe their relationship? [Pause] I certainly wouldn't have been conscious of it – being anything wrong with their relationship until I was into my teens, then it was fairly obvious that my father had a serious booze problem.¹⁰⁶

It was also in Alex's teen years that his father left home and had an affair for a short period, providing Alex with a very clear indication of his parent's troubled relationship. This recognition contrasts with the disconnect evident in other interviews between the details given and the overall assessment of the parental relationship. Patricia, for example, had much more trouble reconciling her father's drinking and abusive behaviour with any potential discord in her parent's relationship:

FC: So how would you describe your parent's relationship?

Patricia: Pretty good actually.¹⁰⁷

Previously in the interview Patricia had stated that her father was violent when drunk, although she asserted that he never hit the children or her mother, and that there was a lot of trouble in the house when he was drunk. Yet, she appeared reluctant to cast her parents' relationship in anything other than a positive light. It has long been asserted that when interviewed, adults are likely to interpret their memories and reconstruct past events, and likely relationships, through their current selves and own adult experiences.¹⁰⁸ This cognitive dissonance articulated by Patricia is evident in a number of interviews carried out for this research and will be explored in greater depth in a reflection on methods in the concluding portion of this thesis.

Conversely, Maureen openly expressed the way in which her parents' relationship particularly affected her:

FC: Can you tell me a bit more about the relationship between your mother and father?

Maureen: Oh, it wasn't good [laughs], which is why I was really interested in, in taking part in this, this game because I know I wouldn't be the only one and I know it's

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Patricia, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Charles F. Halverson, Jr., 'Remembering Your Parents: Reflections on the Retrospective Method', *Journal of Personality*, 56:2 (1988), p. 436.

affected me personally and I'm, they just... My father was a long distance lorry driver who, erm... don't think he ever probably should have been married.¹⁰⁹

Maureen made several references throughout her interview to the way in which she felt her childhood had affected her negatively and how she felt that she was not the only one to have such childhood experiences. Whilst Maureen was right in that a number of interviewees did express similar narratives of childhood and the impact of their fathers' drinking on their experience, Maureen was the only respondent to openly present such an outwardly troubled account. When contrasted with the other interviewees, several explanations for this do become clear. Maureen's narrative reveals that her father's drinking permeated every aspect of her experience of childhood, and his problematic alcohol use highlights the complex interrelationship that a number of influential factors have on the ways in which parental drinking is remembered and reconciled by interviewees, including the impact on family finances and emotional security.

Maureen's father was physically absent from the home for a considerable portion of the time and when he returned he never expressed an interest in her or her sister; her father's physical absence coupled with his emotional distance resulted in Maureen stating that, "I didn't feel like I had a father".¹¹⁰ As Gordon, Alan and Brenda highlight, continuity was vital in feelings of safety and security, however, for Maureen the frequency with which her father would turn hostile was crucial. The lack of stability, both financial and emotional, led directly to Maureen's withdrawal from education, as discussed above, in direct contrast with the continuing financial stability recalled by Alan. Additionally, her father's drinking was understood by Maureen as directly contributing to her mother's anxiety and own drinking behaviour, further disrupting the parent-child relationships within her family. Moreover, her

¹⁰⁹ Maureen, interview.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

father's behaviour also meant that Maureen was disconnected from her mother's side of the family as whenever they would visit her father would "kick-off" once more.¹¹¹ Therefore, unlike Patricia and Alex, Maureen lacked the support of other immediate and extended family members, her father's drinking affecting her relationship with both her mother and her extended family.

Almost all of the interviewees recollected disagreements between parents, and for the most part, interviewee narratives would suggest that they appear to have suffered little long-term distress or disturbance as a result. Of course, the extent to which parental discord had a lasting impact on memories differed amongst interviewees. This difference appears to be partly a result of the extent to which parental discord and dysfunctional behaviour, particularly alcoholism, influenced the functioning of the family; for example, if a father's drinking was not seen to disturb his perceived primary function as provider then it was considered a mere facet of his personality. If, however, paternal drinking consumed vital family funds, then it was seen as unacceptable behaviour. This suggests, in conjunction with the discussion on housing and environmental factors, that many of the respondents ascribed to a gendered nuclear ideal when constructing their experiences of childhood. Although undoubtedly emotionally impactful, preference was given to environmental and material factors by a number of interviewees when recounting parental behaviours. This last point is interesting as it speaks to the changing evaluations and conceptions of a 'good childhood', a discussion returned to in the conclusion of this thesis.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

V. Sibling Relationships

The relationship between respondents' parents was one of two significant intrafamilial household relationships apparent across the interviews: siblings also played a central role in many recollections of childhood, particularly when respondents articulated feelings of security and belonging (or lack thereof). Sibling relations, as Dallett Hemphill argues in her study of siblings in American history, are "a near universal and crucial axis of family relations" and are often considerably influential in experiences of childhood.¹¹² Hemphill sees siblings as a shared support that allows children (and adults) to accept and adjust to society and societal change.¹¹³ Moreover, in her study of British middle-class siblings, Leonore Davidoff concurs and states that "siblings may play a vital part in people's everyday lives as part of their emotional and social world, as well as in practical terms."¹¹⁴

Indeed, out of the 18 interviewees considered in this chapter, 14 had, and more importantly lived with, a sibling for some portion of their childhood (table 1.3). This does not include Jacqueline, who was the only child of her father's second marriage and who had five living half-sisters and one half-brother who had died during World War Two. Despite the youngest of her half-sisters being only 10 years her senior, Jacqueline referred to herself as an only child throughout her interview and as such has been considered so here, however, the relationship between Jacqueline and her half-siblings will be explored further below.¹¹⁵ The mean family size for all of the interviewees considered in this chapter is 3.2, slightly above the average family size of just below three in Scotland in 1951, the middle of the period

¹¹² C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 225.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.1.

¹¹⁵ Jacqueline, interview.

under review here.¹¹⁶ It is worth highlighting that, as with all averages, there is a significant disparity between family size amongst the sample size considered here, which can obscure individual experiences of childhood until examined closer. Within individual family units, one of the most striking features of sibling relations is the way in which they reveal the variations in the experience of childhood based on changing family resources and circumstance, highlighting the importance of familial contexts in attempting to understand experiences of childhood. The interviews suggest that, within a nuclear family structure, the role of siblings was often complex; at times siblings offered a buffer to parental discord, and at others siblings were the source of familial tension. Furthermore, relationships between siblings were not always clearly defined within the family structure, with siblings frequently forming vertical as well as horizontal bonds.

Table 2.3: Family size of nuclear family interviewees

Name	Year of Birth	Family Size	Birth Order
Irene	1931	1	-
Patricia	1937	8	8th
Sandra	1938	5	3rd
Ken*	1939	5	1st
Dorothy	1942	1	-
June	1942	2	1st
Peter*	1943	5	2nd
Jacqueline**	1945	1	-
Alex	1946	1	-
Eileen	1946	2	1st
Gordon	1946	3	2nd
James	1946	5	1st
Stuart	1947	2	2nd
Joyce	1952	2	2nd
Christina	1953	2	2nd
Brenda	1954	3	3rd
Maureen	1957	2	2nd
Alan	1958	4	4th

* Ken and Peter are brothers who were interviewed for this research together.

** Although Jacqueline had half-siblings, she was the only child of her father's second marriage.

¹¹⁶ Eleanor Gordon, 'The Family' in Lynn Abrams *et al* (eds.), *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 259.

Within emotional landscapes of childhood, siblings were often portrayed as playing a pivotal role in a recollected sense of security and belonging within the family unit. John McKenzie, author of *A Mallaig Boyhood*, was born in 1918 and was the youngest of seven children with three brothers and three sisters. Describing his relationship with his family, John states:

As a unit we were made up of three distinct groups, splinter groups in fact. The two eldest boys were always at loggerheads, either with each other or while being bullied by my three sisters, who appeared to get on fairly well together. Duncan and I made up the last group; while we rarely agree with one another, we had to present a united front when we were attacked by either or both the other groups.¹¹⁷

Having large families, spread across a number of years was not uncommon at the beginning of the century, and this, as John illustrates, often resulted in significant age gaps between the eldest and youngest child. John suggests this caused a banding together of similarly-aged children into smaller familial “splinter groups”. Whilst offering support and helping to present a united front, this division within the family could also lead to feelings of alienation and isolation. John also explained how this went on to affect his relationship and feelings of ease within the family unit as a whole: “I knew I belonged to the family but I never felt part of it.”¹¹⁸

Within the interview sample, Gordon, born three decades later, similarly recalled how the 10-year age difference between himself and his younger brother affected their relationship. Describing himself as “very close” to his sister, two and a half years older, he stated, “...my sibling is my sister. I feel more like an uncle to my brother”.¹¹⁹ Gordon’s experience also highlights the often complex relationship that existed between siblings with significant age gaps. Brenda states quite simply that being the youngest of three with two

¹¹⁷ McKenzie, *Mallaig Boyhood*, p. 23

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Gordon, interview.

older brothers left her feeling that they were of “different generations” and whilst her elder brother was very fond of her, her younger brother “dragged” her around.¹²⁰ Ken and Peter are not that dissimilar in age, four years separating them, but even this seemingly small gap had an evident impact on their experiences. The two eldest boys of five siblings, Ken and Peter were the most similar in age and they began by describing a splintering of the family unit, in a manner similar to John:

Ken: I think Elaine, Stuart and Norma were closer to mother.

Peter: Yes.

Ken: Than you or I.

Peter: Yes.¹²¹

Additionally, for Ken and Peter this divide in the family affected their relationship and feelings of closeness with their mother, who they perceived as more involved with her younger children. Additionally, Ken felt the effects of this split more keenly than his brother:

Ken:... Elaine, Stuart, Norma, they know people that I don't know, you know, because I'd been away at 15, then I went to the army, so –

Peter: It was quite a big gap.

Ken: It was quite a big gap. You're the closest to me and some of [the] things that I know that you know.¹²²

Ken's position of the eldest in the family, rather than the previous case of being the youngest, clearly set him apart from his siblings, a situation exacerbated by him leaving home at 15 for work and later being called up for his National Service rotation. The continuation of family life after Ken had left the home left him without that shared bond of memories and experience that would help foster feelings of closeness with his youngest siblings. Throughout the interview, Ken often referred to memories he shared with Peter and displayed disappointment when something was outwith Peter's frame of reference, “do you remember

¹²⁰ Brenda, interview.

¹²¹ Peter and Ken, interview.

¹²² Ibid.

the big tea chest? No you wouldnae remember the big tea chest, aye.”¹²³ Shared memories for Ken and Peter were clearly a source of comfort for them as they both got older and their parents had both since long passed away. Siblings have been found to be vital in meeting social and emotional needs in old age, indeed it has even be claimed that the mere experience of having had a sibling gives adults mental and physical benefits.¹²⁴

Despite assertions that a universal feature of siblings is that they share a family history, Ken and Peter, along with John and Gordon, once again highlight the role of emotion within the definition and boundaries of ‘family’.¹²⁵ Whilst all were biologically related to their brothers and sisters, the role and conceptualisation of siblings appears to be an emotional one. It is not just a shared lineage that results in sibling relationships but a shared emotional experience. Referring back to Jacqueline’s case, this is evidenced by the disconnect in her stating that she was an only child whilst at the same time explaining that she had five half-sisters. Jacqueline’s father was previously married and his wife had died in 1934, 11 years before Jacqueline was born, and she explains, “I’m the only child of that second marriage.”¹²⁶ Jacqueline conceives of herself as an only child, defining her family within a traditional nuclear framework. For much of her childhood, Jacqueline was the only child cared for by her parents, indeed, in the above discussion on education she explains that it was because she was an only child and her parents could afford to support her financially that she as able to stay on at school. Jacqueline does not draw the boundaries of her family wider in order to include her half-sisters because, for her, they did not share a common emotional experience of childhood: “They nearly all were in the house when I was born but I

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, p. 34.

¹²⁵ Susan McHale, Kimberley Updegraff, and Shawn Whiteman, ‘Sibling Relationships and Influences in Childhood and Adolescence’, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74:5 (2012), p. 916.

¹²⁶ Jacqueline, interview.

don't remember them apart from Margaret the youngest one and she was 10/11 years older than me, 10½ years older.”¹²⁷

Additionally, Gordon's sense of being more like an uncle to his younger brother also indicates that this shared upbringing must not only take place within the same timeframe of family circumstance but also at a similar level of familial responsibility. In this way, shared experiences of childhood were key to a close sibling bond. Beyond providing emotional succour, siblings were often called upon to fulfil a more explicit caregiving role. This, as aforementioned, was a widespread phenomenon, particularly amongst working-class families and evident in popular discourses. Story papers in the 1920s often carried articles on the matter, such as 'The Hard Case of the Elder Sister' that appeared in a working-class girls' magazine in 1922.¹²⁸ Whilst paper editors were sympathetic and recognised the hardship and sacrifice that this substitute mother role entailed, especially in regards to the impact on education and leisure, articles were resigned to the fact this was the lot of the eldest daughter.¹²⁹ Evidence from respondents suggests that this expectation was slow to fade.

Additionally, accounts of sibling relationships were much more common amongst female respondents and they returned to these recollections unprompted more often. A sense of responsibility and familial duty towards younger siblings was also more evident amongst female respondents, irrespective of birth order. After her younger brother (born in 1948, two years after Eileen) contracted meningitis, which left him with both a learning difficulty and epilepsy, Eileen found herself in a caretaking role. Her brother's illness gave her a "huge sense of responsibility" and she took it upon herself to look after her brother at school, becoming his personal champion. This led to her getting into trouble at school for coming to

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood*, p. 122

¹²⁹ Ibid.

her brother's defence, but Eileen stated that, because her parents' time was consumed by Bobby's illness a lot was expected of her, to do well at school and be a nice person.¹³⁰ This responsibility was a strain which both impacted her emotional wellbeing as well as her immediate relationship with her brother; Eileen's emotional development and parental support in her studies came second to her brother's more immediate physical needs. In her memoir, Meg similarly describes how her elder brother, Mickey (b. 1937) contracted tuberculosis and spent much of his life in hospital. For Meg, this meant that she did not even meet her brother until she was a toddler; his illness also meant that every available penny, and much of her parent's attention, went to his medical care and attention.¹³¹ Meg, the youngest of three, states that both her and her elder brother, Laurie, had needs that were overlooked, and they often went without because of the economic cost and time consuming nature of Mickey's illness.¹³² Meg's experience once again highlights the all-important nature of a shared experience in fostering a close sibling relationship, alongside raising the difficult issue of sibling competition for parental resources, especially parental affection.

Finally, Brenda's experience differs from the gendered pattern recounted until this point, as it was her two older brothers who helped to raise her, although neither were recollected as doing so through direct care giving. As the youngest child with two elder brothers, one by five years and the other 10, Brenda remembers her eldest brother being very fond of her, "I can remember my other brother coming in and singing to me ... But, I was the baby you see, so my oldest brother was quite fond of me."¹³³ Brenda goes on to explain that the younger of her brothers used to take her with him when he went out, "I remember being dragged by him and his friends around. Not that it was bad, but I didn't share the experience,

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Henderson, *Finding Peggy*, p. 65, p. 36.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Brenda, interview.

it was just an outing, he used to raise me.”¹³⁴ Despite her assertions that being dragged around by her brother was not a bad experience, Brenda’s recollections suggest she clearly perceived a reluctance from her brother to having to take his young sister around with him. Although, she does not expand on his role in her experience of childhood much beyond these recollections, her assertion that he “used to raise me” suggests that his influence was still both meaningful and formative for Brenda. Indeed, the relationships between siblings are not only perceived as physically caregiving but emotionally too, contributing to an emotional and social sense of self.¹³⁵

Sibling rivalry is considered a near universal phenomenon, and yet there is little evidence of explicit concern from prescriptive experts or parents until the twentieth century.¹³⁶ Stearns argues that this is due, at least in part, to an increasing recognition of the emotional state of childhood, as well as smaller family sizes.¹³⁷ For the respondents considered here, sibling rivalry manifested through a concern over parental affection alongside feelings of security and belonging. The middle of five children with two older brothers and both a younger sister and brother, Sandra openly recalls feeling distinctly jealous of her younger sister (b. 1947). Nine years younger, Sandra recalls that when her sister was born her mother stopped tucking her in at night and her father began to bring her sister along on outings that used to be exclusive to the two of them.¹³⁸ Sandra, who cannot recall being jealous of her immediately older brother (b. 1936) or younger brother (b. 1955), clearly felt that her sister was a rival for her father’s affections, linking back to her experience with

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Rosalind Edwards *et al*, *Sibling Identity and Relationships: Sisters and Brothers* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), p. 118; McHale, Updegraff, Whiteman, ‘Sibling Relationships’, p. 915.

¹³⁶ Peter Stearns, ‘The Rise of Sibling Jealousy in the Twentieth Century’, *Symbolic Interaction* 13:1 (1990), pp. 83-101.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 92, p. 97; Hemphill, *Siblings*, p.10.

¹³⁸ Sandra, interview.

education, “of course she did all the right things, went to university and things like that.”¹³⁹ Her sister’s arrival also resulted in a physical demonstration of her mother’s continually divided time, the loss of her contact in the evening keenly felt. In this instance, Sandra’s sister was seen as not only shifting her parents’ focus, taking a share of their parental affection, but also alludes to Sandra’s feelings of insecurity regarding her father’s affections.

Interestingly, feelings of jealousy and resentment were also recounted from the vantage point of the younger child, the traditional source of rivalry. Joyce felt that her older brother (b. 1948) resented her for coming along and taking attention from their mother and father. Joyce believed this had a negative influence on her relationship with her brother,

My brother and I weren’t close. He was four years older and I don’t know if his nose was out of joint when I came along or something, he was maybe quite spoilt and indulged by my mother and her mother. So, we weren’t close.¹⁴⁰

It is not known if her brother did actually feel resentment towards Joyce, but her perception nonetheless shaped her experience of childhood. Joyce did not feel close to her brother, feeling quite solitary as a result. She described playing alone more often than not, and finding difficulty in expressing her opinion within the family.¹⁴¹ Joyce thus lacked the support and sense of belonging that a close sibling relationship may have lent her in facing her parents; her described difficulty in expressing her opinion demonstrates the way in which she felt separate and somewhat alienated from the other members of her family.

As stated at the beginning of the discussion on sibling relationships, one of the crucial aspects to highlight is the variation in sibling relationships within the same family, resulting in distinct experiences of childhood. When asked if she came from a close family, in the midst of her response and reflection on any possible tensions in the home, Brenda reflected:

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Joyce, interview with author, 04.09.2014.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

I think my middle brother probably had a harder time. I can remember him having more arguments with my father in his teens, which I found distressing too. I think different children in a family have different upbringings very often. Then consequently different memories.¹⁴²

Brenda also later stated that, “No, basically a happy...I think for me, a happy childhood. Interestingly, I think my brother may have had different experiences from me, but not very negative I don't think.”¹⁴³ Although these diverse memories are difficult to explore to a significant extent within the confines of this thesis, an opportunity was presented through the conduction of an interview with two brothers.

Ken and Peter were interviewed together; one of their sisters was also present but did not want to take part in the research. Throughout the interview, Ken and Peter's memories were referenced and framed within a mutual understanding, occasionally their account would stray into their sense of each other's recollections and both would often look to the other to confirm or deny a memory:

Peter: I cannae remember your first memories but I always think you remember your little red steel Mickey Mouse bike in [redacted] Road, and you pushing us down the road.

Ken: Yes.¹⁴⁴

As such, the brothers' account was often presented as a single narrative, a negotiated memory. Throughout the life course, it is clear siblings are an important source of emotional and physical support. Interviewed together, Ken and Peter are a clear example of the way in which a close sibling bond could carry on into adulthood and the ways in which siblings not only impacted on experiences of childhood during youth, but also the ways in which these experiences are recollected and engaged with.

¹⁴² Brenda, interview.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Peter and Ken, interview.

As explored, a particularly influential aspect of the sibling bond is a shared experience, a shared horizontal bond in reaction to the vertical bond of parent and child. In the case of elder siblings this distinction is somewhat blurred and roles and responsibilities can be entwined. Sibling relationships, much like childhood experience, take place both within a physical and emotional landscape, resulting in further familial complexity. Moreover, the casting of a sibling in a caretaking role, or indeed taking a caretaking role upon oneself again creates difficulties within the definition of nuclear family. The aforementioned ideal of 2.4 children is still very prevalent in discourse and the roles within this idyll are still strictly defined; parents are perceived as the caretakers in this model and the influential role of siblings in this regard is somewhat ignored. Again, when considering the beneficial (or otherwise) effects of being raised in a nuclear family we have to broaden our conception of the parenting role: siblings as well as the community clearly play a part.

VI. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the experiences of childhood within a nuclear family structure, secondary to this was an analysis of what we actually mean when we refer to a 'nuclear family'. Whilst discussions of housing and education revealed the effect of the environmental contexts on experiences of childhood, the ways in which they affected each respondent differently revealed the importance of the emotional landscapes of childhood. What became apparent through consideration of housing and education, in addition to discussion of parental discord and sibling relations, is the difficulty of ascertaining a clear definition of nuclear family life amongst experiences, leading to a questioning of the form of this dominant model and thus its impact on experiences of childhood. Although interviewees' constructions of childhood reflected a nuclear ideal, their lived accounts

questioned the boundaries of the nuclear family as well as the beneficial nature of the ‘traditional’ model.

In taking the proposed holistic approach to understanding childhood, the popular understanding of the nuclear family form as two parents and their dependent children, with a clear and defined vertical bond between the two individual units was challenged. Narratives of childhood experience began to broaden this definition, not only in consideration of the expected patterns of behaviour but also in the components of the unit itself. When talking of a nuclear family and the supposed inherent benefits therein, emphasis was placed on the family structure. However, the presence of two parents did not necessitate an emotional and physical availability, as seen in the above; indeed, for some, the presence of both parents was cast negatively, due to parental dysfunction and discord. In addition, recollections of safety and security within broader communities began to widen the definition of family to include neighbours, friends and acquaintances. Emotional bonds with extended family members, notably grandparents, and the existence of vertical bonds between siblings drew attention to the inner workings of the family and the responsibility and accountability of individual members.

In addition, in challenging the dominant discourse of the nuclear family, this chapter has also added to the history of childhood. The inclusive approach taken has revealed the importance of mapping the emotional onto the physical landscapes and environmental constants in understanding the ways in which interviewees and memoirists constructed their childhoods. Recollections of affection and family stability were key in how environmental circumstances and educational opportunities were both understood and experienced. Related to the definition of the nuclear family, respondents’ narratives also revealed that their own

expectations and definitions of family life and familial roles was important to their interpretation of familial 'success' and happiness. However, the retrospective nature of the testimony must always be considered here, alongside generational understandings of both childhood and parenting.

Going forward and considering the effects of varying family forms and parental marital states in the rest of this thesis, what the above has highlighted is that childhood within a 'nuclear family', often held as a touchstone for comparison, is a complex experience. Ascribing childhood experience and outcomes to a family form remains elusive. However, an understanding of the experiences of childhood and the impact that the family may have on this becomes clearer.

Chapter Three: The ‘Broken Family’?: Families in Transition

I. Introduction

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the rationale behind this study originated with a noted increase in academic, political and popular concern over the effects of ‘family breakdown’ on experiences of childhood. However, concern about non-nuclear families has a much longer history. In her work on working-class widows, Annmarie Hughes found that there was a concern at the beginning of the twentieth century that working lone mothers were neglecting their children by being outside of the home and not prioritising domestic work. In the inter-war period there was already a concern over the number of “fatherless” children in Scotland, and this was renewed in the post-war period with a concern over an increase in the illegitimacy rate.¹ Furthermore, divorce has also long been a specific target of commentators. Hughes additionally identified both public and official concern over the perceived rising divorce rates in the inter-war period in Scotland.² As Natasha Burchardt stated, the main difference between family breakdown in the nineteenth and twentieth century was the “receding shadow of death and the opening door of voluntary dissolution.”³ It is perhaps this idea of “voluntary dissolution” that is the cause of this increased concern. Indeed, following divorce reform in 1937 in England and Wales and 1938 in Scotland, the Archbishop of

¹ Annmarie Hughes and Jeff Meek, ‘State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: the hidden costs of World War I in Scotland’, *Journal of Family History*, 39:4 (2014), pp. 364-365; Glasgow Caledonian University Archive [GB 1847 OPFS] Anne Ashley, *Illegitimate Children and their Parents in Scotland* (Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child: 1955), p. 8.

² Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 161, pp. 174-175.

³ Natasha Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships in Stepfamilies in Early Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Continuity and Change*, 4:2 (1989), p. 294.

Canterbury published a pamphlet in 1949 entitled ‘The Breakdown of the Family’ where he condemned “easy divorce” for changing “the attitude of people to marriage”.⁴

During the 1960s, family breakdown was still considered a contributing factor to child neglect. In 1963 the Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care produced a report for the Scottish Education Department on the ‘Prevention of Neglect of Children’, which stated under the ‘causes of neglect’ that, “Quite apart from the special problems of the unmarried mother, the permanent or prolonged absence of either parent clearly has major effects on any family”.⁵ The report considered both the emotional impact of parental conflict and separation as well as the importance of continuity and stability for the wellbeing of children; the committee further suggested that neglect was almost always a symptom of family difficulties.⁶ In the late 1960s, the end of the period considered here, lone parenthood was still being singled out as a potential cause of child neglect. Social welfare agencies such as the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC) were including family breakdown – whether by death, desertion, or separation – in their definition of childhood neglect, alongside other factors including poverty, bad home conditions and marital difficulties.⁷ Notably, no explicit link was made between family breakdown and financial stress on families, which could result in poverty and bad home conditions, the implications of which will be explored further below and in the following chapter on lone parent families.

⁴ As cited in Pat Thane, *Happy Families? History and Family Policy: a report prepared for the British Academy* (London: The British Academy, 2010), p. 63.

⁵ Scottish Education Department, ‘Prevention of Neglect of Children: Report of the Committee of the Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care’ (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁷ RSSPCC ‘Annual Report’ for 1969, p. 9, as cited in Anna Christina Mary Robinson, ““Children in Good Order”: a study of constructions of child protection in the work of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in the West of Scotland, 1960-1989” (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2002), p. 132.

Within the context of this thesis, the concern over family ‘breakdown’ and the implicit contrast made between the experience of childhood within ‘traditional’ family and the ‘non-traditional’ is particularly interesting. Scotland has a rich history of family diversity, with irregular marriage and cohabitation, as well as illegitimacy. Additionally, the implications of widowhood and the high mortality rates present during the early and mid-twentieth century are notably absent from much of the contemporary and modern discourse.⁸ This leads back to the idea of ‘voluntary dissolution’ and the moralistic overtones of terms such as ‘breakdown’, ‘broken family’, and ‘family failure’. The implications of such terminology are clear: the ‘broken’ family was no longer whole or intact and is in some way now in deficit and the children of such families were implicitly cast as the victims of such circumstance.

Additionally, within sociological research, a seeming distinction has been made between the outcomes of children of ‘voluntary’ dissolution and those who have lost a parent through death.⁹ Despite more recent sociological research attempting to take into account the effects of divorce versus the effects of the preceding process (particularly family conflict and family violence), children of divorce are still found to fare worse in terms of both emotional and educational outcomes, although these effects have been found to be small or modest for most children.¹⁰ In these instances, the severity of the effects of parental divorce has been

⁸ Of course, this could be due to the changing demography of widowhood; with an increasing life expectancy, young widowhood was becoming less common by the mid-twentieth century and this also led to a reduction in the number of widows or widowers with dependent children, see: Ida Blom, ‘The History of Widowhood: a bibliographic overview’, *Journal of Family History*, 16 (1991), p. 193.

⁹ Brian Rodgers and Jan Pryor, *Divorce and Separation: outcomes for children* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1998), p. 5.

¹⁰ Juho Härkönen, ‘Divorce: Trends, Patterns, Causes, and Consequences’, in Judith Treas, Jacqueline Scott and Martin Richards (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to The Sociology of Families* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.: Chichester, 2017), p. 313.

found to depend on the immediate economic consequences and the instability surrounding the family's transition.¹¹

These points raise a number of immediate questions: firstly, as the family has a strong history of diversity, what are the implications of such family forms and parental marital states on experiences of childhood within a historical context? Secondly, can a distinction be made between the experiences of childhood within these different family forms? In beginning to answer these questions, the following chapter will focus on the transitional phase, the 'breaking', of the family and the childhood experience therein. This period of transition is an important consideration when seeking to understand the experiences of childhood within differing family forms as many families experience more than one form. Indeed, to be 'broken' the family must have at one time been considered 'intact'. This chapter will focus on this transitional period; subsequent family forms, most notably– the lone parent and stepfamily, will be covered in distinct chapters of their own.

Additionally, the assumption that the 'broken' family, or 'broken home', is one that is no longer intact, not only adds an element of judgement to the functioning value of the family unit, but also obscures its complexity. A 'broken' family could be a divorced family, a separated family, or a widowed family, headed by a male or female parent. When talking of the effect of the 'broken family' there needs to be clarity in what is being discussed. For the purposes of this study, a 'broken family' is being defined as above, that is a family that has lost a parent whether by death, separation, or divorce. Four individuals interviewed for this research experienced a 'broken' family and will be covered in this chapter. Of these four interviewees, William was the only respondent interviewed to have lost his mother who died

¹¹ Ibid.

after a long illness when William was 13. David and Helen both lost their fathers, David when he was four and Helen when she was 13. Although David did not recall his father or much about his family life before his father's death, he is included within this chapter as he was admitted, along with his two brothers, to Quarrier's Home when he was four years old. David's transition from a widowed family to an orphanage is representative of the experience of many children of 'broken homes' during this period. Lynn Abrams notes that the majority of children in charitable orphanages were not actually orphans; a large percentage were the children of widows and widowers, the children of the respectable poor, and children who were the victims of family circumstance.¹² Agnes is the only respondent to have experienced the divorce of her parents who separated when she was 11, shortly after the death of her older sister. Whilst we know that parental divorce and separation did occur throughout twentieth century Scotland, it is interesting that only one respondent came forward with such an experience. This perhaps speaks to the self-selection of interviewees and notions of normality and represented experiences that were discussed in the methodology section of the introduction, as well as a reflection of the on-going stigmatisation of parental separation and divorce.

Table 3.1: Interviewees from 'broken' families

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Birth*	Parental Marital Status	Age at Family Dissolution
William	1940	Edinburgh	Widower	13
Agnes	1944	Dundee (town)	Divorced	11
David	1945	Glasgow	Widow	4
Helen	1959	Lanarkshire (town)	Widow	13

* In order to allow for the full anonymity of interviewees their place of birth has been restricted to a county or city and where applicable an explanation of the geographical setting.

¹² Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 83.

As before, the oral histories are supplemented with material from several published memoirs, notably *Shoes were for Sunday* by Molly Weir, *Night Song of the Last Tram* by Robert Douglas, *Pies were for Thursdays* by Dick Lynas, and *I Belong to Glasgow* by Ron Culley.¹³ Molly's father died during World War One when she was only four years old and she was then raised by her mother and grandmother. Although Robert's family did not experience a 'breakdown', in that his parents remained married until his mother's death when Robert was 16, he is included here as his narrative of an absentee father highlights the difficulties in ascribing family forms to experiences of childhood. Dick's mother died of tuberculosis in 1948 when he was five and a half, his father later went on to marry Dick's aunt in 1950, as such Dick's memoir will also feature in the last chapter on stepfamilies. Ron, who was born in 1950, lost his father when he was nine years old in 1959.

Table 3.2: Memoir authors from 'broken' families

Name	Memoir	Year of Birth	Place of Birth	Parental Marital Status	Age at Family Dissolution
Molly Weir	<i>Shoes were for Sunday</i>	1910	Glasgow	Widow	4
Robert Douglas	<i>Night Song of the Last Tram</i>	1939	Glasgow	Married*	N/A
Dick Lynas	<i>Pies were for Thursdays</i>	1942	Glasgow	Widower	5
Ron Culley	<i>I Belong to Glasgow</i>	1950	Glasgow	Widow	9

*Robert Douglas is included here despite the fact his parents remained married until his mother's death when he was 16 as his father deserted for much of his childhood.

Finally, archival evidence from the RSSPCC will supplement the first-hand testimonies above. The notes of the RSSPCC inspectors allow for an insight into official attitudes towards family life and the 'broken family', and provide some evidence of families' experiences as well as the impact of the agency's interventions and considerations. The RSSPCC case files considered here are from the west of Scotland branch of the society. A

¹³Molly Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday* (London: Penguin, 2012); Robert Douglas, *Night Song of the Last Tram* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005); Ron Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow* (Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2011); Dick Lynas, *Pies Were for Thursdays* (Authorhouse: Milton Keynes, 2010).

search of the RSSPCC database returned 210 care records marked as “marital problems – divorced”. Of these 117 were opened in the period under consideration and of those 88 were anonymised and available for consultation. On further examination, of those 88 cases, 14 were discounted as the case records made no mention of a parental divorce or separation, or the divorce took place after the 1970s. This left a remaining 74 case records from 1948 until 1969.

Table 3.3: RSSPCC case files marked as “marital problems – divorced”

Number of Cases	1940s	1950s	1960s
Returned in search	4	18	95
Anonymised and available for consultation	1	12	75
Featuring a divorce or separation	1	12	61

The above sources have been used to analyse the ‘breakdown’ of the family within a historical context. This chapter considers the transition to divorced, separated, and widowed families within a social context, examining the lived experience of separation and family dissolution within narratives of childhood, interrogating the role of welfare agencies, and questioning the extent to which family dissolution was in fact ‘voluntary’. In doing so, this chapter will also seek to explain the historical precedent for the distinction made between these various family forms, whilst also considering the continuities and changes in both policies and attitudes towards, and the lived experience of, the family in transition.

II. Divorce

The family form that arguably attracts the most negative attention in current discourse is the divorced and consequent lone parent family. However, in addition to a strong cultural history of irregular marriage and cohabitation, Scotland also has a long history of divorce, it

having been available in Scotland since the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Nonetheless, it is important not to overstate the accessibility of divorce in Scotland for much of the population; although a considerably cheaper process than in England and Wales, divorce in Scotland was, and remains, a long and expensive process putting official methods of separation out of reach for many.¹⁵ Social constraints further complicated processes of divorce and separation, pressures which arguably increased throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁶ Whilst Leah Leneman argues that the Enlightenment in Scotland had helped to shift attitudes towards divorce and separation,¹⁷ more recent research on divorce and separation in nineteenth century Scotland has highlighted that the presence of a relatively liberal divorce law in Scotland was offset by economic, social, and cultural factors which each impacted the access to official forms of separation and the lived reality of divorce law and legislation.¹⁸

Moving into the twentieth century, Hughes found that social attitudes towards divorced and separated women in inter-war Scotland was condemnatory, reflecting and reinforcing a renewed idealisation of marriage in a post-conflict society.¹⁹ Reflections from several interviewees suggest little change in attitudes towards divorce and separation in the post Second World War period, with a continuation of the prevailing myth of a ‘golden age’ of marriage evident in interviewee narratives. Interviewed in 2014 and born in 1938 Sandra

¹⁴ Eric Clive, *The Law of Husband and Wife in Scotland*, 4th edition (Edinburgh: Scottish Universities Law Institute, LTD, 1997), p. 367.

¹⁵ Leah Leneman, *Alienated Affections: the Scottish experience of divorce and separation, 1684-1830* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 15.

¹⁶ Lawrence Stone argues that attitudes towards divorce and legal separation, specifically towards divorced and separated women, became more severe in the nineteenth century owing to the rise of the cult of domesticity and the ideal of the companionate marriage; Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 342.

¹⁷ Leneman, *Alienated Affections*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Meagan Lee Butler, “‘Husbands without Wives, and Wives without Husbands’: divorce and separation in Scotland, c. 1830-1890.” (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014), p. 241.

