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**Lived experiences of becoming and being a young
maternal grandmother: An interpretative
phenomenological analysis**

**Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Northampton**

2016

Melinda Louise Spencer

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Nanna. I wish you had been a younger grandmother so I could have enjoyed life with you for longer.

Nanna and me (1986)



Abstract

In the last 40 years there has been a surge of academic research into grandparenthood as a result of increased longevity and changing family structures. However, limited research has been identified that explores the experiences of young grandparenthood in England, despite academic researchers' assertions of deviant young grandparenthood made in the 1980s.

Maternal grandmothers have been reported to be the most involved grandparent in the lives of their grandchildren. Further, there is likelihood that the transition to young maternal grandmotherhood is a consequence of young motherhood (of mother and/or daughter). Young motherhood literatures report that mothers of young mothers (maternal grandmothers) can be a primary source of support for their daughters, yet this body of research rarely focuses on the maternal grandmother. With the current cultural norm of grandparenting childcare in the UK and the UK Government's objectives of increasing women in work, improving maternal health, child health and economic self-sufficiency for young mothers, it is important to understand how young maternal grandmothers are, or are not, contributing to Government targets whilst balancing their own working and family lives.

This study makes initial steps in addressing these neglected areas of research by exploring the lived experiences of 10 young maternal grandmothers (aged 35 to 42 years at first transition) living in England. Data was collected using face-to-face semi-structured interviews, prompt objects and photo elicitation in order to answer the research question, 'what are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood?' Guided by British sociologists' conceptualisations of family life and relationships and the use of Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), data were analysed at an idiographic level before moving on to explore convergences and divergences across person cases, resulting in the emergence of shared patterns of meaning and experience.

Analysis of the transitional stage to grandmotherhood identified two essential experiences: Experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her daughter's pregnancy and experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her grandmotherhood. Analysis of being a young maternal grandmother identified three essential experiences: Experiencing grandmothering through time, distance, places, spaces and inanimate objects; experiencing grandmotherhood in the social world (the influence of others and on others); owning and romancing the grandchild, experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness.

The study concludes with a discussion of the current findings in relation to existing literatures and new understandings. Consideration is applied to the research design and the perceived strengths and limitations. The wider implications of this research are presented with specific focus on the potential to develop a conceptual framework for use in intervention measures for mothers (young maternal grandmothers) and/or daughters (young mothers) and recommendations for possible future directions in this research area.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood in England, considering the transitional stage of becoming a young maternal grandmother and subsequently, being a young maternal grandmother. This chapter presents a background to the research: a short introduction to grandparenthood and demographic shifts and a rationale for studying young maternal grandmotherhood. The research aim and question, the research design and the researcher's positioning and reflections are then presented. The chapter concludes with an outline to the thesis and chapter content.

1.2 Grandparenthood and demographic shifts

In the last 40 years, grandparenthood has become an increasingly popular subject of study (Mann, 2007). This growing interest, particularly in the US, Britain and Europe, is a direct result of the increase in life expectancy where individuals have the potential to be grandparents for longer than ever before (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007).

The shift from high-mortality high-fertility to low-mortality low-fertility societies means that the role of grandparent is changing drastically in terms of duration (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007; Harper & Ruicheva, 2010). According to Glaser *et al.* (2010), ageing populations are a universal phenomenon in which an increase in families with three or more generations living at the same time is to be expected. In Britain, over 80% of 20 year olds will have a living grandparent (Glaser *et al.* 2010). The average 10 year old has three grandparents alive compared to 1950 where there was an average of two living grandparents (Grandparents Plus, 2011).

With these changing demographic trends, the pyramid shaped family of the past has been replaced by a beanpole effect (Bosak, 2012). There are now more equal numbers of members in each generation and with increased longevity, grandparents may not be the eldest generation within a given family unit (Griggs, 2010). Further social changes stemming from the 20th century have impacted on family structures and grandparenthood. According to Backhouse and Lucas (2003), the feminist movements of the 1970s have led to an increase in the amount of mothers entering into the work force. No longer is the norm for the nuclear male breadwinner, with many two-parent families and lone parents in paid employment (Clarke & Roberts, 2003; Griggs, 2010).