¹⁹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 161.

stated that, “I mean years ago, people wouldn’t have got divorced.”²⁰ Similarly, Jacqueline, born in 1945, stated:

Families stuck together in those days. Whether they were all happy in their marriages or anything, it’s not something I was ever aware of and, I suppose, even if you weren’t you just stuck by it, didn’t you? You never got divorced or anything, that was unknown.²¹

However, divorce rates did rise over the course of the twentieth century. Avner Offer argues that this is potentially owing to the introduction of new welfare benefits, offering a safety net for women independent of the male breadwinner’s support and alleviating concerns over single parent provision.²² The divorce law also changed prior to the Second World War when the Divorce (Scotland) Act of 1938 added cruelty, incurable insanity, sodomy, and bestiality to the pre-existing grounds of adultery and desertion.²³ Moreover, Legal Aid was introduced in 1950 with the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act of 1949; however, Eric Clive notes that while there was a spike in divorces in the early 1950s, this was not as high of a peak as that immediately post-war in 1946, and on average there were more divorces in 1946-1950 than during 1950-1955 (figure 3.1).²⁴

²⁰ Sandra, interview with author, 12.09.2014.

²¹ Jacqueline, interview with author, 25.08.2014.

²² Avner Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence: self-control and well-being in the United States and Britain since 1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 336.

²³ Clive, *Law of Husband and Wife*, p. 367.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

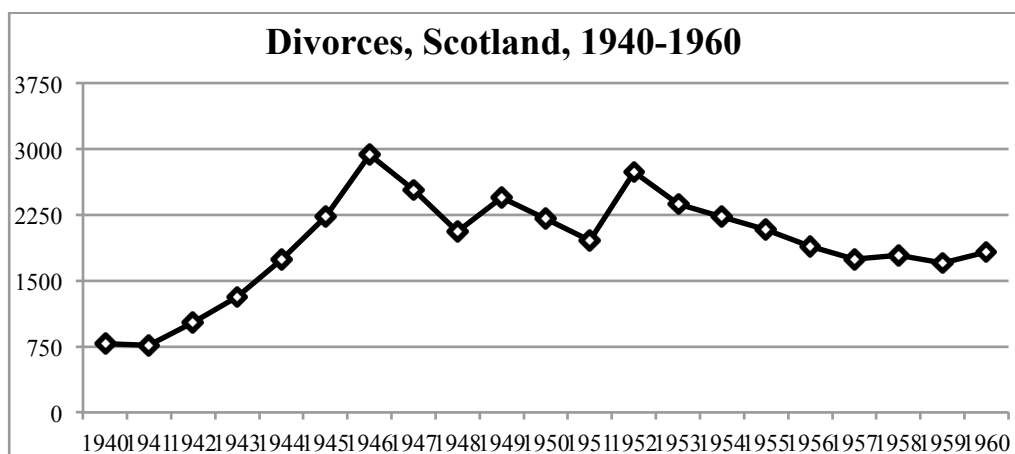


Figure 3.1: Divorces granted in Scotland, 1940-1960, National Records of Scotland, ‘Divorces Scotland, 1855-2011’.²⁵

However, Jacqueline’s comment on the happiness of the marriage is telling, the idea of ‘sticking by it’ revealing a similar attitude to parental relations revealed by respondents in the previous chapter. Despite periods of parental discord, marital violence, heavy drinking, and financial difficulties, interviewees from nuclear family forms largely accepted these instances as part of married and family life. Additionally, Jacqueline was also interviewed at the time when newspaper headlines cited Britain’s “family breakdown epidemic” and organisations such as the Marriage Foundation were being established in order “to confront the scourge of family breakdown by championing long-lasting, stable relationships within marriage.”²⁶ Jacqueline’s, and Sandra’s, comments on divorce not only reflect the myth of the ‘golden age’ of marriage but also the modern concern over the breakdown of the family and the fear of the ‘easy’ divorce.

²⁵ National Records of Scotland, ‘Divorces, Scotland, 1855-2011’, <<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/vital-events-divorces-and-dissolutions/divorces-time-series-data>>, [Accessed 19/06/2017].

²⁶ Jennifer Cockerell, ‘UK in family breakdown epidemic,’ *The Independent*, December 29, 2012. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-in-family-breakdown-epidemic-8432992.html>>, [Accessed 09/04/2012]; Marriage Foundation, ‘About’, <<http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/about/>>, [Accessed 20/06/2017].

During the inter-war period, Hughes found that alcoholism, marital violence and domestic abuse were acknowledged as commonplace within Scottish marriages and women reported feeling trapped stating, “your mother taught you, if you made your bed you lie in it. We were all told that.”²⁷ Additionally, although ‘cruelty’ had been introduced as grounds for divorce in 1938, this was taken up slowly by those pursuing divorce in the post-war period and only gained notable ground during the 1960s, ultimately becoming the leading grounds for divorce in 1970.²⁸ Official attitudes were similar in vein; Hughes notes that from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century the judiciary, agencies of social welfare, and social services would downplay marital violence and domestic abuse, prioritising keeping the family together and protecting the family against breakdown.²⁹ An examination of the RSSPCC files here reveals a similarly paternalistic role adopted by the agency in the post-war period.

The case files written by the inspectors of the RSSPCC provide an insight into the contemporary attitudes towards ‘voluntary’ dissolution of the family and parental separation. What is evident in all the cases examined here is the extreme pressure placed on families, specifically the mother, to stay together. As one of the key welfare agencies in Scotland dealing with families at this time, the RSSPCC were often the first port of call for families suffering financial and marital distress. Indeed, the majority of cases examined for this research were reported to the RSSPCC by an immediate family member, most often the

²⁷ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, pp. 135-137.

²⁸ Clive, *Law of Husband and Wife*, p. 370.

²⁹ Annmarie Hughes, ‘The “Non-Criminal” Class: wife-beating in Scotland (c. 1800-1949)’ *Crime, History and Societies*, 14:2 (2010), p. 49. This official attitude was also found by Leneman in her study of the early period where she found evidence of courts favouring reconciliation over divorce or separation; Leneman, *Alienated Affections*, p. 290.

mother.³⁰ Regardless of the nature of the complaint, the inspectors' immediate response and foremost concern was to prevent the break-up of the family.

Throughout the divorce cases considered here, mothers routinely contacted the RSSPCC in order to mediate periods of parental discord and marital conflict. In one such case from 1965 a mother contacted the RSSPCC to complain that her husband was leaving her for another woman. On investigating the complaint the inspector arrived in the middle of a "quarrel" and wrote,

Both parents were told to think of their young child who did not want to see her parents apart and certainly did not want to see them quarrelling, both of them were made to look at the child's face and noted that the child certainly did not look happy. They were begged for the child's sake to reconsider their decision to break up the union and to look after their child like loving parents in the future.³¹

In a further case from 1969 the notes state, "It is obvious that these parents had been arguing for some time now and I would say that they should be strongly urged to face up to their marital responsibilities."³² The impact of parental conflict on the child in question is not considered by the inspector; indeed the brief allusion to the emotional distress of the child in the first extract is notable for its inclusion. Despite the role of the RSSPCC in child welfare throughout much of the twentieth century, their direct interaction with children was very limited. Whilst the case files and notes written by the inspectors and woman visitors of the RSSPCC are framed entirely around the child (adults featured in all case notes are all referenced by their relationship to the child), the children themselves, as McKie and Innes

³⁰ In her more extensive study of the RSSPCC case files, Anna Robinson found that across all cases from 1960-1989 mothers were the largest source of referral, followed only by neighbours; Robinson, "Children in Good Order", p. 144.

³¹ Glasgow Caledonian University, [GB 1847 C1ST], Children 1 st (RSSPCC) Archive, Case Notes [hereafter RSSPCC case notes], case L65/45 (1965).

³² RSSPCC Case Notes, case 72/523 (1969).

state, are very much the “objects rather than the subjects of the record” and indeed the investigations.³³

Even in cases of severe domestic abuse, the RSSPCC inspectors encouraged mothers to stay with the father and warned against separation. In 1969 the RSSPCC were contacted by a Glasgow police station: a mother of three children had been arrested for breach of the peace and her children taken to their maternal aunt’s house as their father was currently in prison for attempted murder of the mother. Whilst warning the mother of her own behaviour, the inspector also wrote, “I told her that if she had made her mind up that she was not having the father back she was now responsible for the children and must act as a mother and father to them.”³⁴ In 1968 another case file noted, “mother complains, father frightening children, father stays next door.”³⁵ In this case the father had prior convictions for breach of the peace and wife assault, the parents had been separated for six weeks and the mother had moved her three children next door to the maternal grandparents’ home. On speaking to the mother, the inspector assured her that he would “make an effort to see [the] father and warn him of his responsibilities.” The case notes later stated that, on arriving to the society’s office,

Father admitted to drinking but states that he does not drink excessively and that he is keen to have his wife and children back. I formed the opinion that father was very high strung and had a tendency to violence. When I tried to question father he became rather upset and started banging on my desk and had to be restrained by P/uncle [paternal uncle]. I told father I would convey his wishes to the mother and find out if mother wished to see him with a view to reconciliation.³⁶

Although the 1963 report on the prevention of neglect had identified that, “the disruption of homes by death, divorce or protracted illness is known to cause children acute

³³ Sue Innes and Linda McKie, ““Doing What is Right”: Researching Intimacy, Work and Family Life in Glasgow 1945-1960”, *Sociological Research Online* 11:2 (2006), <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/11/2/innes.html>>, [Accessed 15/04/2016].

³⁴ RSSPCC Case Notes, case H835 (1969).

³⁵ RSSPCC Case Notes, case 73/465 (1968).

³⁶ Ibid.

emotional difficulties which, if not sympathetically treated, can lead to distress and delinquency”, there was a limited recognition of the emotional wellbeing of children in conflict-ridden homes.³⁷ Whilst the RSSPCC acknowledged that parental discord did cause emotional disruption to the home, their primary concern was the financial provision for children and their material care. The most recent official definition of neglect during this period was that laid out in the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, which stated that a parent,

shall be deemed to have neglected him [the child] in a manner likely to cause injury to his health if he has failed to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging for him, or if, having been unable otherwise to provide such food, clothing, medical aid or lodging, he has failed to take steps to procure it...³⁸

Thus, the RSSPCC’s main concern was the financial and material care of children, their involvement in cases of marital discord and domestic violence was often restricted to the solving of financial issues. In several cases the RSSPCC actively encouraged families to stay together for “the child’s sake” and their resultant financial security. This was far from unusual, additional research into the case files of the society suggest that domestic violence and abuse was never explicitly recognised by the RSSPCC until the end of the 1970s at which point the RSSPCC decided to record instances of domestic violence. Notably the referral category was titled ‘violence between parents’.³⁹ This shift in the RSSPCC’s practice coincides with a greater awareness of domestic abuse with the campaigns of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the early 1970s and the establishment and subsequent work of Women’s Aid in 1974.⁴⁰ Indeed, in her examination of RSSPCC cases from the 1970s, Anna Robinson notes that the RSSPCC often advised women to go to Women’s Aid, rather than

³⁷ Scottish Education Department, ‘Prevention of Neglect of Children’, p. 11.

³⁸ Children and Young Persons Act (Scotland) 1937,
<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw8and1Geo6/1/37>>, [Accessed 22/06/2017].

³⁹ Robinson, ‘Children in Good Order’, p. 142.

⁴⁰ Rebecca Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 25; Sarah Browne, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 152-153.

suggesting further official involvement.⁴¹ Prior to the 1970s, the focus of the Society's intervention was on pressing fathers to provide adequately for their children, and inspectors rarely, if ever, challenged violent and abusive behaviour between parents. The extent of their involvement was ensuring that the father was not withholding money from the family. This aligns with the emphasis placed on the nuclear model and breadwinner ideology by British welfare regimes discussed in more detail below and in the next chapter.

In one such case from 1966 when a mother complained “of a father drinking to excess and upsetting the children” the RSSPCC all but ignored the mother's repeated claims of domestic abuse, including “obscene and hurtful language” as well as claims of a “sore face” if she asked the father about money. The inspector on the case also failed to note any awareness of the full nature of the mother's initial complaint and her claims of the father upsetting the children. As with all case notes, on the inspector's first visit to the home he made extensive notes on the financial circumstances of the family. He established that the rent was over £16 in arrears (the rent on the home is noted as being £3 3s 5d per month) and the father's weekly wage was listed as £13 10s and the family was in receipt of 18s of Family Allowance. The children were not seen as they were at school, and the inspector made note that although the home was poorly furnished due to the mother having to pawn the furniture, “there is adequate clean bedding” and “food and fire seen.” The inspector did not note having discussed the father's drinking or behaviour with the mother and instead accompanied the mother to the father's place of work in an attempt to obtain his wage directly as the mother feared he would not give her any money that week. The next note in the file is from the following year when the mother complained of the father having received his benefit from the Labour Exchange on the Friday and not returning to the home until the Monday night stating

⁴¹ Robinson, ‘Children in Good Order’, p. 143.

that he had lost the money. On this occasion, the inspector saw the children and noted that they “appeared healthy and well-nourished and in good order.”⁴²

The case remained open for several years with repeated complaints from the mother regarding the father’s failure to provide, eventually the RSSPCC intervened and helped the mother change over the tenancy of the home to herself. Throughout the case the RSSPCC failed to confront the father over the mother’s claims of domestic abuse and, once again, stated that the inspector was to “call at the home and interview both parents together to see if there was any hope of parents agreeing to a reconciliation for the sake of the children.” The father was merely “warned of his responsibilities.”⁴³ The case notes of the RSSPCC inspectors reveal what was thought of as normal and acceptable behaviour for parents during the post-war period. A father’s drinking was only deemed problematic if it led to the financial neglect of his children; “Father obtained a loan of money for drink he denied that his children had ever been neglected, due to him drinking, he was strongly advised to moderate his drinking whilst looking after his children.”⁴⁴ Looking at RSSPCC cases from the 1960s, Robinson found that alcohol misuse was present in 70 percent of cases and whilst it was rarely the initial reason for intervention, it was often a factor in the continued contact with families.⁴⁵ Despite the recurring incidence of alcohol misuse and claims of “heavy drinking”, it was not until 1975 that the RSSPCC included a category for alcohol problems on their assessment form.⁴⁶ Prior to this, the RSSPCC’s interpretation of heavy drinking and alcoholism seems to be entirely focused on the practical or economic nature of a parent’s heavy drinking and the impact of this behaviour on the household budget and material provision for the children.

⁴² RSSPCC Case Notes, case J956 (1966).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ RSSPCC Case Notes, case L63/87 (1963).

⁴⁵ Robinson, ‘Children in Good Order’, p. 132.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 203.

Interestingly, this aligns with the narratives of parental drinking and parental discord in the previous chapter. When discussing their fathers' drinking to excess and, in some cases, his resultant violent and threatening behaviour, interviewees from nuclear families placed a similar caveat on the acceptability of this behaviour. If a father's drinking was not seen to interfere with the family's finances, as with Alan's and James's fathers, constructions of his conduct were much more forgiving. This contrasts with Patricia's construction of her father's drinking in the previous chapter and Agnes's below. However, the RSSPCC's intervention into the father's behaviour must not be overstated. Despite an overall awareness of the financial difficulties caused by a father's drinking, the duty of household management including household budgeting still fell to the mother. In a long and protracted case from 1967 where the RSSPCC, with the help of a woman visitor, helped a mother to budget and clear the family's debt, one note admonished the mother for failing to keep up with her rent payments, "Mother warned that £3 should be paid each week without fail. Father drinking heavily at the moment."⁴⁷ Despite the implication that the father's drinking is directly impacting the family's finances, the emphasis is still placed on the mother's ability to manage the household budget correctly.

In seeking to explain why more people did not get divorced in previous centuries, Phillips suggests that most couples were trapped into a family economy that was difficult to get free of.⁴⁸ Hughes also explains that some of the reluctance to prosecute wife-beaters in the inter-war period originated in both judicial and social welfare agency awareness that the

⁴⁷ RSSPCC Case Notes, case D/V/74/75 (1967). Woman visitors were often employed by the RSSPCC to help mothers in the home, often with the household budget and completing household chores.

⁴⁸ Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: a history of divorce in western society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 373.

prosecution of abusive partners would penalise women financially.⁴⁹ Despite claims that a post-war surge in divorce can be explained through increasing welfare support for lone parent families, the experience of the families investigated by the RSSPCC would suggest that financial considerations were still largely influential in decisions to separate or not, and not just in regards to the cost of the divorce process itself. Indeed, as shall be discussed in more detail in this and the next chapter, the realities of financial provision for lone parent families under the welfare state were complex.

Finally, the RSSPCC cases files not only highlight continually restricted access to divorce but also the difficulty in ascribing the degree of agency in parental separation. Women were not only discouraged from pursuing official separation from their husbands; they were often the victims of the ‘poor man’s divorce’ through a father’s temporary, periodic, or permanent desertion. Of course, this also adds a gendered dimension to parental agency and experiences of divorce and separation. In his study of divorce in England, Lawrence Stone remarked that the option to leave a marriage was much easier for a man, “The simplest was just to desert – to walk out of the house one day and never come back.”⁵⁰ Desertion was a common practice in Scotland throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; indeed, Butler states that it was the most common way to end a marriage in nineteenth century Scotland.⁵¹ Hughes and Meek also note that desertion was commonplace across Scotland in the early twentieth century, so much so that in 1921 the RSSPCC complained about the “great evil of the times ... the readiness of men to abandon their wives and children.”⁵² Moreover, in the 1950s, desertion overtook adultery as the

⁴⁹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 142. Desertion, it would appear, has always been a more popular method of separation amongst husbands, in her study Leneman notes that 75 percent of cases for desertion were brought by women; see Leneman *Alienated Affections*, p. 16.

⁵¹ Butler, “‘Husbands without Wives’”, p. 129.

⁵² Hughes and Meek, ‘State Regulation, Family Breakdown,’ p. 375.

leading ground for divorce in Scotland.⁵³ Indeed, many of the cases reported to the RSSPCC are mothers reporting a father's desertion, periodic or permanent, and a subsequent failure to provide: "... father deserted the home last Thursday and failed to provide adequately for 2 children"; "... father in desertion for 8 months"; "The father prior to that had been in desertion for a period of 6 weeks"; "mother complains of father, who is in desertion, failing to provide for 2 children ... Father has been in desertion for five years..."⁵⁴ In all of the cases examined here there is only one complaint of a mother in desertion and one other mention of a mother who had previously left the home for a period of time.⁵⁵ Desertion left families in a precarious financial position; in addition to losing the father's wage, deserted families were often discriminated against by welfare agencies, as evidenced by the RSSPCC's dealings with deserted mothers.

In the early twentieth century and the inter-war period, Poor Law officials in Scotland treated deserted wives with extreme suspicion and often refused to provide outdoor relief.⁵⁶ Post-war, the National Insurance Act did not make provision for deserted mothers and they, alongside divorced and unmarried mothers, were viewed less sympathetically than widows owing to a perceived agency in their transition to lone parenthood.⁵⁷ The fact that many deserted mothers sought out the assistance of the RSSPCC in financial matters further exemplifies their indeterminate status. One mother wrote to the Society in 1958 explaining her position:

⁵³ Clive, *Law of Husband and Wife*, p. 367.

⁵⁴ RSSPCC Case Notes, case H657 (1958); RSSPCC Case Notes, case L/H/70/39 (1964); RSSPCC Case Notes, case L66/80 (1966). RSSPCC Case Notes, case 73/43 (1957).

⁵⁵ RSSPCC Case Notes, case 74/89 (1969); case L66/80.

⁵⁶ Hughes and Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown', pp. 376-378.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Kiernan *et al.*, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 151; K. D. M. Snell and J. Millar, 'Lone-parent families and the Welfare State: past and present', *Continuity and Change* 2:3 (1987), p. 398.

Dear Sir,

This is to ask you if you could please send someone of authority down to see me tomorrow its [sic] about my husband he got paid on Thursday same as everyone else and never gave me a penny of it. On Friday night around 6 he went away with the money and left me and my two children (one 4 one 2) without a thing in the house and he was not back until after midnight on Monday the end of the Easter holiday. We were left all weekend with nothing. So on Tuesday I went to the Labour Exchange and they sent me up to the Assistance, they told me to come back on Wednesday which I did, but I did not get anything from them either. I have not a penny. The man in the Assistance told me he [the father] must claim as long as he is still in the house. I asked him to come up with me but he would not come I know for definite now that he must have got his money because he handed in the free milk tokens today (Wednesday) and that has given him away. Because he kept telling me that he did not get his money.

This is all I can say Sir in the letter because there is more and it would take too long to write it. The reason I have written is because I have no money for fares to come up. My cupboard is empty and I also have no coal. Because I had a bag of coal to pay for at the weekend there but with having no money I could not pay it. So I could not get any more.

So sir I would be much obliged if you would send someone down to see me...⁵⁸

Desertion also further complicates the contemporary and modern discourse on the impact of divorce and separation on the experience of childhood. The widespread occurrence of irregular marriage and cohabitation makes it almost impossible to accurately measure the incidence of family breakdown in Scotland and instances of desertion only add to this difficulty. Childhood experiences of parental desertion are similarly hard to access and identify due to their often being in flux. Robert Douglas, author of *Night Song of the Last Tram*, recounts his experience of living with his mother in post-war Glasgow whilst his father was in periodic desertion. Robert's father was an abusive alcoholic who left Robert's mother for another woman and joined the RAF, requesting to be stationed outwith the Glasgow area. He did, however, occasionally return to the family home. As such, considerable portions of Robert's childhood were spent 'in transition'. For Robert, the periods of his father's absence were periods of enjoyment; "Since he joined the RAF we'd hardly seen him. Now that he'd

⁵⁸ Case H657.

got himself a new fancy woman, down near Stranraer [90 miles from Glasgow], he was home even less. It was great. For me, anyway.”⁵⁹ Robert’s story is included in more detail in the next chapter which focuses on lone parent families, as his mother was a lone parent to Robert for much of his childhood, but his pleasure in his father’s absence is significant. Despite the resultant financial hardship of his father’s desertion that necessitated frequent temporary pawning of his mother’s wedding ring, his abusive presence was much more negatively impactful on Robert’s experience of childhood.⁶⁰

Women, it is noted, suffered a considerable drop in their standards of living as a result of divorce in the post-war decades, so much so that Offer argues that if a woman initiated divorce proceedings it is possible to frame the decision as a rational one, owing to her full consideration of the consequences.⁶¹ The desire to leave the marriage, in these instances, outweighed the potential negative outcomes of lone motherhood. Following the discussion above, it is perhaps possible to frame the decision as a last recourse for many women. Interviewee Agnes, who experienced the separation of her parents, explained that her mother’s decision to leave her father came at a time when she felt that she had already experienced the worst that could happen. Born in 1944, Agnes lived with her mother, father, and five siblings in a small town outside of Dundee. Agnes described her father as “quite cruel” and a “hard, hard man. Wasn’t – wasn’t good to my mother.”⁶² An abusive alcoholic, Agnes’s father was violent towards her mother, a disciplinarian and a threatening presence towards the children, and was the cause of considerable anxiety throughout her early childhood. Additionally, whilst Agnes described her father as a “very smart, clever man” who was good with business, he was also an alcoholic who “either gambled or drunk it away.”

⁵⁹ Douglas, *Night Song*, p. 253.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 249-252.

⁶¹ Offer, *Challenge of Affluence*, pp. 337-338.

⁶² Agnes, interview with author, 29.10.014.

When Agnes was 10, her elder sister passed away and Agnes described this as a “watershed” for her mother, “it was after that, you know my mum said, she suddenly realised nothing worse could happen to her so she, she asked him to leave and yeah.”⁶³

Agnes’s parents had married in 1935 and separated, ultimately divorcing, in 1955. Like many of the mothers in the RSSPCC case files, Agnes’s mother’s decision to leave her husband only after suffering a personal tragedy emphasises the difficulties in separation and divorce. The economic, social, and cultural roadblocks to divorce identified in research of earlier periods were still evident throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the contrast between Agnes’s experience of childhood before and after her parents’ separation continues to problematise the implied benefits of a childhood within an ‘intact’ versus a ‘broken’ home. Agnes’s experience of childhood within a lone parent family is covered in more detail in the subsequent chapter, however, the contrasts that she makes between the two distinct phases of her childhood are worthy of note.

As aforementioned, Agnes described her father as a “hard man” and goes on to explain that, “I was frightened of my father, very much so.”⁶⁴ Describing her father’s parenting style as “Victorian”, Agnes stated that he “oppressed us”. There is a telling shift in the language that Agnes uses to describe her childhood after her parents’ separation. Whilst living with her father, Agnes discussed the many “rules” in the house as well as the “regimes” of her childhood. When asked if the rules stayed the same when her father left, Agnes stated that, “yeah we had set meal times and yeah, routine, proper routine.”⁶⁵ Not only does Agnes indicate that her family life became more stable and less unpredictable when her father was absent, but her description of ‘routine’ as opposed to ‘regime’ indicates a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

recollection of a more relaxed atmosphere. Additionally, despite the initial financial hardships faced by Agnes's mother on her separation, the absence of Agnes's father and his abuse of the family finances meant that the family saw an increase in their social standing. Agnes's mother managed to become upwardly socially mobile, managing a local dining hall, expanding her business and eventually buying her own home. For Agnes, the point of separation for her mother was when she "well and truly got on her feet" and she worked hard to improve the family's circumstances and was able to eventually move the family to the suburbs and obtain a mortgage to buy a bungalow in 1959.⁶⁶ Her parents' separation and eventual divorce impacted both her physical and emotional landscapes of childhood positively. Her parents' separation resulted in an absence of parental conflict as well as an end to her father's domination of the family, both financially and emotionally.

Moreover, Agnes marked further parallels between the two periods of her childhood, particularly in reference to her emotional security and wellbeing. In the discussion of nuclear families, immediate neighbours and the wider community were discovered to contribute strongly to feelings of familial security and emotional wellbeing. However, for Agnes the small village of her early childhood was described as a source of anxiety, owing to her father's reputation. Shortly after Agnes's parents separated her mother moved the family to Dundee. Agnes described the move, "Dundee was good for us getting out of the small village, I liked the anonymity". Previously, her father's drunken behaviour was the source for this discomfort, "he'd come off the bus and come up the street and he'd be, you know, drunk, and I was a bit ashamed of my family." Prior to her parents' separation Agnes also recalled feeling insecure at school owing to her father's reputation as an alcoholic and the fact that everyone in the village knew he had "done time for something." The close-knit nature of the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

community was not articulated as an asset by Agnes: “I think people in [village] pitied my mother because there she was with six kids and they’re all nicely brought up and this man who behaved badly.”⁶⁷ As discussed above, the impact of a father’s drinking is often mitigated in respondents’ narratives in direct correlation to its perceived effect on the family’s circumstances. For Agnes, her father’s non-conformity to the breadwinner ideal permeated her recollections of home, school, and family stability and security.

Women’s talk, or gossip, has been identified by several historians, most notably Melanie Tebbutt and Elizabeth Roberts, as a source of informal power and community support for women as well as a source of protection against male authority, domestic violence, and as a defence against accusations of bad household management in the wake of a father’s abuse of the family income.⁶⁸ However, whilst both Roberts and Hughes have highlighted that the condemnatory nature of gossip was criticised or misinterpreted by children, and adults reflecting on their childhood, the lasting impact of women’s talk on experiences of childhood has not been examined.⁶⁹ Whether Agnes’s mother benefitted from the talk that Agnes notes is unclear, but the impact on Agnes and her narrative of childhood is evident, and will be returned to in a wider consideration of the effect of ‘gossip’ on childhood experiences in lone parent families in the next chapter.

In addition, Agnes’s testimony further exemplifies the narratives of a ‘good childhood’ from the previous chapter through the way in which constructions of a father’s

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Lynn Abrams and Linda Fleming, ‘From Scullery to Conservatory: Everyday Life in the Scottish Home’ in Lynn Abrams and Callum Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.52; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman’s Place: an oral history of working-class women 1890-1940* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), p. 194; Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: an oral history, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 207-211; Melanie Tebbutt, ‘Women’s Talk? Gossip and ‘women’s words’ in working-class communities, 1880-1939’, in Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (eds.), *Workers’ Worlds: cultures and communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 49-52.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 218-219; Hughes, *Political Identities*, pp. 161-162.

drinking are dependent on the perceived impact on a family's finances. Agnes also negotiated the lasting effect of her father's abuse through a changing discourse on childhood abuse and neglect. Discussions on childhood abuse and neglect in the preceding chapter align well with those put into practice by the RSSPCC through much of the period under review here. However, these discourses began to change in the 1970s with an increasing awareness and recognition of physical domestic abuse and the physical abuse of children.⁷⁰ Agnes's interview also draws attention to a further change; when talking of her father's domination of the family and his "mental cruelty" Agnes is careful to state that "there was no sexual abuse, nothing like that."⁷¹ Child sexual abuse was certainly on the agenda for the RSSPCC in the 1960s, however, their focus was often on the perceived 'immoral surroundings' of overcrowded tenement living, incest, and concerns over the mother's sexual activities and their potential impact on young daughters.⁷²

One inspector employed by the RSSPCC in 1960 and interviewed by Robinson as part of her research stated,

There always seemed to be attitudes of suspicion about sexual relations – usually the mothers. In those days we were not so aware of sexual abuse. Although we kept an eye out for incest in situations where mothers were in hospital or had deserted the family. Some of the mothers did top up their money with prostitution on the side. It was right to be suspicious because teenage daughters could get drawn into it at an early age.⁷³

⁷⁰ The RSSPCC's awareness of child abuse heightened in the late 1960s and 1970s with Dr Henry Kempe's identification of 'battered baby syndrome', indeed the RSSPCC invited Dr Kempe to Scotland to train staff in 1969. This, Robinson argues, heightened staff awareness of physical child abuse and staff vigilance in regards children's injuries developed in the 1970s. See: Robinson, 'Children in Good Order', p. 161. A similar change was noted in the English NSPCC, Henry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989* (Routledge: London, 1994), p. 256.

⁷¹ Agnes, interview.

⁷² Tenement living was often condemned as leading to attacks on children owing to the amount of secluded common spaces such as the back courts, closes, and stairwells. Additionally, as stated in chapter one, the overcrowding of homes was often thought to make children "more easy prey to attack" due to their immoral surroundings; see Abrams *Orphan Country*, p. 225.

⁷³ Robinson, 'Children in Good Order', pp. 137-138.

Herself a social worker with a history of working with child sex abuse prevention units, Robinson argues that child sexual abuse was not “discovered” and explicitly recognised by the RSSPCC until the 1980s; previously in the 1960s the RSSPCCs “scope” was confined to incest between (step)fathers and daughters, and only amongst ‘broken’ families as revealed above.⁷⁴ The RSSPCC, as leaders in child welfare and protection during the immediate post-war decades, still focused much of their attention on ‘neglectful’ mothers and inadequate financial provision. Agnes, however, was composing a narrative of her childhood in an interview taking place in 2014 at a time when child sexual abuse was a high profile topic in public conversation, due to events such as Operation Yewtree, a police investigation into sexual abuse allegations (particularly against children) initiated in 2012, and the highly publicised discovery of a child sex abuse ring in Rochdale in the same year.⁷⁵ As such, Agnes’ construction of her experience of childhood is one that includes an awareness of changing attitudes and discourses surrounding definitions of neglect and abuse.

Throughout the above consideration of the experiences of divorce and parental separation in post-war Scotland, there has been an emphasis placed on the nuclear family by both government and welfare agencies due to contemporary gendered economic, and, consequently, familial roles. Arguably, given the tone of recent moral panics on the family and the prominence of an economic discourse in these concerns, this is yet to change.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 40, 67.

⁷⁵ Although the official investigation titled ‘Operation Yewtree’ began in 2012 a brief search of the BBC news website reveals that it was a constant fixture in headlines throughout 2014 with reports of new arrests, such as: ‘Man Arrested in Operation Yewtree’, *BBC News*, 8.04.2014 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26941091>>, [Accessed 01.07.2017]. Indeed, official reports into sexual offences in England and Wales have suggested that the high profile nature of Operation Yewtree has led to an increased reporting of sexual offences: David Gray and Peter Watt, ‘Giving Victims a Voice: joint report into sexual allegations made against Jimmy Saville under Operation Yewtree’ (NSSPCC and Metropolitan Police, 2013), <<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/yewtree-report-giving-victims-voice-jimmy-savile.pdf>> [Accessed 01.07.2017]; Office of National Statistics, ‘Sexual Offences in England and Wales year ending June 2013’, <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160106232028/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-june-2013/info-sexual-offences.html>>, [Accessed 01.07.2017].

Nonetheless, an examination of the experience of childhood in nuclear families in the previous chapter began to destabilise this ideal of the nuclear family and problematised its continued domination of recent policy and practice. Once more, in examining experiences of childhood within divorced and separated families, this nuclear ideal is not borne out in experiences of interviewees and memoir authors, or in the case files of the RSSPCC.

Despite the reluctance of agencies to concede the benefits of ‘family breakdown’, particularly ‘voluntary dissolution’, on experiences of childhood, Agnes and Robert Douglas both expressed a notable positive outcome, despite resultant financial hardships. Of course, that is not to say that family breakdown impacts every experience of childhood in the same way, rather that the functioning of the individual family must be considered, something that the RSSPCC often failed to do. Throughout the case files considered here and the repeated occurrence of domestic abuse and financial stress, the RSSPCC placed a priority on keeping the family together despite the fact that complaints were brought to the RSSPCC by intact families. Separation, it seems, was only considered a viable option by the society when it appeared that a family was unable to fully provide for their children; indeed Agnes recalls that her mother was told that she and her siblings could be taken into care and placed in an orphanage if she was not coping.⁷⁶ Of course, for many children this was a reality and the ‘breakdown’ of family could result in being removed from the family structure entirely.

III. Institutional Childhood and Childhood Outside the Family

As introduced above, interviewee David was born in 1945 and his father, whose death “shaped the rest of” his “upbringing and childhood”, died in 1949.⁷⁷ After spending a short

⁷⁶ Agnes, interview.

⁷⁷ David, interviewed by author, 13.12.2013.

time with extended family members, David and his two brothers were admitted to The Orphan Homes Scotland, better known as Quarrier's Homes after the founder, William Quarrier.⁷⁸ David and his brothers, like many children admitted to residential care in Scotland during the nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth century, were not orphans; their mother was still alive but was suffering from severe mental health issues and was later admitted to permanent residential care herself. Prior to their admittance to Quarriers, David, his brothers, and mother had been living with a maternal aunt who had four children of her own until a maternal uncle stated that "we have to do something about the three boys" and had them admitted to Quarriers Homes.⁷⁹

Abrams, in her study of the child welfare system in Scotland, notably subtitled 'children of Scotland's broken homes', found that in the case of three separate charitable orphanages in Scotland half of those admitted had only lost one parent. Abrams notes that it is not the loss of the parent that made a child applicable for admission, but rather the absence of alternate support in the wake of this loss, such as family or community support.⁸⁰ David explains the decision made to place himself and his brothers in Quarriers as a result of his extended family's inability to support the three boys: "in 1949 my aunt had four children in quite a small house and similarly my uncle had three children in a small-ish house, they had no spare capacity to look after three, three boys."⁸¹ Although, as seen throughout, overcrowding was common during this time period, David understands his uncle's decision to admit him to Quarrier's as being what was "best" for David and his brothers, his uncle

⁷⁸ Hereafter referred to as Quarriers. For a fuller account of the history of Quarrier's Homes see Anna Magnusson, *The Quarriers Story: a history of Quarriers* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), for an insight into the experiences of childhood in Quarrier's Homes within a wider context of the Scottish child welfare system see Abrams, *Orphan Country*.

⁷⁹ David, interview.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 86- 87.

⁸¹ David, interview.

believing that this would provide “a better education, a better upbringing than they would have had otherwise.”⁸²

In an effort to provide the best help and care to Scotland’s ‘orphan’ children, Quarriers was designed to replicate the support structure of a traditional, nuclear family, and was strongly based on the vision of Dr Barnardo who opened his first cottage home for girls in Essex in the late 1870s,

There should be no longer a great house in which sixty of these motherless girls would be herded together ... but little cottages should arise, each of them presided over by its own ‘mother’ and in which all members of the family could be clad as working people’s children were under ordinary circumstances ... There family life and family love might be reproduced...⁸³

Quarrier’s plan for his own Orphan Homes followed Barnardo’s very closely. Quarrier’s site was to have multiple cottages housing between 20 and 30 children of different ages and to be headed by a married couple, a cottage ‘mother’ and ‘father’, for the boys and a single cottage mother for the girls. Each cottage was intended to function independently of the other so as to more closely resemble a self-sufficient family unit and the cottage buildings themselves were all designed to resemble grand Victorian villas, each slightly different from the other to further duplicate an individual household structure (figure 3.2).⁸⁴ Labelled a “children’s city” by one article in the late nineteenth century and described as resembling an elegant city suburb, at the time of David’s admission in 1949, Quarriers was an established village with over 40 cottages, alongside homes for babies, toddlers, invalid boys and girls, its own church, schools, fire station, workshops, and farm, as well as individual Scout and Girl Guide troops.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Dr Barnardo as cited in Magnusson, *Quarriers Story*, p. 39.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 39, p. 45.

⁸⁵ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 94, p. 106, Magnusson, *Quarriers Story*, pp. 51-52; Tom Shaw, ‘Time to Be Heard: a pilot forum. An Independent Report by Tom Shaw Commissioned by the Scottish Government’ (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, 2011), p. 15.



Figure 3.2: Sketch of the proposed children's cottages at The Orphan Homes Scotland, Bridge of Weir site.⁸⁶



Figure 3.3: View of Hope Avenue, Quarrier's Homes, Bridge of Weir, c. 1930.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Reproduced in Magnusson, *Quarriers Story*, p. 95.

⁸⁷ Official photos of Quarriers Village linked via < <https://quarriers.org.uk/about-us/history/> > available at <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/quarriers/sets/72157624803381104/with/5891240738/>>, [Accessed 01.07.2017].

An understanding of the pseudo-family structure of Quarriers home is essential, not only in contextualising David's narrative of an experience of childhood within a 'broken family' but in that it also demonstrates the continued emphasis placed on the nuclear family structure as that which was perceived as most beneficial to children. William Quarrier's aversion to the traditional institutional setting of many orphanages was based on his belief that, in this 'family' setting with congenial surroundings and a strong Christian ethos, any child would be given a chance for a better future.⁸⁸ This belief was not unique to Quarriers, or indeed orphanages; family ideology also heavily influenced structures in reformatory schools and other child-saving institutions throughout Scotland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸⁹ Arguably, Quarriers, and other homes of its type during this period, largely failed in their aim to replicate parental care for its residents. Prior to the Children's Act of 1948, staff in children's homes were not required to undergo training and, as one former orphanage resident stated, "the only qualification necessary to become a mother in this institution was that she had to be a good Christian".⁹⁰ As investigations into Quarriers past and accusations of abuse and neglect within the home have further uncovered, "the very stability that came from being in one cottage for several years could become associated with being in harm's way for long periods of time."⁹¹ Writing in 1994, Mahood and Littlewood noted that the on-going disclosure of assault and abuse in children's homes revealed "a very old problem."⁹² Quarriers itself has been the subject of a number of inquiries, both national and internal, following numerous convictions of former cottage parents for child abuse. The institution,

⁸⁸ Magnusson, *Quarriers Story*, p. 39.

⁸⁹ Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, 'The "Vicious" Girl and the "Street-Corner" Boy: Sexuality and the Gendered Delinquent in the Scottish Child-Saving Movement, 1850-1940', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4:4 (1994), pp. 558-559.

⁹⁰ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 112.

⁹¹ Tom Shaw, 'Time to Be Heard', p. 14.

⁹² Mahood and Littlewood, "'Vicious" Girl', p. 577.

and the Quarriers charity as it now exists, is also a ‘core participant’ in the on-going Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.⁹³

David describes his own experience of the Quarriers structure as follows:

... a series of called ‘cottages’ in which erm, the boys and girls and very occasionally mixed children would go, say in my day it was about 20 odd, in the care of what we call ‘cottage parents’, er, a couple with erm, different characters and each cottage had a, a – depended totally on the character of the person in charge. So, if you asked, a Quarrier’s, the question “what cottage are you in?” was a very loaded question because it meant what kind of people are in charge, what sort of ethos and I, I was in four different cottages in my time, depending on my age. When I first came I was, er – quite shock, quite a shock to find myself to – cottage 23, when I was about, just short of four years old and then I moved to cottage 20-8, a different set of parents ah, when I was about 12/13 I moved to cottage 39 and, at the very end when I was nearly 18 cottage 44 for about a year. And each of them had a different feel, different character, different experience.⁹⁴

Importantly, David’s interview took place in 2013 against a backdrop of increasing public awareness of widespread child abuse across a variety of child welfare institutions. David himself was involved in the Scottish Government’s ‘Time to Be Heard’ (TTBH), a pilot forum intended to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of a confidential forum for former children of Scotland’s residential homes to recount their experiences in care. Quarriers was used as their initial case study and a report was produced on the home and on the pilot forum in 2011.⁹⁵ Whilst making clear that the report was not intended as a report on Quarrier’s Homes itself and that the 98 stories recounted to investigators were more likely to be from those “who had bad experiences than would be indicative of the range of experiences across all former residents of that institution”, there were several clear themes identified by

⁹³ As of June 2017 seven former house parents, four ‘fathers’ and three ‘mothers’, have been convicted for historic child abuse offences, both physical and sexual. As reported by Quarriers current chief executive, Alice Harper, during her testimony to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. Reported by the *The Herald* 28.06.2017 <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/15375525.Children_had_to_bow_and_salute_to_care_home_staff__child_abuse_inquiry_hears/>, [Accessed 01.07.2017]. A full transcript of Harper’s evidence is available at <<https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/media/1306/scottish-inquiry-day-13.pdf>>, [Accessed 01.07.2017], discussion of former cottage parents convictions on pp. 102-105.

⁹⁴ David, interview.

⁹⁵ Tom Shaw, ‘Time to Be Heard’, p. 5.

the report. The main one being “the lack of affection shown to children, the lack of affirmation, respect and positive communication with them.”⁹⁶ Before moving on to David’s narrative, it is worthy of note that a number of interviewees for this research identified a similar ‘lack of affection’ in their accounts of childhood. Agnes, previously discussed in relation to parental divorce, was asked if her family was affectionate. Stating that they were not Agnes went on to say that, “people tended not to be, generally, as a general rule.”⁹⁷ In the previous chapter, a number of interviewees also recounted a lack of physical demonstration of affection, some stating that this was a particularly Scottish, or a particularly working-class, trait.

From the age of four to 18, David lived in Quarriers residing in a number of different cottages, as described above. Despite his physical removal from his biological family, David constructed his narrative of childhood around his continued contact with his extended family and composed a life-story of belonging and of a “strong family” throughout his interview. David described his uncle, who placed the boys in the home, as “father’s substitute” and his aunt “was like a mother”. David stated that he “was always aware of, as I say, my strong family, it was the rock, the kind of certainty, normality if you like, out there that I would visit. Where I was loved and cared for. Not on my own.”⁹⁸ Despite attempts to recall a strong familial connection, there was also an expression of distance evident in his narrative. Whilst using his extended family as a touchstone to explain that he was not “shall we say, abandoned?”, David also states that his uncle could have had no idea of the impact of Quarriers on David’s and his brother’s lives as he “didn’t understand the reality of being on the ground, how could he? Because he wasn’t there on the ground.” David also stated that

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 6, pp. 13-14.

⁹⁷ Agnes, interview.

⁹⁸ David, interview.

“you tended to feel you have to look after yourself.”⁹⁹ Discussed below, the geographical distance David had from his family also manifested emotionally; his success in school acting as a substitute for parental encouragement and affection. Despite maintaining his “strong family” connection, David’s construction of family and belonging was impacted by his lack of shared experience. This is also evident in the way in which David expressed his relationship with his brothers. In much the same way that interviewees in the chapter on nuclear families relied on shared memories to create a common bond, David’s relationship with his brothers was impacted by their physical separation. David and his brothers were never housed in the same cottage and although David recalled Quarriers strengthened his relationship with his middle brother, as he attempted to “look after me in a difficult environment”, his relationship with his eldest brother “became more remote.”¹⁰⁰

David’s narrative was not unusual in this regard, especially when considering the context for his interview in 2013. In constructing an experience of childhood, David was clear to contrast his experiences with the public narrative and discourses of institutional childhoods at this time, a practice of many oral history respondents. Moreover, research and inquiries into the impact of institutional care on composing a life-story has suggested that being removed from a family structure has a “major impact” on “an individual’s sense of self and identity.”¹⁰¹ It is perhaps unsurprising then that David makes repeated reference to his surviving family throughout his narrative. Indeed, David also demonstrates an awareness of the uncommon nature of his family bond and explicitly references his own experience in contrast to other residents of Quarriers, “there were some young lads there who – whose background was really difficult. Mine was not difficult; I came from a reasonable family, by

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ John Murphy, ‘Memory, Identity and Public Narrative: Composing a life-story after leaving institutional care, Victoria, 1945-83’, *Cultural and Social History*, 7:3 (2010), p. 301.

misfortune I was there”. The connection David shared with his uncle, who would visit every Friends’ Day “like clockwork”,¹⁰² was particularly valued especially when contrasted with other children’s experiences, “it was common, if a different man turned up from a different month for example, so called events of a ‘broken home’ with different relationships going on and a child had to cope with this.”¹⁰³ David’s narrative reflects the ‘broken home’ discourse above, he contrasts his own “reasonable family” with that of the “broken home” and the subsequent different relationships of the lone mother; in ascribing respectability to his own circumstances he implies that others were not so.

Although David constructed a narrative in open contrast to the public narrative of institutional childhoods, he did still reveal his own experience of abuse during his time at Quarriers. David, like many of the respondents to TTBH, recalled a general lack of affection and emotional support from the numerous cottage mothers he lived with as well as the psychological abuse he received from one particular ‘mother’: “But in, in the cottage I was in erm, the mother in charge was a bit of a – she was an older lady, she’d nerves that were a bit shot and she kept control by using her tongue, which was rather sharp and vindictive at times.”¹⁰⁴ David lived in that cottage for around five years during which time the cottage parent would openly mock David’s mentally-ill mother as well as interrogate him on his return to the cottage each evening. A depersonalising regime was not uncommon in large institutions and is arguably what Quarrier aimed to avoid with his cottage ‘family structure’. However, the abuse that David suffered is similar to that reported by a number of TTBH

¹⁰² ‘Friends Day’ was a day once a month, a Sunday, when visitors could call at Quarriers to see residents – evidence from TTBH suggests that this extended in later years, however, Robert only ever recalls being visited by his uncle one day a month; see Tom Shaw, ‘Time to Be Heard’, p. 16.

¹⁰³ David, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

respondents and the particular nature of questioning family origins and attempting to erase the past is found to further complicate the life-stories of those brought up in care.¹⁰⁵

Additionally, David often constructed his sense of self in contrast to that which had been described on his admission papers to Quarriers. David brought a copy of his admission documents along to the interview and referenced these throughout; one line stands out in its repeated refrain, “below average intelligence, highly strung boy.”¹⁰⁶ Admission documents are commonly utilised by adults who grew up in care in helping them to construct a life-story and narrative of self, often acting as a physical replacement for shared memories and stories of family members.¹⁰⁷ In David’s case disproving the description of being “below average intelligence” can be seen as a way in which he defied the control and influence that Quarriers had on his childhood and a way in which he could construct his own sense of self. David did well at school whilst in Quarriers and eventually gained entry to a senior secondary school in Paisley, for which he was allowed to leave Quarriers during the day to attend.

David describes his educational success as a “rarity” and certainly an official report on psychological tests carried out at the Orphan Homes of Scotland School at Quarriers in 1950 suggested that 60 percent of pupils in the home’s school were “borderline defective and dull” compared to an average of 24 percent in the school population in general.¹⁰⁸ This affirmed the rising concerns of the Scottish Council for Research in Education that children in residential homes were worse of educationally than their boarded out counterparts.¹⁰⁹ David repeats that despite being “a bit below average, as they say, I [was able to] leave to go

¹⁰⁵ Tom Shaw, ‘Time to Be Heard’; Murhpy, ‘Memory, Identity and Public Narrative’, p. 305.

¹⁰⁶ David, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Christine Horrocks and Jim Goddard, ‘Adults who Grew Up in Care: constructing the self and accessing care files’, *Child and Family Social Work*, 11 (2006), p. 266.

¹⁰⁸ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

to university” and that “I was able to – despite being “below average intelligence” – I was able to come to Glasgow University as a student”.¹¹⁰ A study of 200 children who left care systems in Glasgow in the 1960s, around the same time that David would have left Quarriers, found that none of the boys were in skilled employment and over half of the girls were engaged in domestic service, factory or shop work.¹¹¹ Despite David’s unique circumstances in the context of this study, his experience of childhood does coincide with narratives of other interviewees, particularly in regards to his educational experience. Irene recalled the way in which education and her academic performance was a connection between herself and her father, as well as a way in which she felt secure in his affections. Similarly, for David, doing well in school was a way in which he sought out affection and approval in the absence of supportive parental figures: “I had a certain pride in doing well because teachers tend to respond to good pupils and maybe if they were good I won a prize and I thought ‘oh that’s rather good.’” For David, education was both an “escape from the rigours of being in cottage” and a form of validation.¹¹² Interviewees repeatedly actively sought emotional support structures and sources of affirmation across this thesis, indicting a degree of childhood agency and commonality across family forms and structures, which will be discussed further below.

As aforementioned, David is unique within the context of this study; however, his experience is somewhat representative of many children of ‘broken homes’ in mid-twentieth century Scotland. As Abrams states, although it was not uncommon for children in Scotland’s charitable orphanages to be the children of widows or widowers this certainly was not a predetermined outcome for children who experienced the death of a parent during the period considered here, c.1920 to 1970. Certainly, neither Helen, Linda, nor Ron Culley who all lost

¹¹⁰ David, interview.

¹¹¹ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, pp. 67-68.

¹¹² David, interview.

their fathers during childhood were admitted to institutions, nor were Dick Lynas and William who each lost their mothers at a young age and their varied experiences of parental death and family transition further highlight the complexity of an experience of childhood within a ‘broken home’.

IV. Parental Death

Throughout history more families were ‘broken’ by death than parental divorce or separation.¹¹³ However, the twentieth century did begin to see a change in this pattern of family dissolution, although it is argued not an increased incidence, with a growth in ‘voluntary dissolution’.¹¹⁴ Widowhood decreased over the course of the twentieth century with only five percent of marriages in the late 1930s ended by the death of a spouse within the first 10 years, whilst 85 percent of those who had not previously separated experienced 25 years of marriage.¹¹⁵ These figures were only slightly disrupted by the First and Second World Wars which, unsurprisingly, contributed to a brief increase in the incidence of widowhood.¹¹⁶ Of the interviewees and memoir authors discussed in this thesis, both Molly Weir and Linda lost their fathers during war.

In losing a parent, William, Linda, and Helen’s experiences contrast sharply with that of David above. Like David, Linda, born in 1944, lost her father when he was killed in action during the Second World War when she was only a few months old. As such, Linda’s mother was in receipt of a widow’s pension and both Linda and her brother received a grant towards

¹¹³ Thane, *Happy Families*, p. 45.

¹¹⁴ Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships’, p. 294.

¹¹⁵ Thane, *Happy Families*, p. 46.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.; Katherine Holden, ‘Imaginary Widows: Spinsters, Marriage, and the “Lost Generation” in Britain after the Great War’, *Journal of Family History*, 30:4 (2005), p. 394; Hughes and Meek, ‘State Regulation, Family Breakdown’, pp. 364-365.

their schooling as their father was an officer.¹¹⁷ Helen, the only interviewee to remember experiencing the death of her father, was born in 1959 and her father died in 1972 when she was 13 years old. Helen was born a decade into the welfare state and although she did not engage directly with any impact that this may have had on the family's circumstances, her testimony provides a different context to the loss of a breadwinner than for David and his family whose father died in 1949. Moreover, with her transition to lone parent household taking place in the 1970s, Helen too, was unlikely to be removed from the home and placed into residential care. Whilst residential care was still in practice in Scotland throughout the period considered here, its popularity started to decline in the 1970s with policy shifting towards deinstitutionalisation and the fostering of children.¹¹⁸ In 1965 for example, 60 percent of children under the care of local authorities in Scotland were boarded out with foster parents and institutions like Quarriers began to select children to be placed in foster homes.¹¹⁹

Despite the inherent changes wrought by the loss of a parent, both William and Helen experienced an important level of continuity after their parents died. When asked if she noted any changes when her father died, Helen responded:

Not particularly, I mean, obviously, my mother must have felt a big difference in that, you know, suddenly they were on a single wage, but erm ... But my mother was used to not having a lot and having worked hard, so she just carried on doing what she normally did and so, you know, we managed very well, you know.¹²⁰

Owing to her mother's own job in a bank and her careful management of the household budget, Helen noted no discernible change in her family's circumstances on the death of her father. It is worthy of note that Helen's mother would have also been in the receipt of a widow's pension, although Helen herself did not mention this. Her mother's ability to

¹¹⁷ Linda, interview with author, 16.07.2014.

¹¹⁸ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 117

¹¹⁹ Magnusson, *Quarriers Story*, p. 149; Tom Shaw, 'Time to Be Heard', p. 25.

¹²⁰ Helen, interview with author, 09.07.2014.

provide on-going stability for Helen and her sister is reflected throughout the interview, when asked if she or her sister became more involved in the house after her father's death, Helen replied, "I think we just carried on very much as before."¹²¹

Born in 1940, William's experience of childhood took place during a similar period and historical context to David's, who was born in 1945. However, William, whose father was a successful solicitor, experienced a middle-class childhood in Edinburgh, rather than a working-class childhood in Glasgow. William's mother died when he was 13 in 1953 and he also did not experience any physical upheaval on the event of his mother's death. The family remained in the home throughout William's childhood, a semi-detached four bedroomed house in the south-west area of Edinburgh, described by William as "a middle-class sort of house, not a particularly posh one, but quite a comfortable one I think you could say." For William, the change wrought by his mother's death was an emotional one that affected his feelings of wellbeing and security within the family. William recalled of his mother's death:

When my mother was ill I was really – I used to lie awake sometimes wondering if she was still breathing, in a way maybe it was quite good because it meant when she finally did die I had maybe been unconsciously preparing for it for quite a long time. So I didn't feel secure in that sort of way.¹²²

As his mother had been ill for several years before her death, William noted that "I saw less and less of her she was quite ill a lot of the time, and in bed a lot of the time." Being closer to his mother than his "distant" and "forbidding" father, William's family arguably began to fracture before the event of its physical break-up with his mother's slow withdrawal due to ill-health.¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² William, interviewed by author, 26.08.2014.

¹²³ Ibid.

The loss of an emotional support and sense of wellbeing is a watershed within William's experience of family 'breakdown'. Whilst continuity is an important aspect that adds to the feelings of security and wellbeing within the home, emotional wellbeing cannot be discounted. Lone parent families headed by fathers were, according to Abrams, considered to be much more stable financially, although this is countered by their perceived inability to parent as well as a mother, to the extent that some fathers were encouraged to place their children in an institution on the grounds that they could not provide the mothering that a child needed.¹²⁴ This coincides with the reflection of the nuclear model in the RSSPCC data above, the family only perceived to be fully functioning as a unit with the presence of two parents fulfilling two distinct parenting roles; the male breadwinner and the maternal caregiver. The loss of one parent thought to be detrimental to a child's wellbeing and, it is argued, a potential cause of neglect, in both the case of bereavement and parental separation.

Additionally, family networks of support were absent for William before the family's eventual transition into lone parenthood. In contrast to the families considered in the previous nuclear families chapter, William only had occasional contact with his grandparents and, due to his family's more affluent middle-class circumstances, they were not called upon to provide practical support to the family. Instead, on the death of his mother, William's father hired a succession of housekeepers as both of William's elder sisters were "growing up and away".¹²⁵ Additional domestic support was commonly sought by widowers whose role as provider remained uninterrupted but found themselves in need of a replacement for the domestic roles carried out by their wife; this was often found through remarriage, extended

¹²⁴ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, p. 220; Lynn Abrams, "'There was Nobody like my Daddy': Fathers, the Family and the Marginilisation of Men in Modern Scotland", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 78:2 (1999), p. 241

¹²⁵ William, interview.

family support or the hiring of housekeepers.¹²⁶ Once more, unlike experiences in the previous chapter, William's sisters were not called upon to act as additional emotional or practical support; this could be due to their older age at the time of their mother's death, being nine or ten years older than William, or their father's financial ability to hire a housekeeper. In contrast, Dick Lynas, whose mother died when he was five in 1947, moved with his father and younger sister into his paternal grandparents' home so that they can look after Dick and his sister while his father continued to work.¹²⁷

William's age at his mother's death as well as his father's socio-economic status also meant that his family did not have to relocate in order to find additional support structures. However, for William, the housekeepers his father hired also fulfilled a mothering role:

There was one woman who was a very sort of sensible sort of woman and I've always regretted that I don't know why she left, whether it was of her own accord or some other reason, I don't know what. But she – I think I met her once many years afterwards and I was quite sorry that I'd not been more involved with her because she'd been a kind and a caring sort of person and she'd really filled a gap that my mother had provided in some ways, she was just a nice person.¹²⁸

Throughout the interviews carried out for this thesis and across the memoirs analysed, there is repeated evidence of children actively seeking out alternative emotional support structures and sources of affection and affirmation. In addition to William finding emotional support in the housekeepers his father hired, David sought affirmation through education and he further stated that he was "closest emotionally to my aunt."¹²⁹ During his father's absence on active duty in the Second World War, Robert Douglas sought out the attention of his maternal uncle, "I cannot believe how lucky I am that this handsome marine is *my* uncle. I follow him

¹²⁶ Blom, 'The History of Widowhood', p. 195; Frans von Poppel, 'Children in One-Parent Families: Survival as an Indicator of the Role of the Parents', *Journal of Family History*, 25 (2000), p. 277.

¹²⁷ Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays*, p. 34.

¹²⁸ William, interview.

¹²⁹ David, interview.

around like a puppy. He always makes time for me. When he talks to me, I glow.”¹³⁰ The involvement of a bachelor uncle in family life during the mid-twentieth century was not unusual and, as Katherine Holden argues, an uncle was more easily able to embody the playful and adventurous aspects of masculine adult-child relationships as he was neither the male breadwinning head of the family, nor the ultimate authority in a child’s life.¹³¹ Furthermore, whilst Robert’s father was physically absent during the war, on his return he was both emotionally absent and physically abusive towards Robert and his mother. Writing retrospectively, Robert’s affectionate and engaging uncle, who always “made time” for Robert, contrasts with the other masculine adult-child relationship of his young life. Additionally, memoirist Molly Weir, whose father died during World War One, found emotional succour in her grandmother, “I never missed my father. For filling every corner of my world was Grannie.”¹³² Indeed, the importance of her grandmother’s role in Molly’s life permeates her first memoir, which both starts and finishes with her memory. Molly recounts that her grandmother became a constant within her life, “she tormented me, disciplined me, taught me, laughed at me, loved me, and tied me to her forever.”¹³³ Thus, for Molly, the breaking of her family only occurs on the death of her grandmother.

The importance of extended family members in experiences of childhood was recounted by interviewees in the previous chapter. Meg Henderson’s memoir recounted how her grandparents and aunts and uncles had provided an influential extended family framework to her own experience of childhood within a nuclear family. Grandparents also played an important role in James’s and Alex’s childhoods and both claimed that they felt

¹³⁰ Douglas, *Night Song*, p. 21.

¹³¹ Katherine Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England, 1914-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 174.

¹³² Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday*, p.2.

¹³³ Ibid.

closer to their grandparents than they did their parents.¹³⁴ The support of extended family was often of particular importance to widows as it would allow them to go out to work making up for the loss of income through the death of the breadwinner, as with Molly Weir's mother.¹³⁵ Memoirist Ron Culley whose father died when he was nine years old in 1959 also received the additional support of his grandparents after his father's death.

One year prior to his father's death in 1958. Ron's family - Ron, his parents and two brothers - had moved from the maternal grandparents' corporation home to a new corporation house in Craigbank, in the south of Glasgow. Despite the move only taking the family half a mile away, when Ron was 11, 18 months after his father's death, his grandparents were:

permitted by Glasgow Corporation to move from their lovely three bedroom, semi-detached terraced home with their back and front gardens, to a ground level, two bedroomed tenement property ... just five closes down from Mum's so she could offer more support to her and us boys.¹³⁶

Thus, the support networks offered by extended family members in the event of family dissolution are evidenced in both Ron and Molly's accounts. However, whilst family support networks have been identified as an important determinant of children's health, and survival in the case of very young children, within one parent families, this support whilst ultimately stemming from the loss of a parent, is not wholly unique to this circumstance, as seen above.¹³⁷ Ron later describes in his memoir that "I remember my younger years as being warm, loving and my father's death excepted, without incident."¹³⁸ As with Helen, Ron's father's death was not followed by any further upheaval in his life; the family remained in the home, there was no noted decline in family circumstance, and his grandparents provided an emotional buffer and support to his mother as well as himself and his younger brothers.

¹³⁴ James, interview with author, 18.07.2014; Alex, interview with author, 07.07.2014.

¹³⁵ Blom, 'The History of Widowhood', p. 197; von Poppel, 'Children in One-Parent Families', p. 278.

¹³⁶ Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow*, p. 45.

¹³⁷ von Poppel, 'Children in One-Parent Families', pp. 284-285; Andrew Blaikie, 'Infant survival chances, unmarried motherhood and domestic arrangements in rural Scotland, 1845-1945', *Local Population Studies* 60:1 (1998), pp. 40-41.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23

Indeed, Helen also stated that her childhood overall had been, “happy, settled – yeah, that’s about all I can think of really.”¹³⁹

Much of the commentary on the effects of family breakdown, as above, has focused on the reduction in family circumstance that comes as a consequence of the loss of the main breadwinner. Indeed, this is borne out by the respondents and authors considered here, as only Helen remembered openly grieving for the absence of a relationship with her father.¹⁴⁰ For Molly Weir this may be explained through the nature of her memoir, which is firmly located within the domestic sphere and dominated by her formative relationship with her grandmother, as well as her young age when her father died. Furthermore, the loss of a mother, Weir writes, was felt much more keenly, even by those who were not immediately connected to the family:

when a loved mother died in our tenements the tragedy was felt by us all. But the family was never broken up and scattered to different Council homes. The father went to work as usual, but the children, skilled shoppers and well aware of the work every penny had to do, ran the house and bought the food, and would be astounded if anybody suggested that it was too much for them.¹⁴¹

It could be argued that the loss of Helen’s, and indeed Molly’s, father was mitigated to an extent by her mother’s ability to provide a sense of continuity and security within the family. Having already “worked hard” Helen’s mother was already in a position to be able to provide financially and to continue in her own job. This allowed a measure of continuity to her children who, owing to her careful management, experienced no discernible difference in their material circumstance after the death of their father.

¹³⁹ Helen interview.

¹⁴⁰ This could be due in part to her age at her father’s death; the majority of respondents had no first –hand memories of their fathers due to their young age at his death.

¹⁴¹ Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday*, p. 64.

Through death or divorce, each respondent or author considered here lost a parent and experienced a change within their family form going from 'intact' to 'broken' and life within a lone parent family. For the majority, this loss was irrevocable in the death of a parent, most notably the father in all but two instances. Predictably the effect of this loss was wide and varied. Not only does gender play a part here, both in the death of the parent and the gender of the child left behind, but so too does class and the broader family structure, as previously alluded to. The role played by external family is again important as the family can be seen not so much as 'breaking' but rather evolving in the wake of a loss.

V. Summary

Whether through death or divorce, the experience of the loss of a parent varied in line with the coping strategies adopted by the remaining parent and the extent of their support network. For Molly and Ron, the absence of a father did not seem to overtly impact their narrative, extended family stepping forward to plug any gap left by their absence. Neither recalled experiencing a notable loss of material or emotional support; their feelings of security remained unchallenged within their constructed narrative. For Helen, the loss of her father was apparent through the loss of their relationship, although arguably not detrimental to her overall experience of childhood. For William and Agnes, however, the effects of parental loss are more notable in their testimonies. With his father's emotional absence, William appeared to find himself adrift with the family unit and he recalled seeking emotional support through a succession of housekeepers that his father employed within the home. These experiences all contrast with that of Agnes, the lone respondent to experience parental separation and divorce, who experienced an overtly positive upswing in her experience of childhood following her parents' separation.

In analysing the lived experience of family breakdown, this chapter provides a vital component in the examination of experiences of childhood in Scotland, c. 1920 to 1970. Placing family 'breakdown' within a historical context has demonstrated the extent to which the nuclear family was, and continues to be, prioritised within child welfare. The role of social welfare agencies such as the RSSPCC and residential institutions like Quarriers have highlighted the ways in which the nuclear family ideal dominated contemporary discourse and practice, occasionally to the detriment of those involved. However, this nuclear family ideal was often not borne out in either the lived experience examined in the previous chapter or in the evidence considered here. The experience of Agnes and the families who came into contact with the RSSPCC further problematise the assumption of the ideal nature of the nuclear family unit.

The long-term impact of family 'breakdown' on experiences of childhood within a lone parent family and within a reconstituted and stepfamily are considered in more depth in the following chapters. However, an initial examination of the process of the transition itself has brought to light several important factors in evaluating the impact of family forms on the experiences of childhood considered here. Positive recollections of coping with the transition from one family form to another relied heavily on a sense of security and continuity. The loss of a parent through death, for example, was less impactful when not exacerbated by any notable downturn in circumstance or physical upheaval and removal from the family home. Indeed, the loss of a parent was often met with the increased support networks of extended family members who sought to bridge the gap left by the departed parent. The separation or divorce of parents was, in some cases, found to positively impact the experience of childhood through a tangible improvement in the family's physical, financial, and often emotional wellbeing.

Chapter Four: Lone Parent Families

I. Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the transition of families from ‘intact’ to ‘broken’ focusing on the process of transition. Building on the previous chapters, this chapter will continue to question the boundaries and lived understanding of ‘family’ within narratives of childhood in households headed by one parent. As with the ‘broken family’, in recent decades there has been ever-increasing focus on, and concern about, the lone parent family in the media and political discourse.¹ Unmarried motherhood is not a new phenomenon and yet it remains a familial state under constant scrutiny. Thane and Evans note that the historical prevalence of unmarried mothers has been (until recently) neglected in most histories of the family and yet the “problem” of the unmarried mother is a historical constant.² This echoes the findings of Kiernan, Land, and Lewis’ earlier work on lone motherhood in twentieth century Britain;³ as a result, there has been growing historical inquiry into attitudes towards and experiences of lone motherhood.⁴ However, most of these texts focus their research on

¹ The aforementioned planned changes to the Child Poverty Act announced in 2015 laid blame on lone parent families for negative child outcomes. Moreover, conservative think-tanks such as the Marriage Foundation and the Relationships Foundation, who publish annual reports on ‘the cost of family failure’, also lay blame on the lone parent family for perceived societal breakdown in recent years. Additionally, in a survey carried out by One Parent Families Scotland in 2014, 74% of single parents stated that they had experienced negative attitudes or stigma in the previous two years, particularly in the local community and when applying for benefits. Department for Work and Pensions Press Release, ‘Government to strengthen child poverty measure’, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-strengthen-child-poverty-measure>>, [Accessed 04/05/2016]; David Wong, ‘Counting the Cost of Family Failure: 2011 update’ (Relationships Foundation, 2011), <http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Counting_the_Cost_of_Family_Failure_2011.pdf>, [Accessed 20/06/2017]. One Parent Families Scotland, ‘OPFS survey results: Single Parents and Stigma’, <http://www.opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/survey-results_201411_single-parents-and-stigma.pdf>, [Accessed 01/10/2017].

² Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, ‘Lone Mothers’, *Women’s History Review*, 20:1 (2011), p. 4.

³ Kathleen Kiernan, Hilary Land, Jane Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth Century Britain: from footnote to front page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁴ See Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? : Unmarried motherhood in twentieth century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); April Gallwey, ‘Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Warwick: University of Warwick, 2011); and Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood*.

England and Wales and, additionally, on the experience of the unmarried or lone mother herself, and not her child(ren).

For example, in her study of unmarried motherhood in twentieth century England, Thane tracked changing opinions through her study of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (NCUMC) where she noted that attitudes oscillated from sympathetic and supportive to condemnatory. Thane relates this change to both community and state support for unmarried mothers, attitudes towards unmarried mothers echoed in levels of support offered to mothers, often linked to wider discourses of respectability and deservedness.⁵ More recently, Hughes and Meek have looked at lone motherhood in Scotland, particularly in the wake of the First World War, however, their research does not extend to the post-war period nor does it directly engage with the impact of lone motherhood on experiences of childhood.⁶

Moreover, within female-headed family households, distinctions have been made between types of lone motherhood, such as unmarried motherhood as distinct from those experiencing separation, divorce or widowhood, in terms of public attitudes and lived experiences. Additionally, despite the existence of lone fathers, their experiences have been comparatively neglected. This could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, lone parent households have long been more likely to be headed by a woman, reflecting the traditional balance of caring responsibilities within parental roles.⁷ Secondly, lone father households,

⁵ Pat Thane, 'Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England', *Women's History Review*, 20:1 (2011), pp. 11-12.

⁶ Annmarie Hughes and Jeff Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: the hidden costs of World War I in Scotland', *Journal of Family History*, 39:4 (2014), pp. 364-365

⁷ Natasha Burchardt, 'Structure and Relationships in Stepfamilies in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Continuity and Change*, 4:2 (1989), p. 300; Michael Anderson, 'What is New About the Modern Family: a Historical Perspective' OPCS occasional Paper 31 *The Family* (London: British Society for Population Studies, 1983), p. 8; Karen Rowlingson and Stephen McKay, *Lone Parent Families: gender, class and state* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. x

where they exist, are less likely to suffer as severe a drop in standards of living, due to men's traditional role as breadwinners, and are therefore less likely to come to the attention of official agencies.⁸ Thirdly, the role of fatherhood in general is comparatively understudied.⁹ As such, the impact of this family form on experiences of childhood throughout mid-twentieth century Scotland remains largely unknown.¹⁰ In examining the experiences of childhood within lone parent families – including unmarried mothers, separated and divorced mothers, deserted mothers, and lone fathers – this chapter seeks to understand the effects of these family forms on experiences of childhood.

Further, as with 'broken', 'lone' is somewhat of an ambiguous term when describing a family's status. Where 'broken' could be used to describe a divorced family, a separated family, a widowed family, or a one parent family, 'lone' or 'single parent' could also cover each of these family forms. Through the rest of this chapter, a 'lone parent' is defined as a parent who has the sole guardianship of their dependent child(ren) following family breakdown or dissolution. 'Unmarried mother' is used, as it was throughout the twentieth century, to refer solely to a mother who has never married and has illegitimate children, that is, a mother of a child who was conceived and born outwith marriage bringing her child(ren) up herself. This latter point is important as, under Scots law, an illegitimate child could be legitimised with the subsequent marriage of their parents. It is also important to note that whilst cohabitation was common in Scotland it was often not officially recognised by

⁸ K. D. M. Snell and J. Millar. 'Lone Parent Families and the Welfare State: past and present.' *Continuity and Change*, 2:3 (1987), p 410; Graham Crow and Michael Hardey, 'Diversity and Ambiguity Among Lone parent Households in Modern Britain', in C. Marsh and S. Arber (eds.), *Families and Households: Divisions and Change* (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 144.

⁹ Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 1.

¹⁰ In her study of 'broken homes' in Scotland, Lynn Abrams does examine the experience of children from lone parent families that entered the Scottish child care system, however, her study does not include an extensive analysis of children of lone parents that remained in the family unit, see: Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998).

agencies such as the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC) who still referred to cohabiting mothers as unmarried and their partners as ‘the putative father’, as such I will do so here.¹¹ Additionally, ‘single’ also encompasses unmarried mothers in that it refers to a mother of an illegitimate child but also those who may have once been married but were subsequently either, deserted, separated, divorced or widowed.