Increases in family breakdowns and lone parent families also have implications for both parenthood and grandparenthood (Backhouse & Lucas, 2003; Clarke & Roberts, 2003). For example, grandparenting childcare is becoming increasingly commonplace, particularly among low-income groups where grandparent childcare is high (Griggs, 2010). According to Griggs (2010), socio-economic status is the key determinant of the grandparenting experience. Working age, working class grandmothers on a low income are more likely to be providing childcare to their grandchildren than any other socio-economic group. Grandparents Plus (2013) reported that the annual value of grandparent childcare contribution in the UK is estimated at £7.3 billion.

Consequently, the relationships between grandparent and grandchild are changing. A grandchild is likely to know and regularly see at least one of his/her grandparents into early adulthood and beyond. The changing dynamics in families that are being experienced today, within many cultures, suggests that grandparenthood is adapting to different and untraditional roles. Grandparents are more likely to hold greater significance in family life than ever experienced before (Glaser *et al.* 2010). For these reasons, Attius-Donfut and Segalen (2001) observed, *"the twenty-first century will be the century of grandparents"* (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007, p. 162).

1.3 The importance of studying young maternal grandmotherhood

In this next section, the importance of studying young maternal grandmotherhood will be outlined. Considerations are applied to the contributions this research will make to both grandmothering knowledge and to society.

1.3.1 Contributions to knowledge

From the beginning of the 20th Century, children increasingly became the central figures within the family, to be valued by their parents (Borovska, 2015). The existing literature maintains that women most often hold the central position within the family, frequently referred to as kin keepers and matriarchs (Thomas, 1989; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001; Lee, Spitze & Logan, 2003; Mann & Leeson, 2010), despite the increase of women now in the workforce (Backhouse & Lucas, 2003; Gray, 2005). May (2008) reported that there is a crucial social norm within modern Western societies that parents, in particular mothers, are expected to conform to; the ethic of care for children. That is, a morally good mother will put her children's needs first and foremost. Considering the increasing grandparent childcare contribution primarily due to

the increase in working mothers in the UK, it is of importance to explore whether the social pressures of 'good motherhood' extend to that of 'good grandmotherhood', particularly when women have the potential to be grandmothers for more than 40 years of their life (Minkler, 1999).

Maternal grandmothers are regularly denoted as the most involved with their grandchildren over the maternal grandfather and the paternal grandparents (Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn & Davies 2002; Svensson-Dianellou, Smith & Mestheneous, 2010). Existing literature suggests that the maternal grandparents will have more involvement in their grandchildren's lives, due to the majority of mothers who take on the main caretaking and custodial role after divorce and in single parenthood (Douglas & Ferguson, 2003; Svensson-Dianellou, Smith & Mestheneous, 2010).

With the most involved grandparent reported to be the maternal grandmother, it is appropriate to consider the mother-daughter relationship: a relationship that is potentially one of the most significant in the lives of both mother and daughter (Fingerman, 2003; Bojczyk *et al.* 2011). An abundance of research has focused on the mother-daughter relationship at various life stages. For instance, research highlights the role of the mother through her daughter's adolescence, suggesting that the mother can be a significant source of guidance and support in her daughter's transition to womanhood (Trad, 1995) and her daughter's developing identity and body image (Maor, 2012).

Bojczyk *et al.* (2011) reported a "bridge period" in the mother-daughter relationship where there is a shift from the unidirectional emotional support of mother to dependent daughter to mutually reciprocated support between mother and daughter. It is important to understand the experiences of the transition to young maternal grandmotherhood, which intertwine with the young adult daughter's transition to motherhood, before the "bridge period". This is due to literature that reports maternal grandmothers as a primary source of support for their teenage pregnant daughters (Borcherding, Smithbattle & Schneider, 2005; Turnage & Pharris, 2013). Yet, the research surrounding young motherhood rarely focuses on the experiences of the young mother's mother, the maternal grandmother (Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). There is also limited understanding of how the social negativity and potential stigmatisation of young motherhood (Kelly, 1995; Wilson & Huntington, 2006; Whitley & Kirmayer, 2008; Redwood, Pyer & Armstrong-Hallam, 2012; Smithbattle, 2013) may affect the maternal grandmother as she supports her daughter through pregnancy and motherhood. It is here that this research will make an

important contribution to the existing literature by addressing the experiences from the grandmothers' perspectives.

There is also limited research into the timing of and transition to grandmotherhood. In the UK, the average age of becoming a first time grandparent is reported to be between 49 and 54 years (Siciak *et al.* 2010; The Grandparents' Association, 2012). Grandparents Plus (2011) reported that working class women are four times more likely than middle class women to become grandmothers before the age of 50 years (22% compared to 5%).