The above definition of ‘lone parent’ resulted in the consideration of six interviewees: William, Linda, Agnes, Joan, Helen, and Sheila. Of these interviewees, William, Agnes, and Helen were all featured in the previous chapter. Linda will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter on stepfamilies as her mother co-habited with Linda’s stepfather and the family moved to London when Linda was 11. Joan was the only interviewee to have experienced childhood within a family headed by an unmarried mother. The last interviewee considered in this chapter is Sheila, born to an unmarried mother in 1945. Sheila’s mother gave birth to her whilst residing in a mother and baby home in Edinburgh and Sheila was subsequently privately adopted at 10 days old. Whilst Sheila spent her childhood in a nuclear family unit, she is included here in order to understand the experience of many children born to unmarried mothers in twentieth century Scotland. In addition, five supplementary memoirs will be consulted as detailed in the table (4.2) below.¹²

¹¹ In her research on irregular marriage in Scotland, Eleanor Gordon notes that prior to its abolishment in 1939, authorities and legal, religious, and political establishments were often hostile towards irregular marriage. Eleanor Gordon, ‘Irregular Marriage and Cohabitation in Scotland, 1855-1939: official policy and popular practice.’ *The Historical Journal* 58:4 (2105), p. 1061.

¹² Molly Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday* (London: Penguin, 2012); Robert Douglas, *Night Song of the Last Tram* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005); Dick Lynas, *Pies Were for Thursdays* (Authorhouse: Milton Keynes, 2010); Ron Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow* (Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2011); Jackie Kay, *Red Dust Road* (London: Picador, 2011).

Table 4.1: Interviewees from lone parent families

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Birth*	Parental Marital Status
William	1940	Edinburgh	Widower
Linda	1944	Glasgow	Widow
Agnes	1944	Dundee (town)	Divorced
Sheila	1945	Edinburgh (town)	Married**
Joan	1947	Glasgow	Unmarried
Helen	1959	Lanarkshire (town)	Widow

* In order to allow for the anonymity of interviewees their place of birth has been restricted to a county and an explanation of the geographical setting.

** Although born to an unmarried mother, Sheila was later adopted and raised within a nuclear family unit.

Table 4.2: Memoir Authors from lone parent families

Name	Memoir	Year of Birth	Place of Birth	Parental Marital Status
Molly Weir	<i>Shoes were for Sunday</i>	1910	Glasgow	Widowed
Robert Douglas	<i>Night Song of the Last Tram</i>	1939	Glasgow	Married*
Dick Lynas	<i>Pies were for Thursdays</i>	1942	Glasgow	Widower
Ron Culley	<i>I Belong to Glasgow</i>	1950	Glasgow	Widowed
Jackie Kay	<i>Red Dust Road</i>	1961	Aberdeen	Unmarried

*Robert Douglas is included here despite the fact his parents remained married until his mother's death when he was 16 as his father deserted for much of his childhood.

All but Jackie Kay were considered in the previous chapter as they each experienced a transition from an 'intact' to a 'broken' family. Jackie Kay, like interviewee Sheila, was born in a mother and baby home and was later adopted into a nuclear family. Jackie's circumstances of birth are included here as they are representative of the experience of a number of children born to unmarried mothers in the 1960s. Robert Douglas has once again been included in this discussion despite the fact that his parents remained married until his mother's death when he was 16. Although married, Robert's parents lived apart for the vast majority of his childhood, his father moving first to England for his army service and then in

with his partner in Scotland on his return. Although occasionally reappearing in the family home, Robert's father made no financial contribution and was not a fixed constant in his life, unlike his mother, who raised him alone. As such, Robert's parents were separated for much of his life and his mother was a mother coping alone. As before, these first-hand accounts of childhood will be supplemented with case files from the RSSPCC (table 4.3).

Table 4.3: RSSPCC case files marked as “single parents – mothers”

Number of Cases	1940s	1950s	1960s
Returned in search	0	1	87
Anonymised and available for consultation	0	1	54

The RSSPCC case files consulted here are those that were returned on a search for ‘single parents – mothers’ on the archival database. The search returned a total of 88 care records opened in the time scale of the 1940s until the 1960s, of these only 55 were anonymised and available for consultation. Of those only one case was opened in the 1950s and the rest were opened during the 1960s, the last decade of the period considered here. An examination of the case files reveals that of the 55 available to consult, all included a ‘single’ mother (mother of an illegitimate child), but of these single mothers, three had previously been married and were now either divorced or separated and had had a child subsequently. Finally, the relatively low numbers of cases regarding single mothers should not be taken at face value, whilst very few families investigated throughout the period were officially headed by single mothers, Abrams found in her analysis of the case files that 40 percent of parents investigated were either separated or divorced and many were women coping alone, despite not being defined as ‘single mothers’ by the RSSPCC.¹³ Notably a search for single fathers, widow, or widower returned no results.

¹³ Abrams, *Orphan Country*, pp. 215-216.

Finally, the annual reports from two agencies that came into contact with unmarried mothers, The Women's Help Committee (WHC) and the Haig Ferguson Memorial Home (HFMH), will also be utilised in order to allow for an insight into the experience of the unmarried mother and the impact of these agencies on the experiences of her child. The WHC, a moral welfare agency, was originally the Glasgow Home for Deserted Mothers, established in 1873, changing to the WHC in 1925. It was initially an organisation that dealt exclusively with destitute and homeless (first time) mothers and their children. With their change to the WHC in the 1920s, they began to focus their attention on those they identified as "delinquent" and "difficult" girls (some of whom were unmarried mothers) alongside the unmarried mother of all ages and her baby, eventually establishing their own mother and baby home, Atholl House, in 1942.¹⁴

The HFMH was the successor to St. Luke's Home, a small mother and baby home in Edinburgh that was renamed in 1934 in honour of its founder, Professor James Haig Ferguson, a prominent Scottish gynaecologist. Similarly, the records of the welfare charity, the Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (SCUMC), will be briefly consulted in order to further contextualise public attitudes towards non-traditional families, particularly those headed by women. Prior to the establishment of the SCUMC, the Scottish branch of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, the WHC had acted as Scottish liaison for the NCUMC throughout the 1920s.¹⁵ Indeed, until the SCUMC was fully established in 1945, the WHC continued to receive referrals from the NCUMC alongside other agencies including the Society of Social Service.¹⁶

¹⁴ Women's Help Committee, *Annual Report 1926*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ Glasgow University Archive [GB 0248 DC260/5], Women's Help Committee, *Annual Report 1927-1928*, p. 5.

¹⁶ Women's Help Committee, *Annual Report 1944-1945*, p. 3.

Continuing on from the last chapter, this chapter will analyse the lived experience of childhood within a lone parent family. This chapter starts with a consideration of provision for unmarried mothers and their children, particularly mother and baby homes, before branching out to consider variations within lone parent families, as well as reflecting on the impact of gender on lone parenthood. In doing so, this chapter will focus on the external pressures and supports offered to the family, most notably from official agencies – including the welfare state. In maintaining focus on the experience of childhood, the following will also return to an examination of the environmental and emotional landscapes of childhood with a consideration of housing and education as well as familial relationships.

II. Mother and Baby Homes and Adoption

As mentioned above, comparatively little is known about the experience of unmarried mothers in Scotland and attitudes towards them were by no means uniform;¹⁷ there were considerable regional variations in acceptance of illegitimacy and unmarried motherhood.¹⁸ As a result, even less is known about the experience of childhood within a family headed by an unmarried mother in Scotland. The records of agencies that came into contact with unmarried mothers and their children provide a valuable insight into the experience of and the

¹⁷For existing scholarship on mother and baby homes in Scotland see: Janet Greenlees, “‘The Peculiar and Complex Female Problem’: the Church of Scotland and healthcare for unwed mothers, 1900-1948”, in Janet Greenlees and Linda Bryder (eds.), *Western Maternity and Medicine, 1880-1990: Studies for the Social History of Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 47-64. For work on mother and baby homes in the rest of Britain see: Gillian Clark, ‘The role of mother and baby homes in the adoption of children born outside marriage in twentieth-century England and Wales’, *Family & Community History*, 11:1 (2008), pp. 45-59; Katherine Kiernan, Hilary Land, and Jane Lewis. *Lone motherhood in Twentieth Century Britain: from footnote to front page* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jill Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes: a survey of homes for unmarried mothers* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968); Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?: Unmarried motherhood in twentieth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Andrew Blaikie’s work highlights the regional variations in the acceptance of illegitimacy and extra-marital pregnancy, and the importance of family support in child welfare, see: Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993); Andrew Blaikie, ‘Accounting for Poverty: Conflicting constructions of family survival in Scotland, 1855-1925’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 18:3 (2005), pp. 202-26.

attitudes towards the unmarried mother and her child in Scotland. Annual reports from two Scottish welfare agencies that came into contact with unmarried mothers, the WHC and the HFMH (formerly known as the Lauriston Home), are analysed here in order to provide an insight into attitudes towards unmarried mothers and their child(ren) in Glasgow and Edinburgh respectively. Although the records of these agencies only allow for an insight into the experience of one distinct family form, within the broader definition of lone parent family, they add to our understanding of the attitudes towards the unmarried mother during this period. This is of interest as the homes' reflection of the societal attitudes towards unmarried mothers directly impacted experiences of childhood through their role in the adoption of illegitimate children in Scotland. Their inclusion here is of further interest as they also reveal the assumed difficulties of the lone mother within society, reflections that will be of interest at a later point in this chapter.

Despite cultural and geographical variations in the acceptance of the unmarried mother, there were still a considerable number of institutions across the United Kingdom that offered residential care for those who sought out seclusion in order to hide from the stigma of unmarried pregnancy. Originating in the nineteenth century with the Scottish Magdalene Homes for unwed mothers, which were amongst the first in Britain, mother and baby homes in Scotland first served as an aid for many unmarried mothers to receive important medical care – although these institutions were still focused on the moral rescue of the mother and the adoption of the child.¹⁹ Mother and baby homes were run by a number of different organisations including moral welfare agencies, official church bodies, and religious charity organisations such as the Salvation Army. There has been no systematic review of mother and baby homes in Scotland, but a report from the SCUMC noted that there were around 20

¹⁹ Greenlees, “‘The Peculiar and Complex Female Problem’”, pp. 51-52; Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 15.

homes operational in the 1960s that combined had accommodation for 233 women.²⁰ Whilst in Scotland, unlike those in England and Wales, mother and baby homes were subject to registration and inspection, the way in which the homes were run varied dramatically.²¹

Although the fact that mother and baby homes came into contact with a relatively small number of unmarried pregnant women throughout the twentieth century, their continued presence throughout the period does indicate an on-going stigmatisation of the unmarried mother. An examination of two homes run from the 1920s until the 1970s in the central belt of Scotland suggests that attitudes towards the unmarried mother were slow to change but that the attitudes towards her child evolved over the period. Although both of the mother and baby homes considered here were run in Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively, both made repeated references to the admittance of women from across the country, and indeed Britain.²²

The number of women making use of the home from across Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom is indicative of the perceived lack of community support for unmarried mothers and the desire by women to escape local censure and gossip. Jackson and Bartie argue that this desire to seek out seclusion persisted longer in Scotland than in England and Wales with an increased demand for mother and baby homes in the 1960s.²³ However, in their study of the NCUMC in England, Thane and Evans found that the society noted that, although there was a “more permissive” shift in the 1960s, this did not extend to unmarried

²⁰ [GB 1847 OPFS] Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, *25th Annual Report 1969*, p. 6.

²¹ Thane and Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints*, p. 157.

²² The HFMH in Edinburgh noted throughout the 1920s and 1930s that the women and girls who came to the home came “from wide areas in Scotland, besides Shetland, Ireland and Northumberland.” - National Library of Scotland Archive [ACC. 6313], Haig Ferguson Memorial Home for unmarried mothers, *Annual Report 1928*, p. 2; *Annual Report 1932*, p. 3; *Annual Report 1936*, p. 2.

²³ Louise Jackson and Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain, 1945-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 137.

mothers.²⁴ The WHC and the SCUMC made a similar note in their annual reports for 1968 and 1969 respectively, that while the wider community was becoming more permissive of extra-marital sexual behaviour, it still did not yet appear to be able to accept an illegitimate child.²⁵ This arguably had an impact on community support networks for unmarried mothers and their children, and experiences of childhood within a lone mother family. This is of particular relevance in the context of this thesis given the importance placed on the role of the community in feelings of safety and security in the previous chapters on nuclear families and ‘broken’ families. More importantly, both homes suggested that this lack of parental or community support led to an increased rate of adoption from mother and baby homes in Scotland in the post-war decades.

At the start of the period considered here, in the 1920s, both homes encouraged unmarried mothers to keep their babies. Similarly to the WHC’s Atholl House, the HFMH only offered support to those who were pregnant for the first time. The home strongly discouraged their residents from placing their babies for adoption, based on their long-held belief “that the effort the mother had to make to support her child had a tonic moral effect”.²⁶ Indeed, in the early 1940s the home was praised by Professor McNeil, the then President of the Royal College of Physicians, for “the stress laid on persuading mothers to keep their babies”. As, he stated, “a good many mothers in the shock and shame of their condition and perhaps without having proper provision for the baby, were inclined to escape their responsibility by handing over the baby to someone else.”²⁷ Interestingly, whilst the home valued the ‘tonic moral effect’ of keeping the baby on the unmarried mother, they also advised against the hasty marriage of the mother and the putative father. The home’s legal

²⁴ Thane and Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?*, p. 133.

²⁵ GB 1847 OPFS, Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, *Annual Report* 25, 1968; Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report* 1969, 10.

²⁶ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1953, p. 10.

²⁷ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1941, p. 7.

advisor had “deprecated forced marriages which were a fruitful cause of disaster for the parents and child.”²⁸ In 1933, Dr Warr, Dean of the Chapel Royal, had also commended the home for giving the women and girls admitted time “to think out her dilemma” and thus, he hoped, “many a girl might be saved from a precipitate and disastrous marriage.”²⁹ This is of particular interest given the emphasis placed by other welfare agencies, such as the RSSPCC in the previous chapter, on the importance of the nuclear unit for child welfare. However, the emphasis here, as before, is on avoiding “that cause of so much danger in our social life – the broken home.”³⁰

In the post-war period there was a discernable shift to adoption of the babies born in the homes. In 1951, the WHC lamented the fact that their newly opened Atholl House was not being used to full capacity, owing, “to the number who part with their babies at birth with a view to adoption.”³¹ The HFMH also saw a change with addresses from both the Lady Provost of Edinburgh and the Maternity and Child Welfare of the Department of Health Scotland, in 1958 and 1959 respectively, emphasising the security that adoption offered the illegitimate child compared with difficulties faced by the lone mother.³² Whilst still making the occasional reference to the redemptive nature of maintaining a child, by the late 1950s both homes recognised that many mothers felt that “Legal Adoption may offer their babies a more equal opportunity in life by providing a mother and a father.”³³ This quote again reflects the nuclear ideal within child welfare. Gillian Clark also argues that the rise in adoptions in the 1960s was a result of the changing demographic of unmarried mothers; a rise in the number of students and professional women coupled with “missing backup facilities” such as

²⁸ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report 1940*, p. 6.

²⁹ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report 1933*, p. 4.

³⁰ Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report 1960*, p.3.

³¹ Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report 1951*, p. 3.

³² Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report 1958*, p.5; *Annual Report 1959*, p. 6

³³ Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report 1958*, p. 3.

grants, social work, fostering, and day care meant that adoptions from mother and baby homes rose from 15,000 to 25,000 in England and Wales between 1960 and 1968.³⁴ Although no comparable figures are available for Scotland, both the WHC and the HFMH saw a rise in the number of adoptions throughout the 1960s. The nature of the adoption records kept by the homes and the details that they provide in their annual reports makes it difficult to accurately track the outcomes for all of the babies born to mothers staying in the homes. However, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, both homes did report a larger percentage of babies adopted rather than kept by either the mother or her relatives.³⁵ For example, in the HFMH, of the 28 babies born in 1960, 15 were adopted, and by 1969 32 of 40 babies were being adopted.³⁶ The WHC noted in 1961 that of 44 admissions, 17 babies were adopted (the outcome for 13 babies was unknown at the time of their writing of the annual report), and in 1969 this had increased to 35 babies from 64 admissions that year.³⁷

Jackson and Bartie note that it is a common perception, and indeed lived experience, that many unmarried mothers (particularly teenagers) were forced into mother and baby homes and subsequently placed their babies for adoption.³⁸ Another perception of mother and baby homes is that the majority of residents were teenage girls and young women, and whilst both the WHC and the HFMH do reference some residents as young as 12, they also saw women up to the age of 42.³⁹ In her 1968 report on behalf of the NCUMC, Jill Nicholson noted that most of the women and girls that sought out residential care during their extra-marital pregnancy were either unsure of how long their “practical motherhood would last” or

³⁴ Clark, ‘The role of mother and baby homes’, pp. 55-56.

³⁵ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Reports* 1950-1970; Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Reports* 1950-1974.

³⁶ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1960, p. 3; Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1969, p. 2.

³⁷ Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report* 1961, p. 3; Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report* 1969, p. 5

³⁸ Jackson and Bartie, *Policing Youth*, pp. 135-136.

³⁹ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1929, p. 3; Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report* 1938, p. 2.

else “they knew it would be over very shortly.”⁴⁰ This “ambiguous maternity” meant that many women entering the homes had already decided upon adoption;⁴¹ indeed, the early reports of the WHC and the HFMH indicate their belief that staying in the home for several weeks after the birth of their children would change many women’s minds. The most important factor therefore, in whether a mother would keep her child, argue Jackson and Barite, was the attitude of the mother’s parents, and arguably her wider community.⁴² Indeed, during the 1930s, the HFMH had commented on the “moral courage” of unmarried mothers and their relatives who kept their illegitimate children, despite the “possibility of malicious gossip” and potential community censure.⁴³ Furthermore, both the WHC and the HFMH highlighted the need for mothers to have stable and continued support at home if she was to keep her baby.⁴⁴

Notably, two respondents interviewed for this project were born to unmarried mothers in Glasgow in the 1940s, one of whom was adopted from a mother and baby home in the 1940s. Sheila was born in 1945 in a mother and baby home in Edinburgh to an English mother in the Wrens and a Canadian airman and privately adopted at 10 days old.⁴⁵ Sheila’s understanding of her adoption from a mother and baby home aligns with the dominant discourses, discussed above, of agencies at the time. Although Sheila was born in the distinct context of the Second World War, when there was a presumption that illegitimate children born to service women would be adopted due to the pressures of war work,⁴⁶ Sheila explicitly

⁴⁰ Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Jackson and Bartie, *Policing Youth*, p. 136.

⁴³ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report 1936*, p.3.

⁴⁴ Haig Ferguson Memorial Home, *Annual Report 1952*, p.8; Women’s Help Committee, *Annual Report 1970*, p.3.

⁴⁵ Sheila, interviewed by author, 28.11.2014.

⁴⁶ Clark, ‘The role of mother and baby homes’, pp. 51-52.

references the direct influence of her grandfather in her mother's decision to have her adopted. She explained,

Grandad was really mad, really very angry with her [her mother], because he was an old-fashioned guy, so they put her in Edinburgh in this home for unmarried mothers and then the doctor took her, so there was no chance whatsoever of her keeping me, none, and that's what they did in those days.⁴⁷

Sheila was interviewed in 2014 at a time when the practice of mother and baby homes was coming to public attention due to increasing government inquiry and academic scrutiny.⁴⁸ However, her mother's lived experience is not dissimilar to that presented by either the HFMH or the WHC. For Sheila's mother, like many girls and women admitted to mother and baby homes, familial attitudes towards her situation were paramount in her (in)ability to keep her child, indeed she cites her grandfather as being solely responsible for her mother's presence in the mother and baby home. Moreover, the role of the community is also evident in Sheila's narrative; her grandfather's anger resulted in Sheila's mother's complete seclusion during her pregnancy and her removal from the community that they were living in in Glasgow to a mother and baby home in Edinburgh. Fear of local gossip and censure is hard to separate from parental attitudes, one feeding the culture of the other. This is further exemplified by the experiences of the poet and novelist, Jackie Kay, who was born to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father in 1961 and was later adopted by a Glaswegian couple after being placed for adoption by her biological mother.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ In 2014 the Irish justice minister ordered a police report on the suspected deaths of almost 800 infants and children at Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Ireland, which consequently led to an official Commission of Investigation into "Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters". Furthermore, the role of mother and baby homes in illegal adoptions has come to public attention through the 2013 film adaptation of one Irish unmarried mother's memoir, *Philomena*. Additionally, in 2016, television network ITV commissioned a documentary on Britain's 'adoption scandal' which ended with a call for a national inquiry into the practice of mother and baby homes throughout England and Wales. BBC News, 'Tuam babies: Justice minister orders police report', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-27728542>>, [Accessed 28/07/2017]; Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation available at <<http://www.mbhcoi.ie/MBH.nsf/page/index-en>>, [Accessed 28/07/2017].

Although Jackie's experience of childhood was that of a secure and loving nuclear family, much like that of Sheila, this was a consequence of her adoption; her biological mother's experience aligns with many unmarried mother's experiences in Scotland at this time, which in turn impacted upon their children's experiences of childhood through their eventual adoption. It is important to recognise the circumstances of Jackie and Sheila's births, as their consequent adoption is indicative of the primacy of the nuclear family model. Jackie is also clear in her memoir that it was important for her in later life to trace her biological parents and to understand the circumstances of her birth.

Kay's biological parents had met in a dance hall in Aberdeen and although they kept in touch during the pregnancy, her father returned to Nigeria and her mother went to a mother and baby home in Edinburgh. Community attitudes towards her mother's pregnancy were revealed by Kay's biological aunt, Edna, who explained "in the sixties, people just didn't have babies with black men ... well, no up here at any rate."⁴⁹ Interracial relationships were a long-standing issue of concern throughout Britain and this only further compounded the problems faced by some unmarried mothers. Indeed there is a recurrent racial thread in many of the moral panics surrounding the unmarried mother throughout the twentieth century.⁵⁰ These attitudes persisted into the late 1950s when, in the aftermath of race riots in England, a Gallup survey revealed that the threat of interracial sexuality outweighed all other concerns with 71 percent of respondents being opposed to racial intermarriage.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kay, *Red Dust Road*, p. 156

⁵⁰ Lucy Bland, 'White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War,' *Gender & History*, 17:1 (2005), pp. 29-61; Wendy Webster, 'The Empire Comes Home: Commonwealth Migration to Britain,' in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 122-160.

⁵¹ France Winddance Twine, *A White Side of Black Britain: Interracial Intimacy and Racial Literacy* (Durnham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 35-36

Kay's memoir, *Red Dust Road* further reveals the public's attitudes towards mixed race children at this time. After having had difficulty in adopting, Kay's adoptive mother stated that they did not mind what 'colour' the child was and they were shown a baby that day. Indeed, Kay's adoptive parents were specifically contacted prior to her birth as they had previously expressed an interest in adopting another child of colour.⁵² Negative public attitudes towards interracial couples were still pronounced in the 1960s and, in the face of an increasingly difficult adoption process, mixed race babies were still thought of as secondary to their white counterparts. The WHC also noted that the mother of a mixed race child faced more difficulties in finding support for herself and her baby.⁵³

Of course, it is likely that comparatively few unmarried mothers came into contact with a mother and baby home, or indeed any agency at all, as will be discussed below in the case of interviewee Joan. The lived experience of children born to unmarried mothers is more difficult to access via the records of the above institutions who had very limited contact with the babies born in their care. However, the role that these institutions played in the adoption of babies in the period between 1920 and 1970 is worthy of note. The experiences of those who did not come into contact with a mother and baby home and the impact of lone motherhood on experiences of childhood is considered in more depth below. Nonetheless, the records of the WHC and the HFMH indicate the role of differing factors, on one hand, local censure and gossip, on the other, extended familial and community support. The configuration of these factors arguably had an influence on outcomes for children.

⁵² Ibid., p. 25.

⁵³ Women's Help Committee, *Annual Report 1957*, p. 3.

III. Lone Parent Families and Housing

Moving towards a consideration of the greater range of lone parent households, as well as those of unmarried mothers who did not experience mother and baby homes or adoption of their children, the issue of housing once more comes to the fore. As with any 'non-traditional family' form, children from one parent families are often thought to be poorer and worse housed than their nuclear family counterparts, particularly families headed by unmarried mothers.⁵⁴ This is, in part, likely to be due to a greater incidence of financial hardship amongst one parent families, again specifically amongst those headed by women.⁵⁵ The early twentieth century Poor Law, an early welfare system, was notably punitive in its treatment of lone mothers, albeit some less so than others with widows notably being treated more sympathetically.⁵⁶ Although the welfare state saw the widespread introduction of state welfare including National Insurance, Family Allowance, and assistance from bodies such as the National Assistance Board (NAB), access to welfare for lone parents, particularly lone mothers was complex, as shall be discussed below. Indeed, their greater financial hardship could be linked to a moral distinction of 'deserving families' made by bodies such as housing associations and social housing policy throughout the twentieth century, a point explored further below.

A brief examination of the RSSPCC case files for single mothers reveals that at the beginning of their case history, 12 families lived in one room homes and a further nine in

⁵⁴ Michael Hardy and Graham Crow, *Lone Parenthood: Coping with constraints and making opportunities* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 47; Pat Thane, 'Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth Century England', *Women's History Review* 20:1 (2011), p. 25.

⁵⁵ Snell and Millar, 'Lone Parent Families and the Welfare State', p 410; Crow and Hardey, 'Diversity and Ambiguity' p. 144.

⁵⁶ Kiernan, Land and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood*; Thane and Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?*; Hughes and Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown'.

two-roomed homes, a total of 38 percent living in homes of two rooms or less.⁵⁷ Furthermore, interviewee Joan and memoirist Robert Douglas spent at least some, if not all, of their childhood in one-roomed homes. Due to the nature of Scottish housing for much of the period from 1920 to 1970, this housing pattern was widespread and certainly not unique to one parent families. Of the interviewees growing up in a nuclear family, considered in chapter two, five lived for some time in a ‘single-end’ or a ‘room and kitchen’ home. Furthermore, of the RSSPCC case files consulted for the next chapter on stepfamilies, over a quarter of families were living in homes of two rooms or less at the beginning of their dealings with the RSSPCC.⁵⁸ Whilst it must be briefly noted that the cases dealt with by the RSSPCC were typified by poor housing; the figures above are not severely out of line with the national average over the period, irrespective of family form.

Although Glasgow’s housing policy is reputed to have changed in the 1960s, this is not borne out in the experience of lone parent families, particularly those headed by lone mothers, as exemplified by the case files here. The Housing Act of 1949 had heralded a shift in housing policy in Britain from a focus on improving working-class living conditions to attracting an ever-increasing ‘Middle Britain’ to social housing.⁵⁹ Throughout Glasgow in the 1940s and 1950s, Glasgow Corporation practiced a strict tenant selection policy in order to ensure the success of its burgeoning social housing. The tenant selection policy was operated on a point system, whereby prospective tenants could be awarded points for: overcrowding, insanitary conditions, homelessness, or living in a slum dwelling. As a result, housing

⁵⁷ Of the 55 consulted cases, 16 cases (29 percent) did not specify the number of rooms in the home, either because the home was not seen as the complaint was made in person at the Society’s office or because the Inspector did not make a specific note within the case files. As such, in reality a higher number of families may have lived in homes of two rooms or less. Glasgow Caledonian University, [GB 1847 C1ST], Children 1 st (RSSPCC) Archive, Case Notes [hereafter RSSPCC case notes].

⁵⁸ RSSPCC case files returned under search “stepfather”, see pp. 236-237 for further analysis.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Sharrer, ‘The Impact of Social Housing on Health in Glasgow and Baltimore, 1930-1980’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2016) p. 134.

allocation was prolonged and complex: one report from 1950 stated that, “the problem of allocating tenancies is one of deciding which families shall be rehoused at all, and not merely deciding the order in which they shall be rehoused.” Eventually, Glasgow Corporation switched to a ‘group plus points’ system, which compared applicants’ point based needs against others of the same category.⁶⁰ Combined, this left many lone mothers in a precarious position, they were neither desirable middle-class tenants nor were they as ill-housed and as overcrowded as many of their counterparts.

Poor housing was a feature of many of the RSSPCC case files consulted for this chapter; indeed one case file from 1969 explicitly deals with a mother’s report of poor housing. Living in a one-roomed home with a leak from upstairs with rats making their way into the house, the mother and her two children had lived in the home for three years, and had applied to the Glasgow Corporation for re-housing. Still waiting, the mother had contacted the Society for help in obtaining suitable housing for her and her children. The case closed a few days later when the Society intervened to find the family another home with the current factor, although this was still a one-roomed property.⁶¹ Whilst the exact reasons for the above family not being allocated a new house are unknown, the difficulties that the family faced in finding suitable housing are unsurprising given the housing policy at the time.

Furthermore, the necessity of contacting the RSSPCC to look into alternate housing demonstrates the difficulty that many families, particularly mothers coping alone, faced in obtaining suitable homes for their families. In his 1969 study, *Mothers Alone*, Dennis Marsden concluded that, in regards to obtaining council housing, lone mothers were “almost

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 177-180.

⁶¹ RSSPCC case file G334, 1969.

powerless without some kind of official support for their case.’⁶² Furthermore, April Gallwey’s research into lone motherhood in England revealed that many lone mothers did not even attempt to apply for local authority housing due to the difficulties in obtaining a home.⁶³ Of those considered in detail here, two interviewees, Linda and Helen, and one memoirist, Ron Culley, noted spending their childhoods in local authority housing. Notably, each of these families were headed by widows. However, Gallwey notes that in England in the years immediately after the Second World War, widows were not considered any more eligible than other lone mothers for council housing and in some cases they were even made to vacate local authority housing to make way for other families.⁶⁴

A distinction between the experiences recounted from different types of lone parent families was apparent as lone mother families were less likely to move into a local authority home. Molly, born in 1910, spent her childhood living in a two-roomed home in Glasgow with her grandmother, mother, and two brothers. Although Molly’s family was surely overcrowded with five people living in two rooms, her family only ever moved from one ‘room and kitchen’ home to another.⁶⁵ That Molly’s family did not move to a larger property is perhaps explained by the fact they were living in Glasgow at a time before the first state subsidised housing act was passed in 1919. Reluctance to move could also have stemmed from Molly’s mother’s established support networks, including her own mother who had given up her own home to move in with the family after the death of Molly’s father.⁶⁶

⁶² Dennis Marsden, *Mothers Alone: Poverty and the Fatherless Family* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1969), p. 142.

⁶³ April Gallwey, ‘Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Warwick: University of Warwick, 2011), p. 56.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday.*, pp. 144-147

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

Linda, whose father died when she was a few months old, lived with her brother and widowed mother in a new housing estate in a suburban area of Glasgow in two-bedroomed home, Linda shared a room with her elder brother before the family relocated to London when she was 11. The home of Linda's childhood was newly built and came with fitted facilities such as a pull-down table and ironing board as well as a fridge – a fairly new commodity for most.⁶⁷ As recounted in the previous chapter, in 1958, prior to his father's death, Ron had moved to a new home that was part of new housing scheme on the outskirts of Glasgow. Ron describes the house as having "larger rooms and more of them" as well as central heating, supposedly the first neighbourhood to be provided so in Glasgow.⁶⁸ Helen, born in 1959, whose father died when she was 13, lived in the same home throughout her childhood; a two-bedroomed local authority built home in a small town, just outside of Glasgow city. Finally, Agnes, whose mother left, and later divorced, her father when Agnes was 11, moved the family, including Agnes and her five siblings, from their corporation home in the suburbs of Dundee to a large flat in the city centre of Dundee in 1955; although it is not known whether this was also a local authority home.⁶⁹ Due to the flat's large size, Agnes's mother was able to take in lodgers in order to supplement the family's income.

Historically, the taking in of lodgers has long been seen as a way of providing a small income for women left without support, particularly women with dependent children who are unable to go out to work.⁷⁰ Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century, female heads of households in Scotland were encouraged to take in lodgers by authorities in order to relieve financial burdens on the parish and to make sure that any dependent children were provided

⁶⁷ Linda, interviewed by author, 16.07.2014.

⁶⁸ Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow*, p. 18.

⁶⁹ Agnes, interviewed by author, 29.10.2014.

⁷⁰ Leonore Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century England,' in Sandra Burman (ed) *Fit Work for Women* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) p.83

for.⁷¹ By the 1960s, taking in lodgers was still a common practice amongst working-class households, but the situation was seen as morally ambiguous by the RSSPCC who frowned upon the practice.⁷²

In contrast, the experience of Joan's unmarried mother was distinct from the widowed or separated parents considered above. Joan, born in 1947, spent a portion of her early years in the basement room of a shared house in a district of Glasgow:

We lived in a big house... and we shared rooms; all the families had rooms. So, we lived in the basement of the house in [redacted] Street, it was one big room with bars on the window and a fireplace. We had makeshift beds with horsehair mattresses and we had old coats to keep us warm. Ma cooked on the fire, we had candles to enable us to see at night, we had a pail to use for a toilet at night-time. In the daytime we shared a toilet that was upstairs with the rest of the tenants. There was a kitchen hotplate upstairs where everybody cooked if they didn't use their fire.⁷³

Despite the undeniably overcrowded nature of Joan's family home, the family did not relocate to a larger home until she was in primary school, at which point her mother took a flat in the city centre of Glasgow.⁷⁴ Although Joan did not say whether her mother had attempted to obtain a council owned property or whether she had her name on any housing lists, it is possible that she would not have been successful even if she had, owing both to the difficulty in obtaining suitable housing and Joan's large family size.

These experiences contrast with that of William, first mentioned in the previous chapter. Born in 1940, William lived in a large semi-detached villa, "a middle-class sort of house", in Edinburgh. When his mother died in 1953, William's family suffered little to no

⁷¹ Jeff Meek, 'Boarding Practices in Early Twentieth Century Scotland,' *Continuity and Change* 31 (2016), pp. 92-93

⁷² RSSPCC case L65/78, case notes (1960).

⁷³ Joan, interviewed by author, 26.11.2014.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

financial or physical upheaval that he recalls.⁷⁵ For William, his family's adherence to the breadwinner ideology, coupled with his father's wage as a solicitor, meant that transition to a lone parent family saw no reduction in their financial circumstances and no need to move from their current home to another. This once more highlights the gendered and class difference in experiences of lone parenthood.

As in the chapter on nuclear families, the emotional importance of the 'home' remained prominent in testimonies. For example, despite the difficulties faced by Joan's family, Joan was clear to praise her mother and the effort she made to look after the family, "she just made a home for us all as best she could and we just all knuckled down to it and that was it." Joan openly admits that she partly decided to take part in the interview "as a tribute to my mother".⁷⁶ As such, she does not openly criticise her early years spent in a one-roomed home and instead focuses on how her mother managed to cope, singlehandedly, with her nine children. Molly also focuses on her formative relationship with her grandmother and her grandmother's role in supporting her family in the wake of their transition to lone parent family. In the previous chapters, location and community played an important role in interviewees' recollections of home and associated feelings of security and belonging and this is notably largely absent from the narratives considered here. This absence is particularly telling in regards to recollected societal attitudes towards lone parent families, particularly lone and unmarried mothers at this time, as well as having a wider significance on the recounted coping strategies of lone parents.

⁷⁵ William, interviewed by author, 26.08.2014.

⁷⁶ Joan, interview.

IV. The Community, the State, and Support Networks

With the fragmenting families discussed in the previous chapter, the perceived ability of a parent to provide a sense of security and continuity was important for many experiences of childhood. At times, this sense of constancy was only made possible via external networks, most notably the role of grandparents, as for Molly Weir and Dick Lynas who both lived with their grandparent(s). In chapter two, focusing on nuclear families, the role of the extended family was also revealed to be influential in the family's functioning and recollected emotional wellbeing. The wider local community too was significant. In discussing lone parent families this is of particular interest given the assertion of the WHC and HFMH that familial and community support was integral to an unmarried mother's ability to keep and support their children.

For families in transition, grandparental support was the focus of many coping strategies of new lone parents. Many widowed and divorced (or separated) mothers would turn to extended family members for support, often to provide childcare allowing them to go out to work, as in the case of Molly Weir whose grandmother gave up her home to move in with the widowed family. Indeed, as a result Molly's mother is somewhat marginalised throughout her memoir, fulfilling the traditional male gender role of financial provider, whilst her grandmother becomes the emotional caregiver. Linda's mother was also able to go out to work because she had the support network of her grandparents: "so when she [Linda's mother] worked I used to go to Granny's after school."⁷⁷ Living with extended family members is also a strategy evidenced in the RSSPCC case files: nine mothers lived in homes

⁷⁷ Linda, interview

rented by their own parents.⁷⁸ Ron Culley's grandparents played a similar support role for his mother: after the death of his father, his maternal grandparents applied to Glasgow Corporation to be rehoused in order to be closer to their widowed daughter who had previously moved out of the home and a half a mile away.⁷⁹ In addition, grandparents could also provide an emotional role to lone parents. Ron stated that while he and his two brothers, "were closer to Mum ... she, in turn, was close to Gran and Grandpa, her mother and father."⁸⁰ Linda too, noted that in the absence of her father her mother "relied heavily" on her own father and brother (that is, Linda's grandfather and uncle).⁸¹ In contrast, William, who experienced childhood in a family headed by a lone father, did not have increased contact and support from his grandparents, or any other member of his extended family. William's family suffered no change in financial circumstances and had no need for the economic assistance often carried out by grandparents. Indeed, William's father had the resources to hire a housekeeper. However, the additional emotional role carried out by extended family members in many lone parent families was arguably absent as a result, and William thus turned to one particular housekeeper to fulfil this role.⁸²

In previous chapters, analysis suggested that location and community played an important role in interviewees' recollections of home and associated feelings of security and belonging. This was notably largely absent from the narratives considered here, although both Robert and Molly did reflect on the larger role of their communities – perhaps, in part, due to the working-class nostalgia for community evidenced in a number of memoirs, or the fact that both of their mothers were not 'unmarried', but rather separated and widowed. Ellen

⁷⁸ RSSPCC case files: L65/36 (1965); LG67/73 (1967); H275 (1967); J885 (1967); G1589 (1967); G1136 (1969); G1384 (1969); G760 (1969); G231 (1969).

⁷⁹ Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸¹ Linda, interview.

⁸² William, interview.

Ross' emphasis on survival networks for women to help keep their families well fed and clothed focused on the role of women as wives. Her study of working-class neighbourhoods in London prior to the First World War indicates the importance of community hegemony in the establishment and running of these networks. Whilst the neighbourhood would often view children as a common responsibility and the children of widows, and those in prison, would often be taken in by neighbours, the unmarried mother is notable in her absence in Ross's analysis.⁸³

The case files of the RSSPCC evidence such stigmatisation and suggest this contributed to the disconnection of unmarried mothers from their communities. An anonymous letter of complaint concerning one single mother's behaviour was written to the RSSPCC in 1969 and reads:

Dear Sir, this is another letter about Mrs ... Surely to God youse will do something she keeps shouting for all the neighbours the cruelty [RSSPCC] is on my side she is passed talking about different men every other week. I ask you how you house filth like this the police was up on Saturday morning by the time they came everything was quite ... [sic].⁸⁴

Upon inspection the investigating officer found the three-roomed apartment to be home to a single mother and her four children, "clean and tidy" with no evidence being found of the "home conditions being bad". Whilst the mother admitted to having had a house warming party earlier that week, she also "emphatically denied bringing men in the home and stated she was finished with men." The repeated occurrence of malicious complaints against unmarried mothers was arguably revealed when the investigating inspector enquired whether the mother was having any problems with her neighbours, indicating a frequency of such tactics amongst quarrelling tenants; the mother did admit to having trouble with one but

⁸³ Ellen Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War I', *History Workshop Journal*, 15:1 (1983) p. 12. Ross only makes reference to one illegitimate child being boarded in the community, later adopted by her 'foster' mother; the unmarried mother herself is not resident in the community.

⁸⁴ Anonymous letter of complaint, RSSPCC case G999 (1969)

declined to elaborate further.⁸⁵ A similar case occurred earlier in 1967; the RSSPCC received a complaint of an unmarried mother neglecting her child. The mother in question was living with her parents in a council house and the child was seen to be “healthy and happy” and her room well furnished with a double bed and cot. The complaint was deemed malicious after one visit to the home and the case was immediately dropped before it caused further distress to the mother.⁸⁶

More specifically, fears over the potential sexual permissiveness of unmarried mothers was revealed in two cases where the mother was directly accused of prostitution. In one instance, the mother was indicted by a Ministry of Social Security (MSS) officer who cited this as the reason for suspension of her allowance; in the other, the priest of a local chapel refused to help the mother find a baby sitter, as he did not want to “expose a young girl at an impressionable age to moral danger”.⁸⁷ In both of these cases the RSSPCC failed to find any evidence to support these claims.⁸⁸ In the same way that communities could come together to form support networks, they could also exclude those that were not deemed respectable.⁸⁹ Indeed Elizabeth Roberts found that the close-knit neighbourhood acted as an agent of social control.⁹⁰ This once again indicates an acceptance of the illegitimate child, but not the unmarried mother, and raises questions over the impact of community acceptance on experiences of childhood, given children’s aforementioned awareness of local gossip and vilification of their parents.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ RSSPCC Case L67/73, case notes (1967)

⁸⁷ RSSPCC case L66/141, case notes (1965).

⁸⁸ Ibid; RSSPCC Case G608, case notes (1969).

⁸⁹ Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 159; Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (London: MacMillan Press, 1995), p.117.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: an oral history, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 199.

However, the stigma of lone parenthood extended beyond the unmarried mother. All mothers living alone appear to have been subject to increased speculation and attention from their neighbours. Not only does this lead to an important distinction between lone mothers and lone fathers, but also perceptions of respectability within lone motherhood. Linda, who lived in a suburban housing estate with her mother and elder brother, noted that while she and her brother were comfortable in the community, playing with the other local children, she was always aware that her family were different,

... 'cause I didn't have a father, I knew that everybody in my street had a father, which was quite unusual considering Scotland provides most of the infantry regiments and what not, but in that group of prefabs we were the only ones who didn't have someone there. And I think my mother was quite conscious about that too.⁹¹

The absence of a husband caused some friction for Linda's mother within the community, "...she always felt that people came and complained to her, if any boys got into trouble, they'd always come to her house first, because she didn't have a man there..."⁹² Whilst the absence of a father in Linda's early childhood did not cause her to vocalise any personal feelings that her own family was somehow lacking, she was acutely aware that they were different. Although not impacting her own consideration of 'family', the fact that her family did not meet a social norm was a cause of discomfort for Linda.

Joan, the only child of an unmarried mother to be interviewed for this thesis, did not mention the wider role of the community or touch on the support networks they may have provided for her mother at any point in her interview. However, one other interviewee, Stuart born in 1947, did reveal children's awareness of the stigma attached to unmarried mothers. Talking of his time living in a local authority house in a district of Aberdeen, Stuart mentioned that there was "one unmarried mother in the whole scheme ... maybe 8,000

⁹¹ Linda, interview.

⁹² Ibid.

people, and you would have known through school ... almost unheard of.”⁹³ However, Stuart also revealed a common strategy for unmarried mothers to negotiate this reputation and attention when he spoke of one of his childhood friends having been raised by his grandmother, believing her to be his mother. Stuart went on to state that on finding this out, his own mother warned him to keep away from the family.⁹⁴

An eventual one of nine children, Joan recounted how her mother, an orphan from 18, was “all alone”.⁹⁵ Whereas previously the support of grandparents was recalled in other cases of lone parenthood, this possibility was absent for Joan’s family. However, Joan does recall the effect that her mother’s lone state did have on her elder sister as a source of support for the family. In the previous discussions on sibling relationships one aspect was notable: the variation in experience of childhood amongst siblings within the same family. Joan was the sixth child out of nine, with four older brothers, an elder sister, and two younger brothers and a younger sister. Joan recalls that her elder sister, the eldest girl in the family, had a considerably different experience of childhood to herself.

Pamela had things the hardest; mother came down on her hard. Always. She always got a good slap or a, you know, she went very hard on Pamela, very, very hard. ... Pamela was the eldest she had all the responsibility and mother gave Pamela all the responsibility and it was always, you know, she was always stressed out trying to cope, as a kid, with it all.
... She was like the Mam as well. It did have a big impact on her...⁹⁶

Having not interviewed Pamela herself it is impossible to state the impact that this role did have on her experience of childhood, however, it was noted by Joan as being significantly different to her own. It could be argued that for Joan’s sister, Pamela, the lone mother aspect of her family increased the pressure on her to fulfil a traditional caretaking role, acting as a parental support to her mother in the absence of a father. However, as seen previously in

⁹³ Stuart, interviewed by author, 28.11.2014.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Joan, interview.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

extensive discussions of sibling relationships, this was not unique to a lone mother family, nor has it been only female siblings recounted as taking on a caretaking and pseudo-parental role. Within the larger nuclear families considered at the beginning of this work, many interviewees ascribed a parenting role to either their elder siblings or to themselves in regard to their siblings.

Additionally Joan's account brings in the pivotal role of state support for the first time. Welfare support had been identified by mother and baby homes as vital in unmarried mother's ability to look after their child(ren) and organisations were aware of the difficulties in accessing such support. Speaking to the *Scottish Daily Mail* in 1958, the head of the Salvation Army-run mother and baby home in Edinburgh explained that, "if there is now a swing towards adoption it is because society does not offer the unmarried mother the facilities for keeping her child in reasonable security."⁹⁷ The official state support offered to families and the introduction of welfare in the post-war years has been covered extensively at the beginning of this work: Family Allowance was introduced for all families with two or more children in 1945 and the means-tested National Assistance support was introduced in 1948. In being available only to women who had two or more children, Family Allowance was of no help to a lone mother and her single child. Even though nearly all of the families considered so far throughout this thesis would have likely been in receipt of some form of government supplied benefit (notably Family Allowance), this did not form an explicit part of any other interviewee's narrative. Peter and Ken made passing references to parish clothing, free school meals and a charitable holiday; however, they did not indicate an awareness of any lasting charitable or state support. Linda, whose mother was widowed during World War Two, also

⁹⁷ Ian Saunders, 'The Nameless Children of Edinburgh', *Scottish Daily Mail* (6.05.1958).

made a brief reference to her mother's receipt of a widow's pension; however, the impact of this was not repeated at any other point during her interview.

It is important to note that questions about welfare support were not included in the interview schedule and that when forming a large part of interviewee narratives, interviewees themselves raised this. This is interesting as, whilst the lack of attention paid to welfare in interviews in previous chapters could be due to an assumption that this was universal or not of relevance, it could also be due to familial roles. Within lone parent families there was no longer the assumed support of a dual parental unit and so issues within the home were perhaps more openly acknowledged and discussed, and financial hardship and family struggles harder to mask. Indeed, Helen stated that her father's death in 1972 when she was 13 had affected her mother in that there was "less room for deflection" and that her mother no longer had anyone else to talk to about issues within the home.⁹⁸ Molly Weir too, indicates that her father's death made her more aware of her family's financial difficulties; through both her acknowledgement of her grandmother's role as the emotional caregiver and her family's deviation from the traditional breadwinner ideology with her mother's fulfilment of the breadwinner role.⁹⁹ Robert Douglas also recounted his awareness of his mother's financial difficulties as a result of his father's desertion; however, here Douglas recounts his mother's visits to the pawn shop.¹⁰⁰ Further, the potential impact of his mother's financial hardship is mitigated by Douglas's pleasure in his father's absence.

Not only was Joan aware of the impact of state support on her childhood, but also charitable intervention. Joan and her siblings were in contact with welfare agencies such as the Salvation Army and were taken on organised outings such as the Fresh Air Fortnight.

⁹⁸ Helen, interview with author, 09.07.2014.

⁹⁹ Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday*.

¹⁰⁰ Douglas, *Night Song*, pp. 249-252.

Whilst Peter and Ken also recollected an organised holiday similar to a Fresh Air Fortnight in the previous nuclear families chapter, Joan's contact with charitable organisations and welfare agencies was much more regular and formed a much larger part of her narrative. Joan recalls the role of her mother's weekly benefit allowance:

Sometimes, you know, she would tell you not to get up because the post office didn't open on a Monday until 9:00 and school started at that time but you had nothing to wear, you'd nothing for your feet. So she'd go and buy the little cloth ballerina slippers you see the kids have these days... You'd have to wait until she came back with her Monday book to give you these shoes to get you up and give you something to eat, because sometimes she'd tell you not to get up because she'd nothing to eat for you.¹⁰¹

Interestingly, the 1908 Education (Scotland) Act introduced legislation requiring school boards to investigate cases of neglected children and provide clothing (something not required by the equivalent 1906 Act in England and Wales) as well as extending the provision of school meals.¹⁰² However, despite the fact that education authorities had been granted the power to intervene, the RSSPCC was still almost the only society actively engaging with how children were provided for in their own homes.¹⁰³ The 1908 Act, and indeed the RSSPCC, still placed an emphasis on child maintenance being first and foremost the responsibility of the parents, further indicating the difficulty for many lone mothers in accessing welfare.¹⁰⁴

Despite assertions that the welfare state made family life easier for single parents, its impact on the experience of the unmarried mother and her family should not be overstated.¹⁰⁵ The recommendations of the Beveridge Report were clear about the position of wives and mothers and the importance that they played in society; however, the position of the

¹⁰¹ Joan, interview.

¹⁰² John Stewart, 'The Campaign for School Meals in Edwardian Scotland', in Jon Lawrence and Pat Starkey (eds.), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), p. 174

¹⁰³ John Murphy, *British Social Services: the Scottish dimension* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 2012), p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

¹⁰⁵ Gill Gorell Barnes, Paul Thompson, Gwyn Daniel and Natasha Burchardt, *Growing Up in Stepfamilies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

unmarried mother was still unclear. National Insurance provision introduced in the 1940s for the lone mother was restricted to widows and did not cover the deserted, divorced or unmarried mother. In addition, despite allowances being available for mothers, these were too small to be of much help to struggling families, as evidenced by Joan's childhood experience of a hand-to-mouth existence, with the family reliant on her mother's, often insufficient, weekly benefit allowance. Finally, although eligible for Family Allowance and weekly assistance from bodies such as the NAB these monies were not always easily obtained by mothers. Colleen Forrest asserts that Family Allowance depended upon a continued normative family structure and assistance from the NAB was not easily obtained either.¹⁰⁶ Virginia Noble states that the NAB deliberately obscured eligibility for assistance and pressed many lone mothers to seek familial support instead – once again state support emphasising a 'normative' (nuclear) family structure.¹⁰⁷ Despite the fact that National Assistance was introduced as a universal right in order to replace the ill-viewed Poor Law and discourses of the 'deserving poor', the NAB's treatment of lone mothers and cohabiting couples was similar to those of the Poor Law authorities, as discussed by Eleanor Gordon. In her study of the official responses to irregular marriage and cohabitation, Gordon found that Poor Law officials, notoriously careful with the public purse, viewed cohabitation as sufficient reason to refuse relief.¹⁰⁸

This is further evidenced in the RSSPCC case files; of the 55 consulted cases, six were mothers who contacted the Society regarding the suspension of their benefits. In one such case from 1965 the inspector reports that,

¹⁰⁶ Colleen Margaret Forrest, 'Family Poverty, Family Allowances, and the Normative Family Structure in Britain, 1917-1945', *Journal of Family History*, 26:4 (2001), pp. 508-528.

¹⁰⁷ Virginia Noble, *Inside the Welfare State: Foundations of policy and practice in post-war Britain* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p.46

¹⁰⁸ Gordon, 'Irregular Marriage and Cohabitation in Scotland, 1855-1939', p. 1070.

The complaint is that the N.A.B. took the mother's Order Book and tore it up in her presence because they were suspicious that there are men frequenting the house and the usual conclusion by the Board in such circumstances is that the mother may be receiving money from these men while at the same time drawing Nat. Ass. [National Assistance] She had an old neighbour, an elderly man, visiting her, when an official of the Board called. This apparently gave rise to suspicion and sometime later two officials called again. It happened that she had a male cousin visiting and when there was a knock at the door, she thought if it were N.A.B. Officials, it would confirm their suspicions that she was at fault, so the cousin went out the window.¹⁰⁹

Whilst sympathetic, the inspector warned the unmarried mother of the dangers of having men in the home and both he and the NAB official viewed her single status as being implicitly promiscuous, once more signalling that the 'permissive shift' of the 1960s was yet to reach unmarried mothers:

The mother appears to keep the home in very good order and the Board official to whom I was speaking also commented on that but he thinks that she is a promiscuous woman. She evidently has had two illegitimate children since her husband left.¹¹⁰

The RSSPCC placed a heavy emphasis on the material conditions of the home and the physical welfare of the children of the families they investigated. Despite praising the housekeeping skills of the mother in question, she was still found lacking as a parent for her children due to their illegitimate status. This reflects the distrust and suspicion surrounding unmarried mothers discussed earlier in this chapter: even organisations such as the RSSPCC whose aim was to aid struggling families and neglected children still ascribed a deserving and undeserving status to the families it came into contact with based on perceived parental conduct and morality. Additionally, numerous cases were referred to the RSSPCC by agencies themselves, including the Children's Department, the NAB and the Ministry of Social Security.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ RSSPCC Case G273, case notes (1965)

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ RSSPCC case files L65/36 (1965); G691 (1969); G1010 (1969); G1331 (1969).

The extensive use of RSSPCC inspectors both during the lifetime of the NAB and the new Department of Health and Security in the later sixties, demonstrates that attitudes towards applicants for relief had not really changed since the years of the Poor Law, when Boards approached all claimants cautiously, believing them to be forming stratagems to obtain relief. Suspicion and surveillance of unmarried mothers arguably only intensified over the course of the 1950s and 1960s as a result of this.¹¹² Kiernan *et al* reported a similar monitoring of unmarried mothers in England and Wales with NAB officials often visiting regularly to check on their status, suspending payments if they were suspected of co-habiting with a man.¹¹³ Moreover, this also reverts to a discussion of respectability in regards lone motherhood. Janet Fink argues in her study of the portrayal of the unmarried mother in British popular film and fiction that there was a growing acceptance of unmarried mothers in the mid-twentieth century, however, this was contingent on their perceived respectability and ability to provide adequately for their children.¹¹⁴ Arguably, this could be extended to cover all lone mothers during this period.

As with the discussion in the previous chapter on parental loss and absence, lone parent's agency and perceived attempts to provide consistency for their family is hugely influential when recollecting experiences of childhood within this family form. Kin support networks maintain their importance across the family forms, the presence of grandparents allowing for mothers to bridge the gap left by a father's absence – whether replacing the practical, emotional, or financial support of a dual unit nuclear model. Whilst the close involvement of grandparents was not unusual across family forms, the reliance of lone mothers on their support is indicative of the necessity for many lone mothers to establish

¹¹² Thane and Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?*, p. 129.

¹¹³ Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood*, p. 163-170.

¹¹⁴ Janet Fink, 'For Better or Worse? The Dilemmas of Unmarried Motherhood in Mid-Twentieth Century Popular British Film and Fiction', *Women's History Review*, 20:1 (2011), pp. 145-160.

more complex and varied support networks than their dual parent counterparts, as well as lone parent families headed by lone fathers. Moreover, with the addition of the state and welfare support appearing extensively for the first time in experiences of unmarried motherhood, the distinction between forms of lone parenthood continue to be important in understanding their impact on experiences of childhood.

V. Education

With children from broken homes being thought to have a lower educational attainment it is unsurprising that children in lone parent families, particularly those headed by lone mothers, are also thought to be similarly affected.¹¹⁵ However, the discussion of education in the two previous chapters, and indeed in what follows, highlights that attempts to measure educational attainment and its relationship with family form is complex within a historical context. For children in nuclear families, as in the second chapter, staying on at school past the required age was contingent on a number of factors including: parental support and approval; class aspirations and notions of ‘getting on’; and, financial support and stability. These patterns are repeated in experiences amongst children in lone parent families, with many of these families headed by lone mothers.

Agnes, for example, recounted how she could have progressed to the local academy,

I could have gone to an academy, [redacted] Academy, back then if you did well in your junior secondary they encouraged you to – well, I didn’t think my mum could afford the uniform and I hesitated, I didn’t mention it to her until the last day, the day before the last day at school, and I told her and she said, “of course, go and tell them

¹¹⁵ Yuxin Li and Karen Mumford, ‘Family structure and the educational outcomes of British children: some preliminary evidence’, *The International Journal of Learning*, 16:7 (2009), pp. 643-656. Research from both the USA and the UK since the 1980s has been relatively consistent in its findings for lower outcomes for children from single-parent households in comparison to children from dual-parent households, Gillian Hampden-Thompson and Claudia Galindo, ‘Family structure instability and the educational persistence of young people in England’, *British Educational Research Journal*, 41:5 (2015), p. 751.

you want to go to the [redacted].” So I went to the headmaster and he said you’re too late, so I didn’t go.”¹¹⁶

As with Maureen previously, Agnes perceived a potential lack of financial stability within the home that resulted in her lacking the assurance that she could stay on at school. Despite her mother’s professed ability to support her at school, Agnes stated that she “wanted to go, I just didn’t have the confidence.” Prior to her parents’ separation Agnes recalls feeling inferior and insecure at school owing to her father’s reputation as an alcoholic and the fact that everyone in the village knew he had been to prison.¹¹⁷ Not wanting to add financial pressure to her divorced mother, Agnes had waited until the last minute to pursue a chance to attend the local academy, a move that would have necessitated the purchase of a new school uniform.¹¹⁸

Robert Douglas describes a similar decision in *Night Song of the Last Tram*. Although Douglas does not state that he left school earlier than hoped, or that he faced direct pressure from his mother to contribute to the household income, he left school aged 16 to get a job. It was with great ceremony that he presented his mother with his first pay packet, exhibiting pride in fulfilling the role that he saw as falling to him in the absence of his father’s support:

In between regularly checking that I hadn’t lost my wages, I had also been rehearsing for this moment. I held the unopened brown envelope up between finger and thumb. ‘There ye are, Ma, my first pay packet.’ As she took it I shyly kissed her on the cheek.¹¹⁹

Previously, the emphasis that the family placed on traditional gender roles has been evidenced with many older siblings, particularly girls, leaving school early to help in the home. Providing for the family as ‘man of the house’ was central to the definition of working-class masculinity throughout much, if not all, of the twentieth century.¹²⁰ In a

¹¹⁶ Agnes, interview.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Douglas, *Night Song*, p. 298.

¹²⁰ Hilary Young, ‘Being a Man: Everyday Masculinities’ in Lynn Abrams & Callum G. Brown (eds.) *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 141.

fatherless family, Douglas took up this position and supported his mother who, in turn, maintained her domestic authority. The impact of lone motherhood on gender expectation and experience for boys and young men is relevant in the case of Ron Culley. On his father's death when Ron was nine years old in 1959, Ron's mother woke him and told him, "you're the man of the family now, Ronald."¹²¹ At only nine years of age, the role of 'man of the house' was largely symbolic for Ron who faced no subsequent restrictions or increased demands on his time, nor was he expected to become more involved with the care of his two younger brothers. However, despite the fact that his mother placed no conscious pressure on him to earn money both she and his grandmother always referred to him as the man of the house, evoking an authoritarian and breadwinner rhetoric, and emphasising that financial security should start as soon as possible. Despite not physically occupying his late father's role in the family, the gesture of referring to him as "man of the house" turned Ron into the symbolic figurehead of his family over and above his mother and grandmother, and grandfather, exemplifying a gender hierarchy within the family, that is irrespective of age, as well as reflecting traditional, familial gender roles.

Children's perception of financial stability plays a key role in deciding to continue in education; recent research from 2015 also emphasises that family stability plays a vital role in children persisting in education after the leaving age.¹²² This research notes the increased likelihood of children from lone parent families stopping schooling due to income, and the general lower incomes of lone mother families.¹²³ Joan's recollection of having to wait until her mother returned with suitable shoes for them to wear to school suggests a more precarious access to education. In his 1969 study Marsden found that children of lone

¹²¹ Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow*, p. 6.

¹²² Hampden-Thompson and Galindo, 'Family structure instability', p. 759.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

mothers often missed school due to a lack of clothes or footwear.¹²⁴ Joan was protective of her mother when recounting her school days, insisting, “We all went to school.”¹²⁵ However, Joan’s memories of school were carefully constructed and presented as positive experiences and her mother is a ‘good mother’ for ensuring that her children all attended school.¹²⁶

Despite this, Joan’s composure slipped when talking of her peers at school, “I remember the girls at school slagging me off and saying, you know, ‘you parish fed git,’ you know, ‘you’re wearing hobnail,’¹²⁷ blah, blah, blah ... and I didn’t care.”¹²⁸ Despite asserting that “she didn’t care” when Joan recounts the appeal of the Fresh Air Fortnight she recalled, “You’d wear a grey skirt and a woollen jumper underneath it and big fleecy draws, you know right down to your knees ... stuff like that. And everybody was the same, nobody was different, we were all the same and you’d get shoes ...”¹²⁹ The repetition of “everybody was the same, nobody was different” is a clear example of Joan’s unconscious cognitive dissonance throughout her narrative. Keen to assure that “she didn’t care” that she was dressed differently to her peers contrasts starkly with her clear pleasure in the uniformity afforded by the Fresh Air Fortnight, suggesting a feeling of alienation and ‘otherness’ at school, separating her from many of her peers. Linda also reflected on the differences between her and her peers at school, echoing Joan’s feelings of distance, “Most of the girls in my class, I would say, were far better off than I was, especially the ones who had two parents. I didn’t know of anyone else in my class who didn’t have a father.”¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Marsden, *Mother’s Alone*, p. 48

¹²⁵ Joan, interview.

¹²⁶ “I loved school. I had a little desk near the front and there was a big blackboard and a little cot with a doll in it, I’d never seen a doll or a cot before, that was my first time.”

¹²⁷ Hobnail boots are large boots where the sole has been reinforced with hobnails in order to make them last longer. As such, the boots both look and sound distinctive. In Scotland, hobnail boots are frequently referred to as ‘tackety boots’ and were often provided by the Parish as part of their material relief for families in need.

¹²⁸ Joan, interview.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Linda, interview.

Joan and Linda were the only two interviewees to mention feelings of a disconnect between themselves and their peers and in both cases, this was linked to an awareness of their family's financial circumstance and not necessarily the absence of their father. Although Linda did invoke the physical absence of her father, she did so in economic terms, contrasting herself with families who were better off due to the presence of two parents. This echoed other interviewees' narratives of awareness of an economic inequality with their peers at school: Ken and Peter above were "a wee bit embarrassed" about receiving school boots and free dinners; Irene also noted how she became aware of "social tensions" between her and her peers in her senior secondary school; and Jacqueline and Eileen also noted a disparity between themselves and their classmates.¹³¹ Whilst financial hardship and disparity is noted by respondents across the chapters, both Linda and Joan expressed an awareness of a precise source for this difference.

William, growing up in a lone father family after his mother's death, experienced no disruption to his education or his assurance in his educational progression. This could be due to the better financial position of his father, but equally there were an increased number of middle-class school leavers entering full-time education.¹³² For those in the working classes, university was often not even considered as an option. Helen, born in 1959, at the time when William would have been attending university in Edinburgh, explained that she did not go on to university because:

my mum was a bit of the opinion, you know like when I said that I fancy going to university and she said well, "do you want to teach?" and when I said no she said

¹³¹ Peter and Ken, interviewed by author, 17.07.2014; Irene, interviewed by author, 16.01.2014/30.01.2014.

¹³² Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 156.

“well there’s not really much point then is there?” I think because that was, there was a certain ignorance about what a degree would actually mean...¹³³

Similarly to Ken and Peter, Helen’s mother placed an emphasis on the importance of a job and trade in getting ahead. As with her nuclear family counterparts, Helen’s education was not seen as the key to social mobility by her mother even in the mid-1970s. Although the loss of her father may have heightened her mother’s awareness of the importance of earning a wage, Helen’s experience was not unique to her family form but rather is indicative of a continuing generational distrust of higher education and increased earning potential. Helen did not lack the financial stability or support to continue on in her schooling but rather, as above, faced a lack of emotional support and parental encouragement.

Despite variations in individual experiences of school, this examination of experiences of childhood in a multitude of family forms demonstrates aspects of commonality. In addition to those interviewees analysed above, Molly Weir, who was entering further education in the 1920s, comments in her memoir that the family had not considered the possibility of her staying on at school, it having “nothing to do with the business of living as we knew it.”¹³⁴ Molly’s experience, as examined previously, is similar to that of Helen’s in the 1970s. Helen’s mother, much like Peter and Ken’s married parents, encouraged her daughter to enter work in an effort to be upwardly mobile, rather than enter higher education. However, Molly did go on to college but only due to the receipt of a scholarship for fatherless children, the widowed status of her mother acting in her favour.¹³⁵ Attitudes towards widows were often more sympathetic, their circumstance seen to be beyond their control. Although Molly does not expand upon the scholarship she received, and only refers to it as a “scholarship for fatherless children”, she is deemed deserving, her

¹³³ Helen, interview.

¹³⁴ Weir, *Shoes were for Sunday*, p. 117.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

mother's lone parenthood respectable. Interestingly, Molly notes that her headmaster was reluctant to recommend her, owing to the cost to her mother and the loss of additional earnings going to college would entail.¹³⁶

Amongst lone parent families there was a degree of variation in experiences of education, however, this variation was repeated across the family forms. Robert Douglas' decision to leave school reflects the oft-told experience of many of his contemporaries, notably females, who would leave in order to help their mothers around the home. Whilst talking of school, Joan and Linda both exhibited feelings of alienation, albeit with varying degrees of awareness. These recollections once again highlight the role of emotion within education, although not in the same way that many nuclear family interviewees constructed educational success as a source of parental affection. For Joan and Linda, their discomfort at school reflected their overall recognition of being different, the feelings of belonging and security expressed through living in homogenous communities is lacking both at home and in school; these narratives are not entirely based on the physical absence of their father but also speak to a sense of socio-economic inequality. Socio-economic inequality is also evidenced in the difference in William's academic career, coming from a middle-class background and experiencing childhood within a commonly more financially stable lone father family, William was able to progress in line with his own and his family's expectations.

VI. Summary

In returning to a discussion of a long-term experience of childhood within a particular family form, an examination of lone parent families has brought a recurrence of the distinction between family form and the way in which the individual family functions as well

¹³⁶ Ibid.

as the influence of external socio-economic factors. Throughout the above chapter there has been a clear contrast between lone parent families and a gendered dynamic has become apparent. However, an in-depth analysis of lone mother headed families has also highlighted the impact of the variations of lone motherhood on experiences of childhood.

Despite the distinct form of the family headed by the lone mother there are consistencies with other family forms found within the analysis. The emotional landscapes of childhood could be mapped onto the environmental; childhood constants such as housing have a deeper significance for the recalled experience of childhood. In the cases examined here, being in a family headed by a lone mother was perceived to place extra pressures on children to conform to traditional gender roles, especially in the case of young men and absentee fathers. However, this was not dissimilar to experiences of interviewees who had lived with both parents on a daily basis who were called upon to provide additional support to the family network.

Even within this small and varied sample the internal functioning and coping strategies of each family appear decisive on the experience of childhood therein, and placed within the appropriate historical context, experiences of family life have a degree of commonality that defies expectations of differing family forms and parental marital statuses. Nevertheless there are some clear distinctions between the experiences of childhood within nuclear families and those headed by lone parents, most particularly lone mothers. The role of the community and of extended families took on a different dimension in recollections of lone mother families and the childhood awareness of this is significant.

Additionally, external socio-economic factors played a much more influential role, as in previous chapters, however here this is explicitly and consistently recognised by interviewees within their accounts of their experiences of childhood. Therefore whilst experiences of childhood within lone mother families are as diverse as those in other family forms, the notable difference is amongst the childhood awareness and recognition of socio-economic hardships. This is further exemplified in recollections of contact with charitable agencies and the importance of the welfare state in experiences of childhood. Although other interviewees recalled contact with such bodies their significance and impact on experiences of childhood was notably marginal in recollections.

Chapter Five: Stepfamilies

I. Introduction

The last family form to be examined in this thesis is the stepfamily; its inclusion at the end purposefully echoes the potential path of the family from nuclear, through ‘broken’ to lone parent and stepfamilies, neatly exemplified by interviewee Linda who has been included across the last three chapters of this thesis. As belonging to a stepfamily often comes at the end of more than one transitory phase for children, this chapter brings together many of the themes from the previous chapters on the nuclear family and life in a single, divorced, or widowed family. Stepfamilies are rarely seen to be as contentious as single parent families; stepfamilies are often viewed, by both commentators on family life as well as parents themselves, as a return to ‘normality’ after a disruptive transitional period,¹ or even as a ‘solution’ to the problem of lone parent families.² Furthermore, evaluations of stepfamilies, as with all ‘non-traditional’ family forms, are often based on comparisons with the nuclear ideal that they so closely resemble.³ As such, where applicable, the following discussion echoes that of the nuclear families chapter at the beginning of this research. Added to this, is a discussion on the nuances of the formation of ‘family’ and its impact on constructions of meanings of family alongside an explicit consideration of (step)parent and (step)child relationships.

¹ Margaret Robinson, ‘Stepfamilies: a reconstituted family system’, *Journal of Family Therapy*, 2 (1980), pp. 67-68; Jacqueline Burgoyne and David Clark, *Making a go of it: a study of stepfamilies in Sheffield* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 144; Lawrence Ganong and Marilyn Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships: Development Dynamics, and Interventions*, 2nd edition (Boston, Springer US, 2017), p.2, p. 33. Furthermore, an idea of return to ‘normality’ is also listed in the National Stepfamily Associations list of top “stepfamily myths”, < <http://www.stepfamilies.info/stepfamily-myths.php>>, [Accessed 28/10/2017].

² Graham Allan, Graham Crow and Shelia Hawker, *Stepfamilies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p.3.

³ Anne Jones, ‘Reconstructing the Stepfamily: Old Myths, New Stories’, *Social Work*, 48 (2003), pp. 228-236; Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 3.

The stepfamily is of interest here owing to its historical prevalence as well as the potential impact of cultural beliefs and norms of stepfamily life on experiences of childhood. When contrasted with nuclear families, children from stepfamilies have been found to have comparably lower scores for a wide range of variables, including: academic achievement, psychological adjustments, self-esteem, and functional relationships; and although the differences are often slight, children in stepfamilies are widely held to fare worse than their nuclear counterparts and similar or slightly better than children in lone parent families.⁴ This is of particular relevance given the discussion of the nuclear family ideal in chapter one and the aforementioned standard to which varying family forms are held.

Defining, and indeed identifying, a stepfamily is not as simple as perhaps one would assume. Despite being identified as a historically dominant family form, the stepfamily is hard to identify, in part due to the lack of official historical data and statistics on remarriage and cohabitation.⁵ In addition, stepfamilies are hugely diverse and difficult to compare as a family form. Indeed, multiple variations of stepfamilies have been identified by different researchers; Burgoyne and Clark, for example, identify five different types of stepfamily based on their qualitative study of 40 stepfamilies in Sheffield in the 1980s. They base these variations on the point of family formation: those classified as “just an ordinary family”, formed when the children are young; those looking forward to the departure of their children and formed when the children were teenagers; the ‘progressive’ stepfamily that thrived materially and embraced their ex-partners and structural complexities; the “successful”

⁴ Heather Canary and Daniel Canary, *Family Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), pp. 68-69; Stephen Collins, ‘Ideological Assumptions in the lives of stepchildren’, in J Brannen and M O’Brien (eds.), *Childhood and Parenthood: proceedings of ISA Committee for Family Research Conference of Children and Families 1994* (London: Institute of Education, 1994), p. 84; Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, pp. 176-177.

⁵ Gill Gorell Barnes, Paul Thompson, Gwyn Daniel, and Natasha Burchardt, *Growing Up in Stepfamilies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.1; Natasha Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships in Early Twentieth Century Britain’, *Continuity and Change*, 4:2 (1989), pp. 293-294; Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 22.

stepfamily that pursued an ‘ordinary’ life and embraced the step-parenting role fully; and finally, those pursuing the ‘ordinary’ life but that were ultimately frustrated and undermined by the complexity of their previous relationships.⁶ Ganong and Coleman offer a simpler insight: those that formed after a divorce, remarriage after the death of a spouse, the marriage of a single mother, the cohabitation of a divorced or never married mother, and the marriage or partnership of a same-sex couple.⁷ However, each of these forms can then become complicated further with the consideration of the pathways of both stepparents into a stepfamily (fig. 5.1). Additionally, the National Stepfamily Association recognises 72 different ways in which stepfamilies can be formed.⁸ Indeed there is so much variation in the formation of stepfamilies that it has been suggested that it would be more conducive to study the variations within stepfamilies rather than contrasting stepfamilies with other family forms.⁹

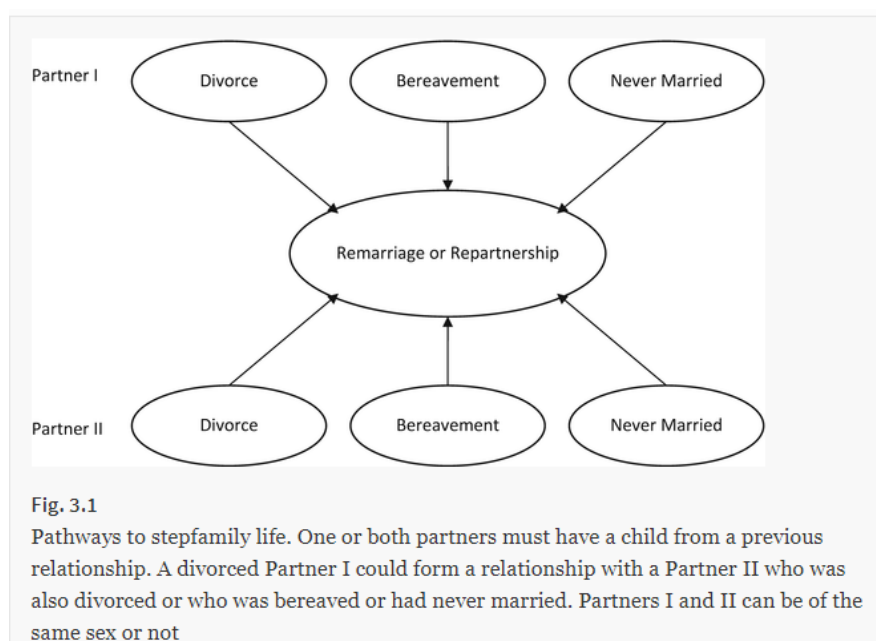


Fig. 5.1: Pathways to Stepfamily life, Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*.¹⁰

⁶ Jacqueline Burgoyne and David Clark, *Making a go of it: a study of stepfamilies in Sheffield* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 191-5

⁷ Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationship*, pp. 39-40.

⁸ Graham Allan and Graham Crow, *Families, Households, and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 168.

⁹ Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationship*, p. 192.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The complexity in pathways to and definitions of stepfamilies are important due to the potential impact on the dynamics of stepfamily relationships. Terminology itself further complicates the understanding of stepfamilies; whilst the term ‘stepfamily’ is popular there is no doubt that stepfamilies themselves dislike the term owing to its negative connotations, and with no officially agreed upon term there are numerous other classifications in-use including ‘blended families’, ‘reconstituted families’, ‘reformed’, and ‘remarried families’.¹¹ For the purposes of this discussion, the most universally recognised term ‘stepfamily’ will be used. This will be classified as that which involves the marriage, remarriage, or cohabitation of a couple with one or more children from a previous relationship.

Within this definition, only one interviewee had an extended experience of childhood within a stepfamily. Linda was born in 1944 and her father died whilst on active service three months later. Like many children who would later become stepchildren, Linda spent a significant portion of her childhood within a single parent family, along with her brother, until her family moved to England with their new stepfather in 1955 when Linda was 11. It is important to note here that Linda’s mother and stepfather did not marry until the 1970s, nevertheless, throughout the interview Linda referred to him as her stepfather, as such he will be considered so here. William, whose mother died when he was 13 in 1953, also had a stepparent - a stepmother; however, as his father only remarried when William was 19 and he had by this time already moved out of the family home. His stepfamily experiences are not those of his childhood and will not be included within this chapter.

¹¹ Allan, Crow, and Harker, *Stepfamilies*, p. 22; Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p.3.

Table 5.1: Interviewees from stepfamilies

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Birth*	Age at Family Reconstitution
S1	1912	Stirling (rural)	16
Elizabeth Arnold	1935	Dundee	10/11
Linda	1944	Glasgow	11

* In order to allow for the full anonymity of interviewees their place of birth has been restricted to a county or city and where applicable and explanation of the geographical setting.

Additionally, Elizabeth Arnold and interviewee S1, interviewed as part of the 100 Families and Scottish Women's Oral History Project respectively, were also brought up within stepfamilies during the period covered by this thesis.¹² Elizabeth lived with her grandparents in Scotland and believed her mother to be her aunt until she was "10 or 11" when her mother came to collect her and move her down to London to live with her stepfather and half-brother, whom she had never met.¹³ S1 lost her mother when she was 13 in 1925 and her father remarried in 1928.¹⁴ These oral testimonies are supplemented with evidence from published memoirs. Dick Lynas, author of *Pies were for Thursdays* was born in 1942 and his mother died of TB when he was five and a half in 1948, his father later went on to marry Dick's aunt in 1950.¹⁵ Ron Culley's father died when he was nine in 1959 and his mother later entered a new relationship when Ron was 14, at which point he left the home and went to live with his maternal grandparents.¹⁶

¹² As these are interviewees carried out for other projects, the method of transcription and formatting of transcripts differs from the researchers own. The transcripts will be cited here as presented by the original researcher and therefore the formatting will differ between interviews.

¹³ Interview with Elizabeth Arnold, Paul Thompson and Harold Newby *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing, an Intergenerational Approach, 1900-1988* (2005) [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 4938, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4938-1>, p. 9

¹⁴ Interviewee S1, *Scottish Women's Oral History Project* (Stirling, Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, 2007), p. 1054.

¹⁵ Dick Lynas, *Pies Were for Thursdays* (Authorhouse: Milton Keynes, 2010).

¹⁶ Ron Culley, *I Belong to Glasgow* (Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2011).

Table 5.2: Memoir authors from stepfamilies

Name	Memoir	Year of Birth	Place of Birth	Age at Family Reconstitution
Dick Lynas	<i>Pies were for Thursdays</i>	1942	Glasgow	8
Ron Culley	<i>I Belong to Glasgow</i>	1950	Glasgow	14

Archival evidence gathered from the RSSPCC case files will, as before, also be analysed. Interestingly, despite the dominant discourse on stepfamilies and the majority of cultural opinion being concerned with the stepmother, a search of the RSSPCC case files returned no cases involving stepmothers, only stepfathers, within the time period. The implications of this will be explored in more depth later but relate, in part, to the nature of the RSSPCC's continuing concerns over financial provision as well as the likelihood of the mother having referred the family herself. This means that Dick and S1's childhood experiences of a stepmother are the only such experiences to be included in this chapter.

A search of the RSSPCC database returned a total of 301 care records involving stepfathers between 1943 and 1976, of these 138 were opened within the timescale (1943-1969) and of those 96 were redacted and available for consultation. After consultation, a further 16 records were discounted as they were either incorrectly coded and did not, in fact, involve a stepfather for the duration of the case, or a stepfather only became involved in the case during the 1970s and thus after the time period considered here. What remains is a total of 80 care records opened between 1951 and 1969 in the RSSPCC's 'Glasgow Division' covering a large proportion of the west coast of Scotland, namely: Glasgow, Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. An examination of the remaining 80 care records revealed that despite the concern over stepfamilies, complaints followed the established pattern of the majority of case files, including insufficient housing and financial (dis)stress. The case notes further revealed instances of marital conflict and child neglect and abuse. Once more, it must

be noted that issues of housing, financial distress, and child neglect and abuse appear across families dealt with by the RSSPCC due to the nature of the society's intervention in family life.

Table 5.3: RSSPCC case files tagged with “stepfather”

Number of Cases	1940s	1950s	1960s
Returned in search	3	23	112
Anonymised and available for consultation	1	14	81
Involving a stepfather	0	12	68

The following analysis considers life within a stepfamily and the effect of being in a stepfamily on experiences of childhood in twentieth century Scotland. This discussion covers the material context and physical boundaries of childhood, as previously, and will also uncover the emotional landscapes and the inner workings of families with an examination of intrafamilial relationships and structures. Here the role of housing and education is revisited in order to uncover complex family dynamics. Additionally, the constructions of family, particularly the notion of the return to normality for stepfamilies, are challenged with an analysis of parental relationships and, for the first time, relationships between stepparents and stepchildren. Whilst revealing some continuity across the family forms considered in this thesis, this chapter also reveals the impact on family reconstitution on experiences of childhood, notably on recollected feelings of security and belonging. Finally, experiences of physical and sexual abuse are also discussed for the first time.

II. Housing

As with families headed by lone parents, it has been found that stepfamilies are more poorly housed and are more likely to live in overcrowded homes than their nuclear

counterparts.¹⁷ An examination of the 80 RSSPCC case files considered here shows that, at the point in which their case was opened, nine families lived in only one room, a further 20 in two-roomed homes and 22 in homes of three rooms, meaning that a total of 64 percent of families lived in homes of three rooms or less.¹⁸ Given the larger average family size of the stepfamily, this undoubtedly meant that a large proportion of these families were living in overcrowded conditions.¹⁹ However, it is not possible to accurately gauge the family size of those who came into contact with the RSSPCC owing to the format of the case records.²⁰ Families who came into contact with the RSSPCC were more likely to be poorer housed than the average; however, the housing experience of children in nuclear families and lone parent families considered in the previous chapters reveals that the experience of those considered here is not overly dissimilar. Indeed, several of the RSSPCC cases consulted stemmed from a family's attempt to secure better housing, as with the single mothers who contacted the RSSPCC in the previous chapter, further suggesting continuity in the housing conditions across different family forms. Moreover, all the cases consulted here were during the nascent welfare state, further highlighting the need to question the assumed positive impact of the welfare state on experiences of family life.

For example, one RSSPCC case from 1967 details a family of five – including three children, a pregnant mother, and a stepfather – who lived in a damp sublet. The stepfather sought help from the RSSPCC in obtaining a loan to put a deposit down on a one-roomed flat. Initially, the RSSPCC contacted the Children's Department, a local authority led

¹⁷ Collins, 'Ideological Assumptions in the lives of stepchildren', p. 84; Elsa Ferri *Stepchildren: a national study: a report from the National Child Development Study* (Windsor: NFER – Nelson, 1984).p. 41.

¹⁸ RSSPCC case files.

¹⁹ Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p. 30.

²⁰ The case notes kept by the RSSPCC do not consistently note the number of children in the house. Sometimes the number of children is noted in the initial complaint, or if all the children are seen by the inspector, however, more often than not their exact number is not noted and case files merely refer to "the children" or "all children."

government body, regarding a loan, but they were reported as being “quite unconcerned about this families [sic] plight and stated that there are hundreds of other families in the same situation, who had to remain where they were.” The RSSPCC later contacted the Ministry of Social Security (MSS), who knew of the family and “thought that this was a deserving case” and supplied the father with a loan.²¹ This exemplifies the struggle many faced in finding suitable housing in Glasgow during the 1960s, as well as a continuation of the ‘deserving poor’ rhetoric discussed in the previous chapter.

As with experiences of childhood in a ‘broken’ family, childhood within a stepfamily came after a significant transition, indeed for many it was a second transition. Therefore, when examining assertions that stepfamilies were more likely to be poorer and reside in lower standards of housing, alongside the fact that all of the RSSPCC case files concern families with a stepfather, we must also recall that single parent families, particularly those headed by a lone mother, are also believed to be more likely to live in poor housing and experience greater levels of financial hardship.²² The RSSPCC case files reveal that the advent of a stepfather did not necessarily involve an improvement in financial conditions of the family, nor arguably a decline. In most cases the stepfather moved in with the mother and the family continued to reside in the housing that pre-dated the changes in circumstance and family form. These findings are similar to those by Ferri who concluded that, although the arrival of a stepfather could improve the financial situation for a large number of fatherless families, in some cases the effect on the family’s housing was less beneficial. Indeed,

²¹ RSSPCC case file GB14 (1967), case notes.

²² K. D. M. Snell and J. Millar. ‘Lone Parent Families and the Welfare State: past and present.’ *Continuity and Change*, 2:3 (1987), p 410; Graham Crow and Michael Hardey, ‘Diversity and Ambiguity Among Lone parent Households in Modern Britain’ in C. Marsh and S. Arber (eds.), *Families and Households: Divisions and Change* (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 144; Brian Rodgers and Jan Pryor, *Divorce and Separation the Outcomes for Children* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York, 1998), p. 5.

children living with a stepfather at 16 were found to be twice as likely to be living in overcrowded conditions than those who lived with their biological parents or a stepmother.²³

Only one interviewee or memoirist considered here experienced a long-term continuation in their housing. Born on her father's family farm near Stirling, S1 (b. 1912) remained in the family home until the event of her own marriage in 1934 at the age of 22.²⁴ Conversely, Linda (b. 1944) moved to England with her stepfather, mother, and brother in 1955 to avoid the 'scandal' of his subsequent divorce. Prior to moving, Linda lived in one of 12 new prefabs built in Knightswood, Glasgow:

They were just two-bedroomed, and I shared a room with Alastair ... and the kitchen was, as I said, quite a roomy kitchen. And everything was fitted, like there was a table that you could pull down from the wall, and ironing board that could be brought down from the wall. And a gas fridge, we're talking 1940's here. It was great to have a little fridge, and everything.²⁵

The two-roomed cottage style flat that Linda recalls was typical of Scotland's post-war housing. Linda's stepfather was a minister for the Church of Scotland and was married with two children of his own when he started his relationship with her mother. In London, the (step)family moved into a much larger house: three bedrooms with a conservatory, dining room, sitting room and separate kitchen.²⁶ Elizabeth also moved down to London around the age of 11 on the event of her mother's cohabitation. Elizabeth lived with her grandparents in a two-roomed flat in Scotland until 1946 when her mother returned to take her to England. This move also involved an improvement in circumstances with a higher material standard of living. The new home was split over the basement and ground floor of a house in London and consisted of:

a kitchen, a scullery and a front room – like what they used as a dining room, a day parlour – and then there was the front parlour. High-days and holidays that

²³ Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p. 41.

²⁴ Interviewee S1, *Scottish Women's Oral History Project*.

²⁵ Linda, interviewed by author, 16.07.2014.

²⁶ Ibid.

was opened, and then upstairs was two bedrooms and with the dividing door between the two rooms.²⁷

However, generalised assertions about a standard of living pay little attention to the associated emotional impacts of housing, the link between the physical and emotional landscapes of childhood and the relationship between the physical boundaries of the home and emotional boundaries of family life. For example, shortly after his mother's death in 1948, Dick, along with his maternal grandparents, three unmarried aunts, uncle, and sister, had moved to a five-apartment home in a post-war housing estate in the east-end of Glasgow (Greenfield). On his father's remarriage to Dick's aunt Mary the family remained in the maternal grandparents' home until 1953 when the expanding family moved to Barlanark. However, the family returned to Greenfield within a year as both Dick and his parents missed the support of his grandparents.²⁸ Dick's transition from nuclear, to single parent, to stepfamily arguably did not alter the material context and physical boundaries of his childhood, and certainly did not adversely affect his standard of housing. For Dick, the family home in Greenfield, albeit overcrowded, was a source of wellbeing and security. Although in a single parent family at this time, Dick recalls his time in Greenfield with considerable nostalgia, "we were all dead poor but that did not stop us from enjoying ourselves hugely"²⁹ Surrounded by his friends and free to run around the streets, this idea of belonging and the additional wellbeing of community hegemony was also recalled by respondents in the earlier discussion of nuclear families. This is important to note as, speaking of a few years after his father's remarriage, Dick states that,

Living as lodgers in the home of my maternal grandparents was not ideal and after the arrival of my brother Neil, my father was keen to get a home of his own for his growing family. And so one fine day in 1953, the Lynas family, father, mother, Rosemary, Neil and I, moved to Garlieston Road in Barlanark.³⁰

²⁷ Elizabeth, transcript, p. 10.

²⁸ Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays*, p. 125, p. 132.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Undoubtedly, with the arrival of a new half-brother and another on the way, Dick's family would have needed more room and would have seen an improvement in living conditions, no longer residing with an additional four surviving extended family members. However, much in the same way that Meg was dislocated from her support networks, Dick too felt disadvantaged by the move:

... the housing estate never really captured my imagination. For a start, I missed all my friends in Greenfield and would frequently make my way back there, like a lost dog finding its way home, to play briefly with my pals before returning to a new address... Again, going back to Barlanark was too much like going back to the tenement life that I had left behind in Carntyne but without the same established neighbours.³¹

The arguable improvement in the family's physical surroundings had a negative impact on the family's more implicit networks of support and wellbeing, and for Dick specifically his comfort in familiarity. The advent of a stepmother did not adversely affect the conditions of Dick's home as his stepmother had been a member of his extended family, and thus she had previously lived with them. In addition, she brought no children of her own to the relationship. Rather, the stepfamily's withdrawal, signified by their move to Barlanark, into a more traditional nuclear model, their attempts to 'normalise' their familial arrangements, and their return to 'normality', with low levels of involvement from extended family members and an increased internalised dependence, negatively affected the familial unit. However, as previously seen, this idealised notion of the nuclear family often did not exist even for this traditional model. The example of Dick's family supports the argument that the definition and boundaries of family are fluid and the benefit, or otherwise, of 'good' housing is more complex than the idea of overcrowding or poor housing having a consequent adverse impact on experiences of childhood.

³¹ Ibid.

Nevertheless, parental remarriage or cohabitation could have negative effects on feelings of security and wellbeing within the home. Studies of stepfamilies across the twentieth century have found continued evidence that children from stepfamilies are more likely to leave home at an earlier age. In her study of stepfamilies in the early twentieth century, Burchardt found that leaving home at a young age was not an uncommon reaction to a parental remarriage that the child(ren) did not welcome.³² Analysing the National Childhood Development Study data, Kathleen Kiernan noted that the children who experienced stepfamily life in the 1960s and 1970s were also more likely to leave home at an earlier age.³³ Kiernan stated that the likelihood of a child leaving home due to “friction at home”, rather than to get married or to study elsewhere was significantly higher for stepsons and stepdaughters.³⁴ Moreover, in the latter half of the twentieth century in the 1980s and 1990s, Gill Jones found that children with a stepparent were still “far more likely” to leave home at age 16 or 17 than those with both biological parents or a lone parent.³⁵ Jones offers a brief explanation for this and explains that 40 percent of stepdaughters and 23 percent of stepsons gave family problems as a reason when asked why they had left home and this was the most common reason cited amongst stepdaughters.³⁶ Of the stepdaughters considered in this thesis, two of three did leave home at the age of 16, both due to ‘friction at home’.

As with Dick, although Linda’s new stepfamily life saw a gradual improvement in her physical living conditions, changes in the home brought negative emotional change. As noted, her family moved to London when she was 11 and they took up residence in a three bedroomed house. This brought an end to Linda sharing a room with her brother. When

³² Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships in Stepfamilies’, p. 309.

³³ Kathleen Kiernan, ‘Impact of Family Disruption in Childhood on Transitions Made in Young Adult Life’, *Population Studies*, 46:2 (1992), pp. 222-224.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227

³⁵ Gill Jones, *Leaving Home* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), pp. 49-50.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Linda described her home in Scotland, however, her emphasis was not on the quality of the housing, nor was it a reflection on the amenities or material and environmental contexts of her childhood; rather her words described the life that was lived within the home. Her home in Scotland, before the arrival of her stepfather, was a “very happy place to have lived” and her family had “loved it there.” Linda states,

It was a very, very happy place to have lived. There were only 12 of the little houses, and they were two-bedroomed and they had gas fridges and they had a lot of inbuilt cupboards, and they were really, really smashing little houses.
... we loved them. We loved it there. They were great wee houses really.³⁷

Her description of the new home in London was less detailed and necessitated more prompting, indeed her new home was only mentioned once throughout the interview:

Linda: Oh it was a very nice house. In a very nice area ... It's worth a lot of money, the house, and the land 'cause it's a long block of land as well, back and front. And it's a detached house.

FC: Quite a big house?

Linda: Three-bedroomed, it had a conservatory, dining room, sitting room, kitchen, hall, three bedrooms. But it wasn't huge, but it's worth a lot of money because of the area it's in.³⁸

Her home in London, whilst “very nice” had little emotion attached to it, and whilst it was clearly a home of some worth it appears to have little value in Linda's recollections. The addition of a stepparent did have a positive financial effect for Linda and her family, but it also had considerable, and more negative, emotional implications.

The relationship between Linda and her stepfather was particularly turbulent,

Well in my case, it was very much a love hate relationship, in some ways, 'cause I quite admired his academic...as I said, he was a very charismatic person, and I quite admired his academia if you like, and I mean, he was very plausible, there was some things I really liked. I admired his public speaking and so on. But, I detested his control. I really hated that. And I couldn't wait to get away from home to be honest.³⁹

³⁷ Linda, interview.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Linda left home at 16 to work in a hotel in Devon and her brother ran away from home at 15 and joined the navy; Linda explained his decision:

Linda: ... If it had been a happy family background Alistair would have stayed on at school and, he always wanted to go into the navy, but I think he would have gone in as an officer perhaps, or tried to get in as an officer, and instead he just ran away.

FC: And that was because of your stepfather as well?

Linda: Oh yeah, he didn't want to stay at home anymore.⁴⁰

The intrafamilial relationships of Linda's family, which will be explored in more depth below, are evidenced in her descriptions of her home and her desire (or lack thereof) to remain.

Elizabeth, who had also moved to London at the around the age of 11, left her home at the age of 16. Elizabeth's mother had moved her down to London sometime after she had begun a relationship with a new partner and Elizabeth found herself moving in with a new stepfather and her two-year-old half-brother, neither of whom she had lived with before. Elizabeth's mother, however, was an alcoholic and Elizabeth soon found herself fulfilling the maternal role for her new family,

I was a Cinderella when I was brought down here... Brother in from school, ran up the road to get the errands like the stuff for dinner. Get the potatoes on, get them peeled - the usual chores. Then get him undressed, washed, get him in his pyjamas and do his bit of washing, do my little bit of washing and then anything my father took off later that night, because Mother was incapable. And it grew steadily, steadily, steadily worse.⁴¹

Elizabeth's description of herself as a 'Cinderella' is telling here. Elizabeth is casting herself in the role of a victim of stepfamily life. The abused stepchild is a recurring character in folklore; however, they are usually the victims of the wicked stepmother. It has been noted that from a psychoanalytical standpoint, cruel stepmothers are symbolic of the antagonistic or uncaring side of natural mothers, the addition of *step* acting as a way in which this maternal

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Elizabeth, transcript, p. 10.

inconsistency can be reconciled.⁴² Elizabeth's mothering role was not just a result of her stepfamily life and her fraught relationship with her stepfather, which will be returned to in more detail below, but also the perceived failings of her mother in fulfilling her 'good mother' role.

Disruptive intrafamilial relationships are not the preserve of stepfamilies, nor are the disagreements between controlling fathers and their dependents. However, Elizabeth and Linda's experiences of childhood support the contention that stepchildren are more likely to leave home at an earlier age, particularly due to intrafamilial dynamics and stresses. In addition to this, stepdaughters in the main are believed to manifest more extreme reactions towards their parents than stepsons.⁴³ However, the remaining stepdaughter, S1, appears to have had little adverse reaction to her father's remarriage, the arrival of a stepmother appearing to have decreased her responsibility within the home and brought about a new found level of freedom.⁴⁴ S1's experience further reflects the gender-based difference in family responsibilities for daughters highlighted in previous chapters.

For memoirist Ron the introduction of a stepfather figure was perhaps the most immediately disruptive. Ron, whose father died in 1959 when Ron was nine, lived with his mother and two brothers in a local authority home in a newly built scheme on the outskirts of Glasgow. Ron recalls his mother having two boyfriends over the course of his childhood, neither of whom caused any "awkwardness". Ron recalls that they "just seemed to be older people than me who made me laugh and who gradually came to spend more time around the

⁴² Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, *The Truth about Cinderella: a Darwinian view of parental love* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1998), p. 5.

⁴³ Charles Bowerman and Donald Irish, 'Some Relationships of Stepchildren to their Parents', *Marriage and Family Living* 24:2 (1962), p. 121.

⁴⁴ Interviewee S1, *Scottish Women's Oral History Project*, p. 1058.

place until almost imperceptibly they were there in the morning.”⁴⁵ However, one of his mother’s boyfriends was a drunk who “could be rough and argumentative” and on finding him acting aggressively and “smashing the place up” Ron gave his mother an ultimatum that either the boyfriend left or he did. At the age of 14, Ron left the family home and moved in with his grandparents, who lived a short distance away, he then remained in the grandparental home until he left to become a student when he was 20.⁴⁶ Relationships between stepparents and stepparents and stepchildren are returned to in more depth below. However, for Ron, the advent of a step-parental figure was not initially disruptive, rather the specific relationship between his mother and his eventual stepfather was notably poor and abusive. At which point, for Ron the boundaries of ‘family’ are re-drawn to include his grandparents at a significant level. This has occurred in previous chapters with interviewees Alex and James both declaring feeling closer to their grandparents than their parents; however, here this is represented physically in Ron’s living conditions.

As with other family forms, grandparents often play a considerable role in assuring the ‘success’ of stepfamilies, their acceptance of the reconstituted family identified as being crucial in the early transitional stages.⁴⁷ In the previous chapters, the role of grandparents in providing continuity in times of transition and increased support for lone parent families was highlighted by a number of interviewees and memoirists. Indeed, it was not unusual for children in stepfamilies to be found to have strong connections to their grandparents following their increased caring or emotional role.⁴⁸ The RSSPCC files reveal several children, like Ron, were living with their grandparents, and in one case a maternal aunt,

⁴⁵ Culley, *Belong to Glasgow*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁷ Robinson, ‘Stepfamilies’, p. 53; Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 212.

⁴⁸ Gorrel Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p. 132.

rather than in the ‘family’ home with their stepfather.⁴⁹ Although the case files offer no explanation for this in the majority of cases, this could be due to the family as a whole having previously resided with the grandparents, as many lone mother families were found to do in the previous chapter.

Stepfamilies, in the main, do not appear to have been housed in any significantly different manner than the other types of family considered in this thesis. There is a continuity to be found across the family forms with regards to the levels of overcrowding and the incidence of poor housing. Interviewees and memoir authors were found to leave home at an earlier age than their intact or lone parent family counterparts, and although there is a limited sample considered here, these findings are in line with the findings of previous research on stepfamilies. The supporting role of grandparents was also revealed to be a continuing thread in the experience of childhood, particularly through their caregiving role. As before, issues relating to housing and the home have complicated and challenged both the idea of ‘family’ and its boundaries; an examination of the material conditions themselves is not sufficient to truly ascertain the impact of housing on experiences of childhood within a stepfamily.

III. Education

Sociological research into educational attainment has often found a correlation between poor housing, particularly overcrowding, and lower educational attainment.⁵⁰ In addition, perhaps in part due to the higher incidence of overcrowding, stepchildren have also been found to leave school and enter employment earlier, resulting in a lower level of

⁴⁹ RSSPCC case files: G376 (1955); L67/59 (1962); L/H/71/5 (1965); 72/217 (1964).

⁵⁰ Gary Evans, Heidi Saltzman, Jana Cooperman, ‘Housing Quality and Children’s Socioeconomic Health’, *Education and Behavior*, 33:3 (2001), pp. 389-399; Dalton Conley, ‘A Room With a View or a Room of One’s Own? Housing and Social Stratification’, *Sociological Forum*, 16:2 (2001), pp. 263-280.

educational attainment.⁵¹ In the cases discussed above it is easy to see how this may be the case. Both Elizabeth and Linda left home at the age of 16 necessitating an end to their education. In her study of stepchildren, Ferri found that, whilst stepchildren did achieve lower test scores on reading attainment and maths at age 16, the differences between stepchildren and other children were not overly marked when other factors were taken into account.⁵² One such factor could be that children from widowed, divorced or separated homes often suffered academically due to family disruption and family dissolution – one of which, of course, has to have occurred for children to find themselves in a stepfamily. Indeed, S1 whose mother died when she was 13, left school at the age of 14:

Q: At what age did you yourself leave school?

A: I left school at fourteen, after mother died. There was no option.

Q: Did you ever go on to any education later on?

A: No, I didn't. I just went on with my reading. I read everything I could lay my hands on.⁵³

S1 left school before the arrival of her stepmother and when asked if she would have liked to have stayed on longer, S1 said

I don't really think so. I quite enjoyed school when I was there and I was quite good at French, but I don't think I would have gone on to do anything other than come home and help on the farm. I think being the eldest girl, <..pause..> made it obvious that I was needed at home.⁵⁴

In this regard, S1's experiences were not dissimilar to those previously discussed in the lone parents chapter of this thesis. Indeed, being the eldest girl in the family at this time often negatively impacted educational attainment, as was highlighted in the nuclear families chapter with the discussion of the proliferation of the 'little mother'.

⁵¹ Gorell Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p9, pp.178-181; Ferri, *Stepchildren*, pp. 84-90; Kiernan, *Impact of Family Disruption*, pp. 219-222.

⁵² Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p. 90.

⁵³ Interviewee S1, *Scottish Women's Oral History Project*, p. 1056.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1057.

Of the interviewees and memoirists considered here, only two – Dick and Ron – stayed on at school and went on to higher education straight after; this was a much lower uptake than the interviewees within nuclear families and comparable to those from unmarried, widowed, or separated parent families. Notably, both are male which may indicate a continued biased allocation of education to boys rather than girls, particularly when family resources are short.⁵⁵ However, the sample size of stepchildren examined here is not large enough to offer any definitive conclusions on the impact of stepfamily life on educational attainment. Nonetheless, as before, a discussion of childhood education revealed much about the relationships, affection and expectations within individual families.

As detailed previously, Linda recalled that she did not enjoy her time at primary school in Scotland, due to her awareness of her family's comparative economic instability, as a lone parent family. However, she also revealed later in the interview that this time at school in Scotland coincided with feelings of insecurity and unease at home:

I think I was in a turmoil, I knew my mother was up to something towards the latter part of my schooling in Glasgow, and I always felt very unsettled, I knew we were going to be moving to England, but I didn't know when. And I shouldn't really say I was unhappy at school, but I just didn't really enjoy it that much.⁵⁶

Linda's unease at home manifested itself in uncertainty and lack of enjoyment in her schooling, and indeed the insecurity over leaving school feeding the turmoil felt at home. Once she had moved to London, Linda recalls enjoying school much more. This was due in part to attending a school with a "very high academic reputation" and an escape from some of the "fierce" teachers she had recalled in Scotland. However, this was also as a result of increasing stresses and tensions in her home life.

⁵⁵ Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 67.

⁵⁶ Linda, interview.

FC: I'm just interested a bit in how your life changed when you went to London, how your family changed and you said you enjoyed school more and...?
Linda: Ah but that was probably 'cause I was away from home more.⁵⁷

On her move to London, Linda lived with her stepfather for the first time, finding him to be controlling, both emotionally and financially. Much in the same way that David, from the previous chapter on 'broken' families, found school to be an escape from his unhappy time in Quarrier's Home, Linda found her time at school to be an escape from her own disruptive home life. This is in line with discussion in chapter three: a negative atmosphere at home could impact decisions to continue with schooling for children within nuclear families too. Linda had been encouraged to stay on at school by her stepfather, an academic man himself:

He wanted me to stay on at school and go to university, and I just knew that was another four years at home, 'cause he'd want me to go to the local uni' in London, if I got in there, and I thought, no, I just can't do it.⁵⁸

Linda's decision to leave school can be seen to be directly related to her decision to leave home; her stepfather's controlling nature was hugely influential in Linda's decision whether to stay on at school and go on to university. Whilst parental support and encouragement has been found to be a determining factor in fulfilling academic potential, this could be negated in instances of home life adversely influencing children's psychological wellbeing.⁵⁹ This was clearly evidenced by Linda's, and indeed Elizabeth's, decisions to leave home early. For Linda, this meant giving up her desire to attend college and become a journalist. However, as Gorell Barnes *et al* found, many stepchildren who left home and school at a young age later returned to education in their early 20s.⁶⁰ Linda did, in fact, later return to London to attend nursing college. Linda's brother was also adversely affected by his

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Desforges and Abouchaar, *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: a literature review* (2003), <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130403234550/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR433.pdf>> [Accessed 28.06.2016].

⁶⁰ Gorell Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p. 178.

relationship with their stepfather and Linda herself makes the direct link between their family life and their academic path, as detailed previously:

But you see, Alistair, he went to grammar school, he passed the scholarship to go grammar school in London, and he just couldn't stand living at home, so it really destroyed his life I think.⁶¹

Elizabeth left school at the age of 15 to start working and contributing to the family's finances, strained at this time due to her mother's alcoholism:

At what age did you leave school?

Fifteen, and it was 12/6d a week. I got half a crown and my mother kept the 10/-. Again, there was still the excessive drinking.⁶²

Financial security and family stability, and the particular impact of a father's drinking, were previously seen to be a contributing factor in both the desire and the perceived ability to continue in education. Elizabeth's ability to stay on at school was impacted by her biological mother's drinking, underscoring the complexity of stepfamily relationships and emphasising the need to consider intrafamilial dynamics in full when discussing the impact of family form on experiences of childhood. It was not just the addition of a new family member that could disrupt family function but also the actions of existing family members within the newly formed family.

Furthermore, Elizabeth received little support from either her mother or her stepfather and was never encouraged to continue with her schooling. Indeed, her mother stated that she was "bloody lucky you're leaving school at fifteen, I was working for two years by the time you're leaving school..."⁶³ This lack of academic encouragement appears to have been a continuity for Elizabeth, and not unique to her experience within the stepfamily: when living in Scotland with her grandparents she also received little academic encouragement.

⁶¹ Linda, interview.

⁶² Elizabeth, transcript, p. 31.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 6.

Did your grandparents take any particular interest in your schooling?

Oh no, they never discussed school. I mean, there wasn't much standard of worrying about your children's education in those days - it was the quicker you left school and got to bloody work. You were only there to work. Women were not meant to have an education in those days. I mean, I found a vast difference of interest in schooling down here [London] than I ever did up there [Dundee]. Up there you are bred and you are educated to work and that was it.⁶⁴

Despite Scotland's strong tradition of higher education and a belief in a classless education system, many interviewees recalled their parents' lingering distrust of education as a means to get ahead and their resulting emphasis on trade and work. However, in addition to Elizabeth's construction of this behaviour as particularly Scottish, her attitude towards her lack of educational opportunity is notable. As briefly stated above, Elizabeth resented her mother's failings in her maternal duties, failings that led to Elizabeth herself taking on the maternal role within the family. Seeing no way out for herself, seemingly trapped in this endless cycle of care giving, Elizabeth eventually left the family home altogether and joined the army.

What made you think you would enjoy the Army, because you must have had that as an ambition, or perhaps a way out for you?

No, it wasn't an ambition, it was a get-out. I knew that I had to get somewhere to live, I had to be fed. And they were recruiting, they had a campaign down at Whitehall and places and I went down there.⁶⁵

Elizabeth's decisions to leave school at age 15 and to join the army were arguably not just a direct result of her having been in a stepfamily, but being within a dysfunctional family in general. That is not to say that her relationship with her stepfather had no impact: indeed her poor relationship with her stepfather was a significant factor in Elizabeth's decision to leave home and join the army:

It was already embedded in my mind that as soon as I could, as soon as I was old enough – I was away. And the thing that basically made way for that was me running off and going into the army. But that was only because of my stepfather.

I wanted to ask about your relationship with him?

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth, transcript, pp. 33-34.

Never very good. He was the master of the house, as I would call it. His food had to be put there in front of him.⁶⁶

Although she had a poor relationship with her stepfather, Elizabeth's ultimate decision to leave home seemingly stemmed from her desire to escape her "Cinderella" role as the family's *de facto* caregiver and financial support. Elizabeth suggests that she was failed by both of her parents, including her mother who she wished could have been "a real mother", as well as seeking to escape her domineering, controlling, and abusive stepfather.

Although studies have shown that overcrowding can have a negative impact on educational attainment, Dick, who arguably lived in the most overcrowded home considered here, was the only stepchild to stay on at school longer than the required time and progressed to study at the University of Glasgow. Although Dick never explicitly mentioned any academic encouragement, or otherwise, that he might have received, his time at home and his relationship with his family was supportive and beneficial in the main. Thus it is not necessarily the stepfamily form itself that has a negative impact on education attainment but rather a variety of other variables. In the testimonies drawn from here, impacts on education are notably evident from the previous family form *before* transition into a stepfamily. For S1, the death of her mother and the needs of her family necessitated her withdrawal from school, several years before her father remarried.

Elizabeth and Linda arguably left school solely in an attempt to distance themselves from controlling stepfathers; however, for Elizabeth this was also exacerbated by her problematic relationship with her mother and her desire to break away from her familial responsibilities. Whilst Linda draws a direct correlation between her stepfather and both her and her brother leaving school, tensions and instability within the relationship between home

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.31.

and education were also recalled from her time before family transition. Alluded to throughout this discussion of education is the impact of intrafamilial relationships on experiences of childhood within a stepfamily, notably the relationships between (step)parents and stepparents and stepchildren.

IV. Parental Discord

As with experiences of childhood in nuclear families, parental discord in stepfamilies is particularly impactful, as seen briefly with Ron above. Parental discord, as well as being recollected by interviewees and memoirists, is revealed through an in-depth analysis of the RSSPCC cases dealing with stepfamilies. Analysis of the RSSPCC case files for stepfather cases between 1951 and 1969 demonstrates the issues that concerned the RSSPCC more generally and as such, display less evidence distinct to stepfamilies. 29 cases involved a complaint of (step)father not providing; 18 cases involved incidences of ‘marital strife’, including parents arguing, threats of eviction from one parent to another and incidents of domestic abuse; and seven cases involved the desertion of one parent, in the majority of cases the stepfather. Together, parental discord accounted for a total of 54 of the 80 stepfather cases reported to the RSSPCC (68 percent), this is unsurprising given the high number of cases brought to the RSSPCC’s attention by mothers referring their husbands to the society. As noted, the RSSPCC failed to recognise, or concern themselves greatly, with issues of domestic violence until the mid to late 1970s. The RSSPCCs primary focus prior to this was the material welfare of the children involved in a case, and as a result the majority of their intervention was often focused on ensuring that the stepfather was providing financially for his family. To this end, as with the ‘breaking’ families considered previously, an emphasis was placed by inspectors on maintaining a normative family structure and keeping the family together.

In one case involving a stepfamily made up of a mother, stepfather and their two biological children, in addition to the mother's daughter from a previous marriage, the inspector notes that, "mother had a bruise on her face, she says father struck her last night, and has done so repeatedly. I spent more than an hour trying to reconcile these quarrelling parents..."⁶⁷ As before in the RSSPCC cases involving divorce, there was little recognition of domestic abuse and the power imbalance evident in the case, blame was laid on the "quarrelling parents" and not the violent stepfather. Additionally, the traditional nuclear unit and the presence of two parental figures were still considered to be of more benefit to children than the functioning of the parents themselves as a couple. In a further case from 1963, a mother was reported to the RSSPCC for deserting the home and leaving her children with their stepfather. On questioning, it transpired that the stepfather had four convictions for wife assault and the mother had left due to being "frightened of the father", the mother was warned of her responsibilities towards her children and was noted by the inspector as appearing "to be more concerned with her own selfish interests rather than her children's welfare."⁶⁸

Furthermore, as with the divorce cases previously, mothers would also use the RSSPCC as a mediator between herself and her partner (the stepfather), often in relation to his behaviour in the home and his financial provision. In 1969 the RSSPCC received a complaint from a mother regarding the father's conduct in the home. Whilst the mother reported that the father has "taken to coming in excessively drunk and assaulting her and throwing articles of furniture around the home" she was also quick to assert that "the father is

⁶⁷ RSSPCC case 73/68 (1964), case notes.

⁶⁸ RSSPCC case L63/138 (1963), case notes.

a regular worker and a good provider and so far he has always given her regular wages”.⁶⁹ This echoes the expectations of marriage and parental behaviour discussed in both the previous nuclear families and ‘broken’ families chapters. The breadwinner ideology was reflected in both agencies’ constructions of good parenthood, and in parents’ own expectations of marriage, including second marriage. Additionally, as with lone parent families and divorcing families, financial provision was prioritised by mothers, further indicating that the welfare state was not seen as a dependable alternative. Finally, one mother reported her husband to the RSSPCC in 1958 for “squandering” his allowance from the Labour Exchange. The RSSPCC intervened and warned the father of his responsibilities; on their last visit to the home the mother stated, “everything has been going well since she complained to the society.”⁷⁰ In only one of 80 cases did the inspector make note of informing the parents of the possible emotional affect that their discord may be having on the children, “also informed [parents] that continual arguing had effect on their children.”⁷¹

Here, however, issues over financial provision can be seen to be complicated by the family form. In 1966 a mother reported a stepfather to the RSSPCC for failing to provide for the children. Whilst this was not a unique occurrence as we have seen, the father’s reasoning was. On being questioned by the inspector, the stepfather “insisted that the children not being his children and him only being in receipt of the weekly wage of £12 he could not afford to keep them.” However, the stepfather did provide for the mother as his wife, giving her a weekly allowance of £2. The father was warned by the RSSPCC and “encouraged to take an interest in the children as a stepfather should.”⁷² In a separate case from 1960 a father was reported as having put his two stepsons out of the home and onto a bus to their maternal

⁶⁹ RSSPCC case G935 (1969), case notes.

⁷⁰ RSSPCC case V1947 (1958), case notes.

⁷¹ RSSPCC case 75/9 (1969), case notes.

⁷² RSSPCC case L66/152 (1966), case notes.

grandparents whilst their mother was in hospital, his own two children from the remarriage remaining in the home.⁷³

The RSSPCC cases returned in the search for stepparent cases reveal similarities with the issues raised in the nuclear families chapter, as well as the RSSPCC cases for divorced families. (Step)father's drinking and gambling, and resultant spending of the family's funds, was a notable continued theme across all family forms. Furthermore, the agency's continued prioritisation of the breadwinner model was evident in the stepfather cases dealt with here by the RSSPCC. Due to the nature of the case records kept by the RSSPCC, it is difficult to understand the exact and detailed impact of the parental discord on the experiences of childhood within these particular families. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, it has been found that incidents of domestic violence and awareness of parental discord impacted children's potential relationship with a stepparent.⁷⁴ This is most clearly evidenced by Ron's decision to leave the family home at 14 in response to his mother's poor relationship with her partner. Additionally, a stepfather's assimilation into the family has been found to be mitigated by his perceived relationship with the biological mother, that is if he is seen to make her happy and they are seen to have a functioning relationship then he is found to be more readily accepted by his stepchildren.⁷⁵

Moreover stepchildren themselves could often be the source of tension between parents. Numerous cases dealt with by the RSSPCC reported that arguments between parents often arose around behaviour towards the stepchildren, particularly in regards to the disciplining of stepchildren by their stepparent. In one such case from 1966, the mother reported that "there was bad feeling between him [the stepchild] and the stepfather causing

⁷³ RSSPCC case 72/407 (1960), case notes.

⁷⁴ Gorell Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p. 250; Allan, Crow, and Harker, *Stepfamilies*, p. 135

⁷⁵ Allan, Crow, and Hawker, *Stepfamilies*, p. 135

many of the parents quarrels.”⁷⁶ In a separate case from 1968 the inspector reported that, “as he [the stepfather] is not the father of this child, the mother resents any interference when he rebukes the child or threatens to chastise him.”⁷⁷ Parental authority within the stepfamily has been identified as a highly contested issue and one of the primary causes of conflict between parents.⁷⁸ As such, Gorrell Barnes *et al* found that in stepfather families the mother most often maintained the role of disciplinarian, owing in part to the tensions between stepfathers and stepchildren arising from a stepfather’s attempt to assert their authority.⁷⁹ It has also been found that when stepfathers have attempted to assert control and influence this has led to difficulties in the stepparent and stepchild relationship.⁸⁰ Burchardt offers a further explanation and makes a connection between children’s loyalty to their biological parent and their age at their parents’ remarriage – the older the child is on the occasion of remarriage the more likely they are to remain loyal to their biological parent and resent interference from their new stepparent.⁸¹ Thus, constructions and expectations of stepparents are complex. Not only do stepparents have to contend with the often idealised absent parent (whether alive or dead) but also the widespread cultural legend of the ‘evil’ stepparent. Indeed, Allen and Crow found that in many cases it is the stepfather’s own choice to step back from the disciplinarian role, perhaps in part in an attempt to negotiate their role as a ‘good stepfather’.⁸² Despite this, Canadian researchers Daly and Wilson found that stepparents in the *National Survey of Families and Households* conducted in the USA in the 1990s reported striking children substantially more often than genetic parents when asked about discipline.⁸³ Notably, when talking of her own remarriage in adulthood, Elizabeth comments that she told her husband, “I

⁷⁶ RSSPCC case L66/33 (1966), case notes.

⁷⁷ RSSPCC case H230 (1968), case notes.

⁷⁸ Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 92.

⁷⁹ Gorrell Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p. 279.

⁸⁰ Lies Blyaert, Hanna Van Parys, Jan De Mol and Ann Buysee, ‘Like a Parent and a Friend, but Not the Father: a qualitative study of stepfather experiences in the stepfamily’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* (2016), p. 121.

⁸¹ Burchardt, ‘Structure and Relationships in Stepfamilies’, pp. 303-304.

⁸² Allan, Crow, and Hawker, *Stepfamilies*, p. 125.

⁸³ Daly and Wilson, *Truth about Cinderella*, pp. 51-52.

said to him ‘John, if there’s any chastising to be done, it must be done by me. I don’t want you used as the bad step-father – no way.’”⁸⁴ Although Elizabeth only talks of her own stepfather having disciplined her once when she was a child it is telling that she did not want her own husband to discipline her children in case he was seen as a bad stepfather.

Parental dysfunction and discord did not only affect experiences of childhood, but could also affect interviewees’ own marital relationships. Linda described the relationship between her mother and stepfather as passionate, albeit controlling:

FC: Was it an affectionate relationship they had or...?

Linda: Oh yes, I think probably passionate’s the word, I would say. Just, oh I think he loved her, there’s no doubt about that. He loved her. He controlled her, but he loved her, and he appeared heartbroken when she died.⁸⁵

For Linda, who never lived with her biological father, her mother and stepfather’s relationship was one of the only lived examples from which she could take ideas about men and women’s relationships. Later on in the interview, Linda discussed the impact of having watched her mother’s relationship with her stepfather:

... my stepfather certainly...I always thought, I’m not going to be controlled by anybody when I leave home, I’m never going to be controlled in my life, I’m going to be left...my own...and I think that wasn’t helpful toward my marriage either, that I resented, not that [redacted] ever told me what to do or anything like that, but sometimes I couldn’t even discuss it, what we should be doing, I could become quite negative about things, I’ve still got a very negative attitude to life, to this day.⁸⁶

As with Isabelle’s assertion, in the nuclear families chapter, that she never wanted to marry a Scotsman owing to her own father’s drunken and abusive behaviour, Linda’s own marital aspirations were affected by her stepfather’s behaviour. Interestingly, in her study of stepchildren, Ferri found that attitudes towards marriage in girls from stepfather families revealed that they were much more likely to marry at a young age (under 20) than girls from

⁸⁴ Elizabeth, transcript, p. 71.

⁸⁵ Linda, interview.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

intact families.⁸⁷ Ferri offers no in-depth explanation for this, although one reason could be a desire to leave home earlier, as many stepdaughters did from stepfather families.

There are recurring themes across all of the family forms considered here in regards to parental relationships and the expectations of parental roles, particularly the prioritisation of financial provision over emotional wellbeing. However, respondents and memoir authors from stepfamilies spent considerably less time talking about the relationship between their parents than those who grew up in nuclear families. One reason for this could be the comparatively shorter time spent in a stepfamily as opposed to an intact family, owing to the time between transition and the age at parental remarriage. A further explanation could stem from a general reluctance to consider a parent's romantic relationships; Ron's above assertion that there was "no awkwardness" caused by his mother's relationships suggests that there was an expectation of discomfort. Finally, the interviewees' and memoirists' own relationship with the stepparent could have overshadowed the relationship between parents and stepparents.

V. Stepparents and Stepchildren

Of the RSSPCC cases consulted, comparatively few dealt with issues and concerns unique to stepfathers and their children. As aforementioned, there were reports of tensions within homes stemming from a stepfathers' disciplinary role and there were also cases where stepfathers refused to provide for their stepchildren. Indeed, throughout the examination of the RSSPCC case files, it is clear that the RSSPCC's role in the lives of the families they came into contact with was largely financial and material in nature. This finding has been echoed by Gary Clapton's research into the activities of the RSSPCC from their conception

⁸⁷ Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p. 53.

until the early 1970s. Clapton found that despite playing down the amount of material provision of help that they actually undertook, such as providing food, coal, clothes, furniture, and bedding, this occurred in the vast majority of RSSPCC cases.⁸⁸ This is perhaps understandable given the previous discussion on the changing perception of child neglect and abuse over the mid-twentieth century. However, it is interesting to note that the only clearly identified cases of child abuse to be found in the RSSPCC cases consulted for this research occurred in stepfamilies.

For example, an RSSPCC case from 1968 involved the report of a two-year-old battered baby boy in a very serious condition in hospital, who later died five weeks after admission. Upon investigation by the RSSPCC it was discovered that the young boy's stepfather had hit the child around the head with a 1.5 inch textbook when he was "annoying" the father whilst he was studying. There was some initial confusion as to whether the child was or was not a biological child of the father until "it was revealed that the child was not his, but he would not agree that this had any effect upon his likely to cause ill-treatment of the child [sic]".⁸⁹ The fact that the RSSPCC spend some time attempting to ascertain the father's exact relationship with the child is telling of the attitudes towards stepfathers. Although there is no male alternative for the 'wicked stepmother' in children's fairy tales, the bullying, overbearing, or sexually harassing stepfather is often found in adult literature and films, from *Hamlet* to *Lolita*, and is echoed by interviewees here. In the same way that stepmothers are thought to be wicked because they have not been "softened" by the act of childbirth,⁹⁰ a stepfather's 'wicked' behaviour is easier to tolerate because he is not a "real" father and is an

⁸⁸ Gary Clapton, "'Yesterday's Men': the Inspectors of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1888-1968.", *British Journal of Social Work*, 39 (2009), p. 1048.

⁸⁹ RSSPCC case H547 (1968), case notes.

⁹⁰ Stephen Collins, 'Ideological Assumptions', p. 87.

outsider to the family.⁹¹ That the RSSPCC push to inquire as to whether the nature of his being a stepfather is linked to his violent behaviour towards the child is further evidence of their conception of intrafamilial physical abuse of children until the late 1960s.

Paediatrician Dr Kempe had identified Battered Child Syndrome, also known as Battered Baby Syndrome, in 1962, but it did not become a focus for the RSSPCC until the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁹² Previously, constructions of child abuse were located outwith the home and perpetrators were non-relatives, thus, the RSSPCCs understanding of the stepfather as an abuser.⁹³ In the case above, the RSSPCC attempted to mitigate the seriousness of the incident, stating that the stepfather was “quite a pleasant young man to speak to” and whilst it was careless of the stepfather to study where the child was running about, “it didn’t reflect much sense on the part of the mother herself.”⁹⁴ Here again, the RSSPCC apportion blame equally, the mother’s failure to control her child seemingly comparable to her husband’s physical violence. On the death of the child, the stepfather was arrested and charged with murder. The trial was reported in the *Evening Times* and the stepfather was sentenced to five years on a charge of culpable homicide.⁹⁵ On sentencing, the judge was reported as saying that the sentencing had caused him “more than usual difficulty”, owing to the stepfather’s good character and the fact that he was “under strain at the time these episodes took place.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Stephen Claxton-Oldfield, ‘Deconstructing the Myth of the Wicked Stepparent’, *Marriage and Family Review*, 30:1-2 (2000), p. 53.

⁹² Anna Christina Mary Robinson, “‘Children in Good Order’: a study of constructions of child protection in the work of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in the West of Scotland, 1960-1989” (Unpublished PhD thesis, Stirling: University of Stirling, 2002), pp. 161-162.

⁹³ Ibid; Henry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989* (Routledge: London, 1994), pp. 253-256; Lynn Abrams, *Orphan Country: Children of Scotland’s Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 217.

⁹⁴ RSSPCC case H547, case notes.

⁹⁵ ‘Five Years for Killing Stepson’, *Evening Times* 11.07.1968, <<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ZCE-AAAAIBAJ&sjid=hUoMAAAAIBAJ&pg=3662%2C1289053>> [Accessed 29.08.2017]

⁹⁶ Ibid.

In addition to working full-time “as a laboratory technician at Allan Glen’s School earning £12 a week”, the stepfather was studying to become a radio and television engineer, his dedication to providing for his family and his adherence to the breadwinning ideal seemingly evidence of his good character; the prioritisation of the gendered nuclear ideal mitigating even the most violent of behaviours. Despite the father having admitted to striking his stepson on various occasions over a five-month period, his case was described by the judge as no “means as bad in degree” as a case tried previously that day.⁹⁷ Also reported in the *Evening Times* a stepfather had earlier been jailed for 12 years for the culpable homicide of this three-year-old stepdaughter, whom he had beaten and kicked.⁹⁸ In this case, the stepfather admitted to punishing his stepdaughter “far too severely” and said that he was “quick to fly off the handle”.⁹⁹

Important research by Daly and Wilson has suggested that having a stepparent is the most influential epidemiological risk factor for “severe child maltreatment yet discovered.”¹⁰⁰ However, the vast majority of case studies carried out into the overrepresentation of stepchildren as victims of child abuse, neglect, and murder have been conducted by Daly and Wilson themselves. Their critics argue that the question of whether stepchildren are disproportionately at risk “was not settled” and that there is “no conclusive answer to the overrepresentation question for stepchildren among physical abuse victims.”¹⁰¹ However, the majority of research does indicate that children are at more risk of abuse if they live in a household with any adult who is not a genetic parent, which of course includes

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ ‘12 Years for Man who Beat, Kicked Stepdaughter’, *Evening Times*, 11.08.1968, available at <<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ZCE-AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hUoMAAAIIBAJ&pg=6240%2C1281500>>, [Accessed 29.08.2017]

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Daly and Wilson, *Truth about Cinderella*, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ Francesca Adler-Baeder, ‘What Do We Know About the Physical Abuse of Stepchildren? A review of the literature’, *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 44:3/4 (2006), p. 75, p. 78.

stepfamilies.¹⁰² The most common theory offered for this is that proffered by Daly and Wilson, evolutionary theory. The “Cinderella effect” suggested by Daly and Wilson is that stepparents are more likely to abuse and even kill stepchildren due to the fact that they are not their biological offspring.¹⁰³ Other theories presented have included economic stresses, the increased incidence of family conflict and violence found in stepfamilies in general, and the stresses resulting from family transition.¹⁰⁴

As aforementioned, a full awareness of child sexual abuse was not evident amongst the case files of the RSSPCC until the 1980s; however, inspectors did look for abuse amongst lone father and stepfather families.¹⁰⁵ One case of sexual assault by a stepfather was found in an examination of the RSSPCC case files. On following up an unrelated complaint, a mother reported to an RSSPCC inspector that one of her daughters was living with relatives in the USA as “when she was resident with the family the stepfather attempted on many occasions to molest her, although it was admitted that he did not have intercourse with her.” On closing the notes from the visit, the inspector noted that the father was “strongly warned not to interfere with any of his daughters.”¹⁰⁶

As discussed above, both Linda and Elizabeth left home due to varying tensions with their respective stepparents, and sexual abuse was also evident in Elizabeth’s case. Elizabeth stated that her decision to leave home was due to her stepfather, who had attempted to rape her when she was 15.

... He jumped on me. I was in bed asleep and he woke me up. It was his weight on me that woke me and I was petrified because I didn't know what the hell he was going to do and he grabbed me. I said "I'm going into Auntie Dack, I don't

¹⁰² Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 187.

¹⁰³ Daly and Wilson, *Truth about Cinderella*.

¹⁰⁴ Gnaong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, pp. 188-189.

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, ‘Children in Good Order’, p. 67.

¹⁰⁶ RSSPCC case L/H/71/5 (1965), case notes.

want to stay here anymore and I wouldn't come back in the house, but this time I couldn't tell my mother.

So, he jumped on you and what did he try to do?

He tried to get himself in me, you know. I was always a well-built girl.

But, you fought him off and got out?

Yes - because, again, I knew that what he was doing was not right. I didn't know exactly what he was doing. I mean I know now he was trying to sexually assault me, but I didn't at that time basically know what it was all about, because I was that innocent. But I knew that what he was doing was wrong, because he shouldn't be in my bed and with that I got out - in a panic - and I went to the lady next door and I told her. I begged her if I told her the secret that she would never tell my mother.

Did she?

No.¹⁰⁷

The impact of this experience was not fully explored by the interviewer, although Elizabeth does state that,

.... I never felt safe with him.

Ever - even at the beginning?

I felt all right with him. It never used to worry me until he tried to interfere with me.¹⁰⁸

Elizabeth continued to reside in the family home until she was 16 and decided to leave to join the army, after three years she left the army and once again returned to the family home, “yes, I lived at home, but I never, ever felt safe there after what my step-father did - never felt right...”¹⁰⁹

Linda's father was a particularly controlling influence on her family, as has been alluded to above. Not only did the family relocate to London in order to escape the ensuing scandal of his divorce, but he prevented her from mentioning her paternal Scottish family. Her stepfather's abusive control and manipulation resulted in Linda feeling that her Glasgow history, the history of her parents and grandparents, was “distorted”.¹¹⁰ Once in London, on a day-to-day basis, he increased his control over Linda: she was not allowed to go out on

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth, transcript, pp. 32-33

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Linda, interview.

weekdays, she was not allowed friends in the house, he insisted she get a Saturday job so she could contribute to the family income, and he even charged her to watch the television: "... paying for a film. I was allowed to watch a cultural affairs programme; I could watch the news, that was it. And I got that free of charge."¹¹¹

Her stepfather's control touched on every aspect of Linda's life; he impacted her ability to make friends at school, as well as her ultimate decision to leave. Furthermore, as well as the relationship between him and herself, Linda's stepfather's controlling had an impact on her relationships with the rest of her family:

FC: So would you have described yourselves as a close family when you were younger?

Linda: No.

F: No?

Linda: No, Alastair and my mother and myself, yes. Until [redacted] came along, until the stepfather came along.¹¹²

The loss felt most keenly by Linda was the alteration of her relationship with her mother. She describes her stepfather as coming along and taking her mother's affections and later states that "my mother really had no influence in our lives after that, really. She wasn't strong enough, she didn't have that to stand up for us in any way you know? [sic]" Most tellingly perhaps, when asked if she felt secure at home in Glasgow and London, Linda only responded, "yeah, I did actually, my mother did give us a feeling of a family home and security. Especially when we went to the prefab, I think."¹¹³ She makes no mention to her time in London with her stepfather. Furthermore, owing to her stepfather's control, Linda lost a valued connection with her extended family, particularly her grandparents. In the same way that grandparents have been found to provide a strong support role for families during transition, grandparents offer a continued connection to the deceased parent's memory.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Additionally, Gorell Barnes *et al* have found children often carried strong and formative relationships with their grandparents into their new family, perhaps offering a sense of emotional continuity in the face of physical change.¹¹⁴

Mothers are often thought to remarry primarily to increase financial provision for their children and stepfathers have been found to have a comparatively limited influence in their stepfamily's' lives, as opposed to stepmothers.¹¹⁵ However, this cannot be said of Linda and Elizabeth's experience. The texture of Linda and Elizabeth's lives was drastically altered by the arrival of a stepfather and, whilst their financial and material circumstances may have improved, their emotional and psychological wellbeing was adversely affected. While these examples pertain to stepfathers, it is the 'wicked stepmother' that maintains a more pervasive cultural fear. However, this is not a trope that can be extensively explored within the pages of this thesis, given the limited evidence available. The only experience of a stepmother detailed here is that of Dick, whose father married Dick's aunt in 1950, two years after the death of Dick's mother. It has been stated that stepmothers are often held to a higher standard than stepfathers, and as a consequence, are the cause of more friction with stepfamilies than stepfathers.¹¹⁶ Dick himself was quick to dispel this idea,

... and so my father married Auntie Mary and my godmother became my 'mammy'. To be honest, I do not really remember that it made all that much difference to me at the time- or indeed since. Aunty Mary was a kindly aunt, as were her younger unmarried sisters, Auntie Nancy and Auntie Margaret who also shared the grandparental home. And if she was to be called mammy from now on that was alright by me. A wicked step, she wasn't.¹¹⁷

Although remarrying a sister-in-law was a common strategy for widowers, it was not without controversy. In order to protect inheritance, laws had been passed in the nineteenth

¹¹⁴ Gorell Barnes *et al*, *Growing up in Stepfamilies*, p. 131.

¹¹⁵ Crow, *Families, Households and Society*, p. 166; Burchardt, 'Structure and relationships', p. 304.

¹¹⁶ Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p.48; Gorell Barnes *et al*, *Growing Up in Stepfamilies*, p. 71; Allan, Crow, and Harker, *Stepfamilies*, p. 85.

¹¹⁷ Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays*, pp. 58-59.

century that made a marriage between a widow or a widower and their deceased spouse's sibling void; this was related to constructions of incest as well as complex issues of inheritance. These laws were repealed in 1907 with the passing of the Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act. Interestingly, the female equivalent of the act (the Deceased Brother's Widow's Marriage Act) was not passed until 1921.¹¹⁸ Dick's 'mammy' was not a stranger; she was familiar to Dick. Dick's father's remarriage seems to have had very little real impact on Dick's life, resulting in no upheaval. Rather, the remarriage was more reminiscent of a continuation of his current familial situation in which Mary was already fulfilling a maternal role for him and his sister within the grandparental home. Of course, an additional reason for Dick's acceptance of his stepmother could be his relatively young age at the time of his father's remarriage. Being only five and a half on the death of his mother, Dick claims to have "very few memories of it" and of his mother in general, and thus was unlikely to make unflattering comparisons between the two.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Bowerman and Irish have asserted that the younger the child at the occasion of remarriage, the more likely and quicker their assimilation to their new stepparent (excepting in the case of very grown up children).¹²⁰

Indeed, the only change that seems to have occurred for Dick is that which he overtly recalls: his Aunt Mary's change to 'mammy'. This in itself is significant. The naming of a stepparent is particularly telling in regard to the affection and acceptance felt between stepparent and child.¹²¹ Throughout his memoir, Dick refers to his stepmother merely as 'mother', apart from a few notable exceptions. More often than not, Dick's use of the term 'stepmother' stems from his need to distinguish between his biological mother and his

¹¹⁸ Stephen Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: a history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp. 43-50.

¹¹⁹ Lynas, *Pies were for Thursdays*, p. 28

¹²⁰ Bowerman and Irish, 'Some Relationships of Stepchildren', p. 116; Crow, *Families, Households and Society*, p. 16; Burgoyne and Clark, *Making a Go of It*, p. 150-152.

¹²¹ Burchardt, 'Structure and relationships', p.305

stepmother within a recollection, however, on two occasions his terminology is telling. Dick recounts a memory of being punished by his father for staying out too long and worrying his “ever-anxious step-mother”.¹²² In addition, when criticising his stepmother’s anxious behaviour Dick once more refers to her as his “step-mother” rather than his “mother.”¹²³

In contrast, throughout her interview, Linda referred to her stepfather as her stepfather or by his given name, despite there not being the possibility of any confusion with her biological father who died overseas when she was three months old. This not only highlights her loyalty to her biological parent over her stepfather, but also constructs a distance between her and her stepfather through her choice of language. Conversely, Elizabeth refers to her stepfather as both her stepfather and father throughout her interview.

Elizabeth stated in her interview that she knew nothing of her biological father, although she did recount an incident of her father visiting the home when she was between two and five and not being allowed to see him. Of this visit, the only detail that Elizabeth recalled was her mother “beating the hell out of somebody” and confronting him about his violence towards her when she was pregnant.¹²⁴ Arguably, Elizabeth had no loyalty to her biological parent whom she had never met and who was not idealised in any family myth, being only known to her as a violent man. Furthermore, her use of stepfather as well as father may also be explained by her need to distinguish between the two figures throughout her interview, indeed, the interviewer referred to her biological father as her “real father” presenting a stepfamily bias that Elizabeth herself may have continued to reflect.¹²⁵ Of course, her use of stepfather could also be a distancing mechanism, as with Linda, especially

¹²² Lynas, *Pies were for Thursday*, p. 94.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 74.

¹²⁴ Elizabeth, transcript, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

when recounting her stepfather's attempt to sexually assault her, "my father tried to sexually assault me - my step-father, I mean."¹²⁶

The varying pathways to becoming a stepchild add to the complexity of relationships within a stepfamily. Relationships between a stepparent and a stepchild can be impacted by those between a child and their remaining biological parent as well as the memory and construction of their absent parent. Far from being 'wicked', stepparents themselves were often represented by officials as overwhelmingly beneficial, even in the wake of extreme violence, helping the family conform to the nuclear ideal. Within the limited sample here, stepchildren's familial security and sense of belonging was often impacted by the addition of a stepparent, notably a stepfather. However, in each recollection of a stepparent there was an important consideration of continuity in experiences of childhood before transition to a stepfamily.

VI. Siblings

Considering the comparatively scant research into sibling relationships, there is a surprising amount of research covering the relationship between stepsiblings.¹²⁷ However, the findings are often quite limited, particularly amongst the British studies based on the data from the NCDS that failed to distinguish between stepsiblings, half-siblings, and full siblings.¹²⁸ Stepsiblings cannot be covered in much depth here as only Linda's stepfather had any children prior to his joining her family and Linda states that she never had any contact

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

¹²⁷ All of the aforementioned studies contain sections or subsections dedicated to the relationships between stepsiblings and half-siblings. See also: William Beer, *Strangers in the House: the World of Stepsiblings and Half-Siblings* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

¹²⁸ Particularly that by Ferri and Kiernan.

with them after the family moved to London.¹²⁹ The complex nature of the stepfamily is exemplified by the often complicated relationships between siblings within the family unit. Indeed, it has been argued that to truly capture and attempt to understand family complexity you must measure the presence of siblings, rather than the current method of examining parental marital status and parent-child relationships.¹³⁰

Stepfamilies can vary dramatically in their makeup with the potential presence of stepsiblings, half-siblings, and full siblings. Family form can also vary between siblings, in that for one sibling the family may be a stepfamily with the presence of stepparent, in others it can also include stepsiblings from a stepparent's previous relationship, whilst for another it can more closely resemble a nuclear family with two biological parents and a half-sibling, as is the case for both Elizabeth and Dick. Furthermore, Jacqueline, from the nuclear families chapter for example, was the only child of her father's second marriage and constructed her family as a 'nuclear' family despite having five half-sisters. As such, it is worth reiterating from previous chapters that experiences of childhood can vary dramatically between siblings within the same family, and this is only exacerbated in the case of stepfamilies. Burchardt found that there were significant differences between children who resulted from remarriage and those who acquired stepparents, the children of remarriage recalling much more positive views of family life, potentially owing to not having experienced parental loss or conflict prior to family reformation.¹³¹ Moreover, Burgoyne and Clark found that a new baby often acted as a symbol of the common identity that the newly reconstituted family shared, helping bind them together as a family unit.¹³² Therefore, it is not just stepsibling relations that can

¹²⁹ Linda, interview.

¹³⁰ Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 192.

¹³¹ Burchardt, 'Structures and Relationships', p. 313.

¹³² Burgoyne and Clark, *Making a Go of It*, p. 176.

influence life within a stepfamily, full or even half-siblings will still play an influential role in experiences of childhood within stepfamilies.

Both Dick and Elizabeth had half-siblings. Dick only briefly mentions his siblings throughout his memoir, his main concern being that on the arrival of his father and stepmother's first child the family decided to relocate in order to give themselves more space for their expanding family. The effects and ultimate failure of this move are covered above. The lack of space given by Dick to his siblings in his accounts of his childhood is not necessarily telling of his relationship with them. Previous chapters of this thesis have also suggested that, in general, men are less likely to expand on their sibling relations than women. This could be due in part to the larger influence of sisters in their sibling's lives, for example S1's 'little mother' role that she fulfilled for her twin sisters on the occasion of her mother's death. However, regarding retrospective accounts specifically, this could also be explained by the increased focus by male authors and interviewees on events outwith the home.¹³³

Elizabeth's relationship with her half-brother has already been briefly outlined – on her arrival to London she found, “he was a milestone around my neck, never to leave me [sic].”¹³⁴ Not only did Elizabeth resent her time spent looking after her younger brother but she also found herself taking out many of her frustrations of her family life on him.

I didn't have a lot of love for him because unfortunately he was the thing that I took most of my anger out on.

Say a bit more about it. I mean, I think it is quite understandable that that would be the case, or certainly it is to me.

Well, it was a case of no matter where I went, he had to be with me - so I couldn't go to Saturday morning Pictures because he was too young. I even got to the stage where I tied him up to a tree - doesn't it sound awful? Piled a pile of bricks

¹³³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 99.

¹³⁴ Elizabeth, transcript, p.9.

and stuck his bottle on the pile of bricks and I'd go to the Pictures and I'd bunk out during the Interval to come and see if he was all right and bunk back again. But, he was always my loss of pleasure. So, anytime I had a chance I'd stand him up in a swing and push the swing so he'd fall out and he'd cut his head, so she'd have to look after him.¹³⁵

Much more than a cause of the loss of much of her potential for fun and freedom, Elizabeth's brother was also a symbol of her mother's absence. Not only did Elizabeth feel that she herself was lacking a "real" mother but she had to now act as a substitute mother for her young brother, something that irrevocably coloured their relationship. For Elizabeth, her brother can be seen as an embodiment of her feelings of confusion, resentment, and displacement on learning about her mother, her new stepfather and her impending move to London. Moreover, her mother often used the threat of a new baby as a means of control when Elizabeth misbehaved.

Yes, but I could remember her always saying that if I was naughty, she would get a baby in and I would have to be put in a home.

When you were little?

Yes. My first recollection of that was on seeing that baby and Gran coming up to the hospital and I said "You wouldn't let her put me in a home, would you Granny?" She said "Whatever for?" And I said "Well, she's got a baby now". And it's amazing how a thing can be embedded in a child's mind and how you can relive that small a sentence. You know - I can't describe what I mean - it's a little thing - a little saying - but, it can have a totally different meaning when you sit and think about it and your reaction to it.¹³⁶

Elizabeth's relationship with her brother further exemplifies the varying dynamics of family relationships. Ganong and Coleman recount that numerous studies have found that stepchildren who have half-siblings have worse outcomes in a number of variables than stepchildren who do not have half-siblings.¹³⁷ As before, siblings are often the source of jealousy and resentment, seen as a physical embodiment of a parent's split affections.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 9

¹³⁷ Ganong and Coleman, *Stepfamily Relationships*, p. 201.

For Elizabeth, her mother's use of a threat of a new baby as a literal replacement was emotional abuse, the arrival of her younger brother a physical embodiment of this torment. Elizabeth herself abused her younger brother, tying him to a tree and injuring him to unburden herself of his care. Just as there are beneficial horizontal and vertical bonds within a family, there can be both horizontal and vertical abuse. The complexities of child abuse are clearly exemplified here, both in their varying nature and their identification and perpetration. Abuse pervaded Elizabeth's family and it passed between biological, step, and half relations.

The substitute mothering role that fell to S1 on the death of her mother did not have such a severe effect on her experiences of childhood. This is arguably because there was no maternal alternative, thus S1's adoption of this role was not indicative of any dysfunction within her family, but instead was indicative of a widespread cultural practice of 'little mothering'. Conversely, Linda's stepfather's disruption of her life and relationship with her mother caused her to be much closer to her brother: "most of my memories are really about Alastair and myself really. We were quite close."¹³⁸ As with John, author of *A Mallaig Boyhood* discussed in a previous chapter, Linda and her brother formed a "splinter group" within the family offering support and succour to one another in times of familial discord. Having spent as little time as possible within the stepfamily home in order to avoid her stepfather, Linda's memories of her brother are perhaps her strongest connection to her family life and act as a clear measure of Linda's feelings of security and belonging within a family, perhaps in part because the majority of her childhood with her brother was spent outwith the stepfamily unit.

¹³⁸ Linda, interview.

Whilst it has been claimed that sibling relationships within a stepfamily are less harmonious and satisfactory than those in intact homes, this analysis of experiences suggests that sibling relations within stepfamilies are as varied and complex as they are in other family forms.¹³⁹ Whilst, as in any other family, siblings can be the source of friction and resentment they can also act as a buffer and help children to present a united front in the face of family disruption and dysfunction. The horizontal bond between siblings is seen to be as impactful as the vertical bond between children and their parents; in regards to the stepchildren discussed here, these bonds and relationships between siblings could either exacerbate or mitigate feelings of safety, comfort and belonging. Furthermore, the role of siblings is important to consider here in particular as they do help to identify complex family systems, arguably much more so than parental marital statuses.

VII. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explore experiences of childhood within stepfamilies in twentieth century Scotland. What the above discussion has revealed, as in earlier chapters, is that the stepfamily, and therefore the experience within a stepfamily, is a complex and varied entity. As with the consideration of the nuclear family, the examination of a stepfamily has in part led to a challenging of the cultural and social expectations of stepfamily life. Although sociologists have contended that the variations between stepfamilies means that there is some difficulty in successfully contrasting experiences of childhood within stepfamilies and other family forms, an examination of the interviewees and memoirists here reveals some notable continuities.

¹³⁹ Ferri, *Stepchildren*, p. 7, p. 52.

In considering some of the variables of experiences of childhood, such as housing, education, and intrafamilial relationships, it is clear that each has a notable impact, as before. For example, housing and issues of overcrowding, whilst undoubtedly found amongst the stepfamilies discussed here, appears to have been at no higher level than any other family form discussed during the period. Although there is a continuation from the previous chapter on lone parents, in that stepfamilies with stepfathers appear to have been more overcrowded than their stepmother counterparts. This raises interesting points within the historical analysis of gendered experiences of parenting and housing.

Furthermore, decisions and opportunities to continue in education and improve academic achievement were again impacted by a number of variables; lower educational attainment too, cannot be merely ascribed to having belonged to a stepfamily. However, the testimonies of Elizabeth and Linda are particularly stark in the problematic nature of their stepfather's behaviours and the impact that this had on their life choices, particularly in regards to education. Although the extent of their stepfather's control and abuse is unique here, other examples of parental behaviour impacting education can be found throughout this thesis; Agnes's father's drinking affecting her confidence to continue in school, as with Maureen's parents' volatile relationship.

Constructions of family norms also persisted in the evidence surveyed here as external agencies continued to place an emphasis on the breadwinner model and the nuclear family format; the 'return to normality' attempted by stepfamilies echoed in their interactions. Indeed, in Dick's case stepfamily life was a return to normality, especially as the family eventually continued to reside in the family home that Dick had lived in prior to his father's remarriage. However, for Linda, Elizabeth, and Ron, stepfamily life marked a watershed in

their experience of childhood. Whilst their families can be seen to be returning to ‘normality’ in that they now more closely followed the gendered nuclear ideal with the addition of a male provider, the disruption this caused was notable in each case. This speaks to a recurring theme of constructions and meanings of family and experiences of childhood. Whilst the emphasis is placed on material conditions by agencies such as the RSSPCC, as in chapters previously, these cannot outweigh emotional wellbeing in recollected experiences of childhood. For example, within the small sample of cases considered here physical and sexual abuse appeared within the family for the first time, due in part to a contradictory portrayal of the stepfather as not a ‘real father’. However, it must be noted that wider definitions of neglect and emotional abuse are seen across experiences of all the family forms considered in this thesis.

As aforementioned, it is surprising given the fact that the stepfamily was a prevalent family form in the twentieth century that there was not more evidence to be uncovered. This could speak, in part, to the self-selection of interviewees, but also to the nuances of stepfamily life – particularly in the pathway to stepfamily life. In some instances, the stepfamily is closer to the nuclear ideal, indeed for some children (such as Jacqueline and Elizabeth’s brother) the stepfamily was a nuclear family. What this chapter has revealed, however, is the relevance in the ways in which stepfamilies have formed; the age at formation as well as the experience of childhood within the previous family form being of particular importance. In analysing a variety of family forms, what has become clear, rather than the stepfamily closely imitating the nuclear ideal, is a level of continuity across all family forms. The impacts of family form on experiences of childhood are wide and varied and it is well remembered that when talking of family life there are a number of variables to consider, both within and out with the familial unit.

Conclusion

Peter: It's funny, I think a lot of people of our age group, they say they wouldn't change [the past], you know. They say...like they say I never really fancy the way the young ones have got now, a modern life. Although everything is at their hands, it's a press button and things that are cushions, it still doesn't seem to...I mean, I wouldn't give up our times, you know what? Our times were very good, you know. I don't know what it is, it's...

Ken: It's probably the fact that we were kids...¹

In reflecting on their childhoods, Peter and Ken speak to the ways in which experiences of childhood change over time. Here, they encapsulate the ways in which interviewees throughout this thesis have constructed their narratives around multiple, changing meanings of childhood over the life course. This thesis set out to explore how people had experienced childhood in a variety of family forms from 1920 to 1970 with a focus on the 1940s onwards; this was a period dubbed the 'golden age' of the family that saw the supposed hey-day of the nuclear family in the post-war decades. In examining narratives of childhood, this thesis has demonstrated that 'family' is a subjective term, expanding and contracting as it is both lived and understood. My research has established that the physical and emotional boundaries of family can be seen as fluid; family is not only a social construct but is continually constructed and reconstructed by those that experienced it, both as lived experience and in recalling childhood and family. The meanings of childhood and of family have varied across family forms and across time. In concluding, I wish to reflect on the impact of family life on experiences of childhood, as well as the methods used to capture those experiences retrospectively, particularly oral history, and the extent to which both adult awareness and nostalgia contributed to the ways memories were framed. Overall, I reflect on the extent to which the dominant discourse of the nuclear family has been challenged by my

¹ Peter and Ken, interviewed by author, 17.07.2014.

research findings, and the interplay of external social structural factors and emotional ties within households, extended family and the wider community.

I. A reflection on method

One of the main objectives and achievements of this thesis was to place experiences of childhood at the centre of the history of the family. This was accomplished through the extensive use of personal testimonies, in conjunction with expansive archival evidence. The subjectivity of oral history recollections and the effects of nostalgia were one of the first criticisms levelled at oral history, and arguably remain some of the more lasting reservations.² Nostalgia was apparent throughout the testimonies considered here, and was particularly evident in discussions of community as further discussed below. However, as recognised in the introduction, the subjective nature of both oral history and the memoir is what made these methodologies ideal for this research. Personal recollections are one of the main, if not the only, ways that we can uncover the meanings of family and childhood experiences as well as their changing definitions and significance over time. Moreover, the interplay of subjectivity, memory, and nostalgia has added an important dimension to the analysis of much of the personal testimony considered here.

Similar to the ‘composure’ discourse within oral history theory, nostalgia was utilised by respondents as a way in which they could explain their childhood experiences positively whilst also protecting their narrative of childhood. Interestingly, some participants actively sought to throw off the veil of nostalgia, keen to uncover forgotten truths during the interview. For example, pausing during her recollections of her mother’s parents, Brenda

² Alistair Thomson, ‘Memory and Remembering Oral History’, in Donald Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 79.

stated, “I can’t think of any big ... I’m trying to think of some skeletons, but I can’t think of them.”³ However, the majority of respondents and memoir authors did demonstrate a level of nostalgia; indeed, throughout this research there was evidence of a collective nostalgic memory of childhood.

Throughout this thesis, recollections of childhood often included distinct tropes of freedom and safety that seemingly defied generational boundaries: “freedom to go out by yourself”; “we had a great childhood because of the freedom, you’d be away all day”; “and it was just good that you had a lot more freedom”; “nobody worried in those days”; “most of us had very good childhoods”.⁴ In adhering to this collective memory of the past, respondents presented themselves as belonging to a wider group, sharing in an identity of a child of the past. Moreover, for the majority of respondents this was not just a reflection of a shared past but also a reflection of their desire for their childhood to have been a *good* childhood. In seeking to present a recollection of a good childhood, interviewees often mitigated disruptive and abusive circumstances as seen throughout this research. This was particularly evident in narratives of sexual danger.

For example, eight of the 16 women who were interviewed for this research recounted atmospheres of sexual danger, specific events of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault during their childhoods. These accounts were often juxtaposed with nostalgic declarations over the freedoms and safety of their childhoods. This was most starkly present in Jacqueline’s recollections of her childhood in the outskirts of Edinburgh. Despite recalling the “freedom” of childhood and the belief that “there was never any, kind of, danger in the

³ Brenda, interviewed by author, 18.03.2014.

⁴ Jacqueline (b. 1945), interviewed by author, 25.08.2014.; Agnes (b. 1945), interviewed by author, 29.10.2014; Sandra (b. 1938), interviewed by author, 12.09.2014; Brenda (b. 1954), interview; Sheila (b. 1945), interviewed by author, 12.07.2014.

place”, Jacqueline also recalled being warned away from a local man who would expose himself to young children.⁵ Agnes also recalled being warned about a man who exposed himself to young children, and yet she also stated “we had a great childhood because of the freedom.”⁶ There is a distinct inconsistency in Jacqueline’s and Agnes’s assertion that there was “never any” danger alongside their clear recollection of potential sexual danger. This disconnect was repeated by several other respondents who all reflected within the interview on the freedom and safety of childhood whilst later recalling the presence and experiences of sexual danger. Discussed in more depth in chapter two, this can not only be interpreted as a way in which interviewees reflected on the loss of local communities, but also a desire to represent a narrative of a good childhood.

Furthermore, as well as navigating her way through gendered constructions of space, safety, and security, Jacqueline was openly nostalgic for the neighbourhood of her childhood, the close-knit “small community” of her memory. Jacqueline, a mother and grandmother herself, lived in a large city at the time of interview. Therefore, she was also reflecting on the loss of this safety and security for her own children and grandchildren. Commenting on the development of her old town, bemoaning the absence of community, Jacqueline stated, “but now [redacted] has totally changed. They’ve built private housing and it’s huge now and nobody, that hub that we had, that doesn’t exist anymore like everywhere else.”⁷ These ideas were further apparent, as discussed in chapter two, when interviewee Gordon recalled the “community parenting” that occurred within his experience of inner-city tenement living and in Irene’s recollection of the “good quality” area of her youth; both interviewees actively engaged in a similar discourse of loss as Jacqueline.⁸ Jacqueline’s comments on the

⁵ Jacqueline, interview.

⁶ Agnes, interview.

⁷ Jacqueline, interview.

⁸ Irene, interview; Gordon, interviewed by author, 30.10.2014.

community of her childhood not only speak to her own experience of childhood but her experiences of parenting and awareness of modern discourses of childhood. As Ken shows in the quote opening this conclusion, memories of childhood are often constructed as good simply because those remembering “were kids”, but their memories are also composed across a lifecourse. As such, meanings and experiences of childhood are (re)constructed to relate to a changing and relative definition of a ‘good childhood’. In doing so, it is not just collective memories that are altered and shaped by this changing discourse, but also individual memories and experiences. This is further exemplified in interviewees’ changing understandings of abuse discussed throughout this thesis.

Thus, I demonstrate that interviewee narratives were often composed in such a way as to safeguard the meanings given to their childhoods, particularly as they relate to an understanding of a ‘good childhood’. This protective restructuring of memory occurred at several points throughout this thesis, notably with Alan’s construction of his father’s drinking in chapter two. Reluctant to cast his father as an alcoholic, Alan instead constructed his father’s drinking as “typically Glaswegian”.⁹ Whilst revealing contemporary discourses on drinking and Scottish male culture, Alan’s narrative also safeguarded his construction of his relationship with his father. In the same way that his father’s reputation as a good provider and family man remained safe and unchallenged, so did Alan’s narrative of a good childhood. Similarly in chapter three, Agnes was clear to assert that, although her father was emotionally abusive towards her and her siblings, he never sexually abused them.¹⁰ In engaging with a continuing public uncovering of, and discourses on, child sexual abuse at the time of interview, Agnes negotiated her own experiences in order to compose an experience of a good childhood. Similarly, returning to chapter two, Patricia described her parents’

⁹ Alan, interviewed by author, 09.07.2014

¹⁰ Agnes, interview.

relationship as “pretty good” despite her father’s drinking and abusive behaviour towards her mother.¹¹ Whilst these recollections all related to contemporary discourses, they also reveal a need to conform to a collective nostalgic narrative of a good childhood during the interview.

Additionally, two interviewees approached this research with awareness that their experience of childhood was divergent to this collective nostalgic memory of childhood. Maureen, whose childhood was dominated by her parents’ volatile relationship, expressed interest in being interviewed primarily because her experience of childhood was so different (to the assumed norm). Maureen stated that she knew she “wouldn’t be the only one” to have negative and difficult experiences during her childhood.¹² However, she was actually the only respondent to overtly express such an experience of childhood.

In drawing on changing discourses of a good childhood, interviewees (re)constructed and composed their accounts of childhood across their life course. This focusing of memory often fulfilled a protective function, interviewees generally negotiating and idealising their own experiences in order to conform to a wider collective and cultural memory of a good childhood. Within oral history, as Summerfield has argued, where interviewees cannot draw on a public account of events, their response is often to justify their deviation.¹³ This was evident in my research: where respondents could not conform to a ‘good childhood’ narrative, they sought to justify this through negotiating their experiences, whether this be reframing their father’s alcoholism or locating their experience of childhood abuse relative to the increasing awareness of the complexities and experiences of abuse. However, not all respondents idealised their childhoods and engaged with this collective nostalgic memory.

¹¹ Patricia, interviewed by author, 04.04.2014.

¹² Maureen, interviewed by author, 08.08.2014.

¹³ Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004), pp. 92-93.

Thus, Maureen openly contrasted her childhood with the common nostalgic representation of childhood, framing her own experience in contrast to those who did conform to this narrative. Additionally, Maureen comforted herself with the knowledge that she would not be the only one to have had such a childhood experience, therefore redefining her own shared meanings of childhood and family as not isolated examples.

II. Meanings of Family

One of the reasons this thesis sought to explore experiences of childhood, focusing on different family forms, was because of the increasing political and public scrutiny placed on varying family forms and the continual emphasis on ‘family breakdown’ as a measure of familial failure.¹⁴ In seeking to address the over-arching research question to what extent family structure shaped experiences of childhood from the inter-war period until the 1970s, this thesis uncovered the experience of childhood across family forms in mid-twentieth century Scotland, focusing on a questioning of the idealisation and primacy of the nuclear family model. With the majority of sources focused on the nuclear family in the post-war decades, this thesis has explored what childhood was like in a nuclear family and the impact of external structures on variations in experience. Furthermore, the testimony from those who experienced lone parent and stepfamily childhoods is suggestive of the importance of the individual family function in childhood experience as well as allowing for a further interrogation the domination of the nuclear ideal. In looking at whether individual family function was a better measure of familial ‘success’ than family form this thesis also, raised questions about how we measure or explain familial success.

¹⁴ This can be seen in the opening discussion to this thesis, for example in changing definition of ‘child poverty’ (discussed on pp. 1-2) as well as the continued use of terms such as ‘broken’ when referring to non-nuclear family forms.

During the course of the research, it became clear that the boundaries of the family were fluid and respondents attached multiple meanings to family; indeed, one of the most important contributions of this work is the ways in which it challenges the dominant discourse of the nuclear family as a self-contained, functional unit. Within social and political commentary, and arguably some academic discussion, there has been an inherent assumption that the nuclear family is the ideal family. Throughout the archival research carried out for this thesis, it became clear that the ideal of the nuclear family shaped the views and actions of official agencies throughout twentieth century Scotland. This was most apparent in the case records of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC). This welfare charity placed a considerable amount of emphasis on the nuclear ideal and conformity to this ideal was often prioritised over and above child welfare.

Albeit very brief, Sheila and Jackie's contact within the institution of a mother and baby home reveals a further intersecting relationship between official bodies and family life. The experience of mother and baby homes such as the Haig Ferguson Memorial Home (HFMH) and that run by the Women's Help Committee (WHC) reveal further constructions of the meaning of family from official standpoints between 1920-1970. Over the course of the period under review here, mother and baby homes echoed the RSSPCC's focus on the nuclear ideal by placing a greater emphasis on adoption. In this way, Sheila and Jackie, born in a mother and baby home in Edinburgh in the 1940s and 1960s, are an example of the undoing of a lone parent family and the creation of a family following the nuclear model through adoption. These views were also apparent in the local government structures for welfare relief and state benefits over the course of much of the period considered here, the early decades of the welfare state stressing the breadwinner ideology and the related nuclear ideal. However, the oral histories and personal testimonies drawn on challenged the

assumption that both parents were physically and psychologically present within the family, even where the family fitted the description of a nuclear family. Indeed, the presence of both parents could negatively impact the experience of childhood if there was considerable parental discord or dysfunctional behaviour, as in the cases of Maureen and Agnes.

Furthermore, interviewee's testimonies revealed fluidity in the definition of nuclear family as it was both lived and understood. The boundaries of the nuclear family were often in flux, expanding to include extended family members and the wider community. Parental discord or dysfunctional behaviour often resulted in interviewees forming close bonds with extended family members, particularly grandparents. As a result of Alex's father's drinking and his parents' fraught relationship, he was much closer to his grandparents, as was James. Additionally, relationships within the nuclear unit also challenge assumptions over the working of the model. The nuclear family is defined with vertical relationships between parents and dependent children, however, in my research, sibling relationships often blurred these lines and relationships were often formed vertically between siblings as well as horizontally. That is, the caregiving role carried out by some siblings was particularly formative for some interviewees. Moreover, birth order and significant age gaps resulted in disparate emotional, and sometimes material, experiences of childhood within the same family, complicating feelings of belonging and further blurring familial lines. Emotional ties to family members also influenced their inclusion in the boundaries of family, exemplified by Jacqueline's construction of her family as 'nuclear' despite her half-siblings. The broadening of the meaning of family was also evident in discussions on housing and the home.

The topic of housing was initially included in the interview as an 'icebreaker' for interviewees to ease them into their recollections of childhood. However, discussions of

housing and the family home soon became a crucial point of analysis. The role of housing in respondents' narratives indicated the necessity of mapping the emotional landscapes onto the material and environmental context. Across the chapters, childhood recollections of the family home revealed much about the internal workings of the familial unit as well as its lasting impression and impact on the adult remembering in retrospect. Memories of the home became largely synonymous with accounts of family life. The 'cosy' childhood home was shorthand for the warmth and affection between family members; the overcrowded home of a single mother a physical manifestation of her struggles to support her growing family. This was also reflected in official discourses, the poor housing recorded by the RSSPCC a reflection of a mother's care or neglect of her children. However, the physical boundaries of the home did not reflect the emotional boundaries of the family. 'Family', as defined by interviewees, was not limited to household, nor was it related to kin, but an extension of the home into the street and the local community, and significant relationships beyond the home.

The local community also appeared to be influential in constructions of a good childhood, particularly where there was an overall sense of belonging, especially within the wider community. Socio-economic homogeneity appeared to be important to a recollected sense of comfort and childhood wellbeing, as with Irene's "good community" and Sandra's assertion that her family were "poor, but I never felt poor."¹⁵ However, for Agnes, whose father was an alcoholic and whose parents later separated, the community was a source of anxiety and a reminder of her family's failure to adhere to the seemingly ubiquitous nuclear narrative. Linda, who lived with her widowed mother also reflected on her childhood awareness that she "didn't have a father", unlike everyone else in her street.¹⁶ Thus, it was not just community belonging that was important to interviewees, but also perceived

¹⁵ Irene, interviewed by author, 16.01.2014/30.01.2014; Sandra, interview.

¹⁶ Linda, interviewed by author, 16.07.2014.

homogeneity in family structures and behaviour. Indeed, within this thesis, experiences of childhood within lone parent families revealed interviewees were keenly aware of this family difference in childhood.

The support network of the community so frequently referred to amongst nuclear family interviewees was all but absent for children of lone parents, particularly lone mothers. For lone mother families, whilst the sample was much smaller, it was clear that the internal functioning and coping strategies of each family impacted heavily upon the experiences of childhood recounted. Here, interviewees explicitly expressed awareness of official support structures and welfare provision in a way that was absent in the other recollections discussed. The vast majority of all the families considered in this thesis would have come into contact with an official agency or institution, aside from educational bodies, at some point, and yet this contact was only explicitly and repeatedly recounted by those in 'non-traditional' family forms. Further research would be needed in order to fully explore the impact of welfare agencies on lone parent families and stepfamilies; however, evidence here is certainly suggestive of this notable difference in family forms.

Indeed, through the course of research for this thesis, family boundaries were extended to include an institution, as in the case of David. David's experience of childhood adds an interesting depth to the analysis here, his experience in Quarriers home serves as a reminder that not all children experienced childhood within a family unit and that traditional notions of family were not a lived reality for many, over and above broad definitions of the term. However, although David spent the majority of his childhood outwith a traditional family structure, his narrative of childhood was still composed within an understanding and meaning of family. Extended family remained a touchstone for David and education was a

physical and mental escape from his emotionally abusive childhood, as well as a source of care and validation from adult, pseudo-parental figures.

Education was an important factor in many interviewees' recollections of childhood, across all family forms, in the same way as housing. It was an environmental constant, as children were required by law to attend school until 15. However, this research adds an important facet to our understanding on the impact of education on experiences of childhood through the ways in which attitudes and access to education also revealed family dynamics. In much the same way that warm homes represented familial love, educational achievement often reflected parental affection. Similarly, outwith family structures, educational success was a measure of caring attention and affirmation. The ways in which interviewees negotiated educational opportunities was indicative of wider issues within the family. Childhood awareness of familial difference and parental conflict was evident in decisions to continue in education, as with Maureen whose parents' unpredictable relationship meant that she did not feel secure enough to carry on at school. Linda, who lived with her mother and controlling and emotionally abusive stepfather in London, left school in order to leave the fraught family home.

Additionally, leaving school to contribute to the family economy was found to be common across all family forms. In some instances, this was constructed as a financial necessity, with growing family size or family instability resulting in feelings of responsibility, as with Elizabeth and Maureen respectively, but was also a reflection of on-going discourses on masculinity and breadwinning, exemplified by author Robert Douglas. Furthermore, in discussions of education the impact of class became notable for the first time. None of the interviewees from middle-class backgrounds, namely William and Dorothy, experienced any

enforced break in their education, in part due to their financial circumstances. However, that is not to say that education was not a contentious or difficult subject for either; Dorothy's relationship with her father became particularly strained over the pressures he placed on her education.

Intrafamilial relationships and dynamics were apparent in many discussions of education. Education could be a source of tension in parent-child relationships, as well as affection. My analysis demonstrated the importance of a level of consensus between parents and children, as regarding educational progression and some interviewees in this respect recollected generational tensions. For example, both Patricia born in the 1930s and Helen born in the 1950s, recalled a lack of parental support and encouragement to carry on in school, their parents instead placing an emphasis on entering work as soon as possible. Conversely Irene and Jacqueline were encouraged by their parents to continue in their education.

Evidence from lone parent families is also suggestive of the importance of continuity within experiences of childhood. In non-nuclear families, continuity was found to be key in recollected experiences and for David education provided this constant offering a sense of security and providing a level of self-esteem. For other experiences of transitioning, or 'broken', families, this continuity was found in intra- and extra-familial relationships. For Helen, the agency of her remaining parent, her mother, was vital. Helen's assessment of her childhood as "settled" despite the death of her father when she was 13, evidences the importance of her mother's success in maintaining a sense of familial continuity, providing financially and emotionally.¹⁷ In contrast, as with nuclear families, where emotional support

¹⁷ Helen, interviewed by author, 09.07.2014.

was lacking in the immediate family, children sought this out through wider extended family members or within the community. With the emotional and physical absence of his father, Robert turned to his bachelor uncle as a paternal figure and William sought emotional support through his relationship with a housekeeper. In addition, the presence of siblings seemed to lend strength to feelings of continuity and their role in the experience of the transitioning family, is of considerable interest for further research. In contrast, where there were no pre-existing support networks to be drawn upon, respondents suggest that this gap was filled with external, institutional support, as with Joan.

Throughout this research, interviewees drew on dominant discourses of family life and parental roles through their construction of meanings of family. Amongst nuclear family interviewees this was most clear in the acknowledgement by James and Alan that their fathers continued financial provision despite heavy drinking. For stepfamilies this was expressed through a contemporary, and arguably continued, expectation of a return to ‘normality’. In dealing with stepfamilies, agencies such as the RSSPCC continued to place an emphasis on the nuclear ideal and the importance of strictly gendered parental roles, with a maternal caregiver and a paternal provider. However, this was not reflected within interviewee narratives of stepfamily life. For stepfamilies the variable behaviours of individual members accounted for their ‘success’ or ‘failure’. For Dick, whose father married Dick’s maternal aunt, his return to normalcy was evident in his acceptance of his “mammy”, a woman who had notably been previously been providing a caregiving role to Dick and his younger sister. For Linda and Elizabeth, the acceptance of a stepfather was much more difficult, in particular owing to their controlling and abusive behaviours.

Although abuse was evident throughout this research, it was most explicit (within interviewee narratives and archival research) amongst stepfamilies. No claims can be made as to the rate of occurrence of abuse within varying family forms given the small sample here, as varying levels of abuse are to be found across all family forms considered in and beyond this thesis. However, the historical and cultural use of the ‘wicked’ stepmother and ‘cruel’ stepfather tropes may allow for a protective distancing in the discussion of familial abuse, as something which happens in ‘other’ families. Indeed, in the example of the RSSPCC’s attempts to understand a (step)father’s murder of his son, there was mitigation of his behaviour through his not being the biological father. In returning to narratives of a good childhood, being outwith the structures of a traditional family might allow for an easier negotiation of recollections of abuse by survivors, and an easing of societal consciousness in cases where the narrative has already transgressed cultural norm through an experience of stepfamily life.

Throughout this thesis, the question of cultural norms and discourses of family life have been key. Nonetheless, it is important to note that all of the family and childhood experiences for this research have come from religiously and racially homogenous backgrounds, a point that was not intentional and bears reflecting on. Not only is there a need to examine a more diverse background of families, but also to consider why individuals from non-white, non-Christian backgrounds did not come forward for research into childhoods in Scotland. Moreover, religion did not form a large part of any interview and, interesting for the west of Scotland there were no accounts of any Catholic/Protestant tensions within families. In future research into family life in Scotland, questions on religion would be interesting to pursue, not only in seeking to understand religious tensions but also the dynamics of religiously diverse families – particularly given Glasgow’s large Irish Catholic,

Italian, and Jewish populations during the period considered here, as well as the greater ethnic diversity in the later twentieth century across Scotland. Indeed, the experience of childhood within these families would be of particular interest given the on-going research into Scottish Jewish and Italian Scottish identities.¹⁸

Moreover, in relation to this, there is a large disparity between the family forms represented here with the nuclear family vastly outweighing all others. Since it is known that there was a presence of diverse family forms throughout Scottish history, the experience of non-nuclear families is of particular interest, and once more the reluctance of those who experienced childhoods in such families to come forward and form a part of this narrative reflects an intriguing opportunity for investigation. Finally, the archives of organisations such as the Scottish Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (SCUMC) and the RSSPCC were both utilised in this research, but the full impact of these organisations on discourses of family and childhood remains underexplored for reasons of space. Both institutions have English counterparts that have been the subject of numerous studies, as aforementioned; the archives of the Scottish branches offer a further enticing prospect for investigation and comparison. In particular, a fuller examination of the holdings of the RSSPCC archive would provide a greater understanding of their changing constructions of a ‘good childhood’, this thesis having already indicated a shift from a focus on material provision to emotional wellbeing. Such an examination would also add to expanding scholarship on historical child abuse, allowing for an insight into official understandings of, and responses to, abuse over the course of the twentieth century.

¹⁸ See, for example: Ben Braber, *Jews in Glasgow 1879-1939: immigration and integration* (London: Vallentine Mitchell in association with EJPS, 2007); Kenneth Collins, *The Jewish Experience in Scotland: from immigration to integration* (Glasgow: Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, 2016); Wendy Ugolini, ‘The Italian Community in Scotland’, in John Beech, Owen Hand, and Mark Mulhern (eds.), *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnography*, vol. 9 *Individual Life and Society* (2005).

In this research, the archival evidence has added to the understanding and meanings of family over the course of the twentieth century. Further research into these archives would allow for a greater understanding of their impact on family life as well as allowing for a fuller comparison between Scotland and England and Wales, resulting in a fuller analysis of the impact of Scotland's diverse history of family forms and its relevance beyond Scotland. Additionally, this thesis has also begun to explore the ways in which agencies related to changing social and political discourse on the family, highlighting a complexity in the way agencies interacted with families and individuals. The archival holdings of the WHC and the HFMH revealed the crucial role of community in family acceptance as well as the prioritisation of the nuclear ideal. Both also show a shift towards adoption in the post-war period that is of interest when considered alongside the perception of the greater welfare provision for single mothers in the same period. This would be interesting to pursue in order to expand on the impact of the primacy of the nuclear ideal in the post-war period, as well as adding to an evaluation of the impact of the welfare state on childhood over and above experiences of education and healthcare.

Overall, the methodology used throughout this thesis has indicated the crucial element of subjectivity within the research, necessary to reveal the everyday details of family life and the varied ways in which interviewees and authors construct meanings of family and childhood. This thesis has highlighted that we cannot simply generalise the experiences of children within differing family forms, there is a need to take a case-by-case approach as much as is possible. When discussing experiences of childhood within differing family forms, it is important to retain an awareness that understanding family is subjective and experiences

are based on individual family's functioning and relations, alongside external socio-economic factors that affect the experience of childhood in twentieth century Scotland and beyond.

Appendix A: Call for Interviewees



CALL FOR INTERVIEWEES

The effects of family form on childhood experiences in twentieth century Scotland

Volunteers born **1920 - 1960** who spent their childhoods anywhere in Scotland are requested for an oral history project exploring the effect of the family on childhood experiences between 1920 and 1970.

This research focuses on the memories and experiences of those who were brought up in different types of families throughout mid-twentieth century Scotland. If you're willing to share your memories and experiences of childhood, or for further information, please contact Felicity Cawley at:

Telephone:

Email: f.cawley.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Post: Felicity Cawley, Economic and Social History, Lilybank House,
University of Glasgow, G12 8RT

Asking for further details does not commit you to taking part. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, an interview will be arranged at a time and place of your convenience, you would not be expected to travel to Glasgow. Interviewees' testimony will be stored, archived and used in accordance with their wishes, in line with the Data Protection Act (1998) and ethical guidelines.

Appendix B: Sample Interview Schedule

When were you born?

Where did you live as a child?

- What was that like (housing type, room number etc.)? Did anyone else live there?
- How long did you live there?/Did you move?
- Can you remember other families on the street/tenement/estate (etc.)? What were they like? (Was your family different? How so?)

Can you describe your family?

- Do you know when your parents were born?
- How old are your brothers/sisters?
- Did you have any aunts and uncles? How often did you see them?
- Do you remember your grandparents? How often did you see them?

(In the case of a non-intact family)

- When did your mother/father remarry?
- Would you see your (biological) mother/father often?

Do you know how your parents met?

- When did they get married?

What did you parent(s) do for a living?

- Were they ever out of work?

What were you parents like?

- What was their relationship like?
- What did your parents do after work/on the weekends? Did they have any outside interests/hobbies?
- Did your mother/father go to the pub? How often? Did they drink at home?

Do you remember who did what in the house in terms of housework?

- What about you/your siblings?
- Did you have certain tasks you would do? Was that the same with your siblings?
- Did anyone come in to help in the house? Anyone from the family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.)?

Were you a close family?

- Do you remember talking to your mother/father much as a child?
- What did you talk about? Do you think they listened? How did they respond?
- Did your mother/father show affection towards you? How?

- Did you have routines in the house? A bedtime (would anyone tuck you in? Read you a story?)? Did you have a dinner routine? Did you say prayers?
- Did you play games with your parents?
- Did someone help you with your homework?
- Would you do things together as a family (day trips/church/outings/holidays)?
- Would your father take you places without your mother?
- Did you father ever look after you on his own? (what if your mother was ill/pregnant)?
- Would you say you were close to your parent(s)?
- Did you feel secure at home?

What kind of rules did you have in the house?

- Whose rules were those?
- What would happen if you broke the rules?
- Who disciplined you? (Did they do it often? How? Did you think it was fair?)

When did you start school?

- Did you enjoy school? Where you good at studying?
- When did you leave school? Did you friends leave at the same time?
- Would you have liked to have stayed longer? (What would you have studied? Did you have a certain job in mind?)
- Why did you leave? What did you do after you left school? (First job?)
- When did your brothers/sister leave school? What did they do when they left?

What did you do after/outside school?

- Did you belong to any youth organisations? Sunday school?
- Did you play any sports?
- Did you get pocket money?
- Did you have a specific group of friends? What would you get up to? Did you ever get into any trouble?
- Were you aware of your friend's families? Did you spend time with them? What were their families like? Were they different to your family?

What about your family now?

- Did you want to get married? Do you have a partner?
- When did you meet your partner?
- Do you have children? When were your children born?
- Would you say you are close to your own children?
- Do you think you are like your mother/father? (How?)
- What did you parents teach you about family life?
- Are there any events in your adult life that affect your view of your childhood? Do you think you childhood has affected your adult life negatively?

Appendix C: Table of Oral History Interviews

Name	Year of Birth	Place of Birth*	Family Form	Interviewer
S1	1912	Stirling (rural)	Stepfamily	Karen Connal**
Irene	1931	Lanarkshire (village)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Elizabeth	1935	Dundee	Stepfamily	Paul Thompson***
Patricia	1937	Aberdeenshire (rural)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Sandra	1938	Aberdeenshire (village)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Ken***	1939	Aberdeen	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
William	1940	Edinburgh	Widowed	Felicity Cawley
Dorothy	1942	Dunbartonshire (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
June	1942	Aberdeen	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Peter***	1943	Aberdeen	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Agnes	1944	Dundee (town)	Divorced	Felicity Cawley
Linda	1944	Glasgow	Widowed	Felicity Cawley
David****	1945	Glasgow	Widowed	Felicity Cawley
Jacqueline	1945	Midlothian (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Sheila	1945	Edinburgh (town)	Nuclear*****	Felicity Cawley
Alex	1946	Fife (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Eileen	1946	Fife (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Gordon	1946	Glasgow	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
James	1946	Caithness (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Isabelle	1946	Glasgow	Nuclear	Paul Thompson***
Joan	1947	Glasgow	Unmarried	Felicity Cawley
Stuart	1947	Aberdeen	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Joyce	1952	Stirling	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Christina	1953	Edinburgh (village)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Brenda	1954	Edinburgh	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Maureen	1957	Aberdeenshire (village)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Alan	1958	Lanarkshire (town)	Nuclear	Felicity Cawley
Helen	1959	Lanarkshire (town)	Widowed	Felicity Cawley

* In order to allow for the full anonymity of interviewees their place of birth has been restricted to a county or city and where applicable and explanation of the geographical setting.

** Interviewed as part of the *Scottish Women's Oral History Project*.

*** Interviewed as part of Paul Thompson and Harold Newby's *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing, an Intergenerational Approach, 1900-1988* (2005)

**** David spent 14 years in Quarriers Homes.

***** Sheila was born in a mother and baby home and was later adopted into a nuclear family.

Appendix D: Table of Memoirs

Name	Memoir	Year of Birth	Place of Birth	Family Form
Molly Weir	<i>Shoes were for Sunday</i>	1910	Glasgow	Widowed
John McKenzie	<i>A Mallaig Boyhood</i>	1918	Mallaig	Nuclear
Elizabeth Wheeler	<i>Growing up in Cowie and Bannockburn</i>	1924	Cowie	Nuclear
Jenny Chaplin	<i>Tales of a Glasgow Childhood</i>	1928	Glasgow	Nuclear
George Rountree	<i>A Govan Childhood: the 1930s</i>	1930	Glasgow	Nuclear
Robert Douglas	<i>Night Song of the Last Tram</i>	1939	Glasgow	Nuclear
Dick Lynas	<i>Pies were for Thursdays</i>	1942	Glasgow	Widowed/ Stepfamily
Meg Henderson	<i>Finding Peggy: a Glasgow Childhood</i>	1948	Glasgow	Nuclear
Ron Culley	<i>I Belong to Glasgow</i>	1950	Glasgow	Widowed/ Stepfamily
Jackie Kay	<i>Red Dust Road</i>	1961	Aberdeen	Unmarried

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