From the pioneering work of Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1965), the growth of research into age normative frameworks demonstrated the existence of implicit societal constraints and timetables for the appropriate ages of life-span transitions. Labelling transitions that fell outside of these social age expectations as "off-time" (Hagestad & Lang, 1986). The transition to grandparenthood was no exception, with the early or late grandparent denominated as deviant and pathological (Kornhaber, 1986). More particularly, the early or "off-time" grandmother was believed incapable of performing typical grandmotherhood when she was still actively parenting and/or engaged in paid employment. This is perhaps complicated further by the young daughter's motherhood and her dependency on her mother before the "bridge period" in their relationship. Consequently, it was inferred that the young grandmother had little time or mental capacity to undertake the additional role of grandmother (Kornhaber, 1986). There is a noticeable absence of research conducted since the 1980's to support or disclaim the atypical assertions of the early or young grandmother and here, this research aims to address this identified gap in the literature.

Literatures into the life-course perspective also tend to neglect consideration of the timing and impact of grandmotherhood: a role that is frequently associated with later life (Kaufman & Elder Jr., 2003) but in reality, often occurs in mid-life (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007). Therefore, it is of value to study the experiences of young maternal grandmothers, where grandmotherhood continues to be socially represented as an older age role. Further, it is necessary to consider how early grandmotherhood fits within life-course literatures and theory. For instance, becoming and being a grandmother, whether considered "on-time" or "off-time", has received limited attention in relation to Erikson's (1963) psychosocial mid-life developmental stage of generativity versus stagnation and research into life stage transitions or psychological turning points.

Tarrant (2011) has written that grandparenthood is relational: that grandparenting identities are shaped in relation to others. From a sociological perspective on family life, there has emerged a growing body of literature into the sociology of personal life (Finch & Mason, 1993; Smart, 2007, 2011; May, 2013). This British founded sociological inquiry proposes that the personal is unequivocally relational (Roseneil & Ketokivi, 2015): that the sense of self *"emerges in relationships with and in relation to other people"* (May, 2013, p. 4). Smart (2011) reconceptualised the multi-dimensionality of family life in order to oppose existing theories of individualisation. Developing a toolbox of concepts (relationality, biography, embeddedness, memory and imaginary), Smart (2011, p. 27) suggested that these concepts connect to each other and that they can potentially *"open up new ways of seeing and can bring into the field of personal life and relationships an additional depth of meaning."* Because of the 'relational' in grandmotherhood and in particular, the mother-daughter relationship through the simultaneous transitions to grandmother and mother, this research draws on Smart's (2011) conceptualisations of relationality in order to develop understandings of the lived experiences of young maternal grandmothers.

In summary, this research will make an important contribution to knowledge in four identified areas:

1. A new and novel area of research. Limited academic research has been identified, to date, which has explored the lived experiences of young maternal grandmothers in England;
2. To re-visit the assertions of the deviant "off-time" grandparent made in the 1980's (Hagestad & Lang, 1986; Kornhaber, 1986);
3. To contribute to the existing knowledge of young motherhood from the perspectives of young grandmothers;
4. To explore the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood by drawing from existing psychological and sociological theories, conceptualisations and the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (research design is discussed in section 1.5).

1.3.2 Contributions to society

It is important to place young maternal grandmothers within the context of contemporary society and politics. At present, the UK is experiencing an onslaught of political change and uncertainty (with the EU Referendum leave result on the 23rd June 2016 and the subsequent radical changes in the Government cabinet). Additionally, since 2010, the UK has experienced severe

austerity measures, which have resulted in the Government's dominant fiscal policy of huge spending cuts and small increases in tax (Oxfam, 2013). Cuts to public services in England and Scotland have been, and continue to be, noticed in the lives of many people (Hastings, Bailey, Bramley, Gannon & Watkins, 2015).

As discussed previously, there is likelihood that the transition to young maternal grandmotherhood is a result of a daughter's young motherhood. Within the current UK's political and economic climate, there are implications for the young ages of mother and daughter. There is firstly a concern for the teenage mother, who is frequently depicted as impoverished, welfare dependent and at risk of lower educational achievements and workforce participation (Kelly, 1995; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). A further concern is for the welfare of the child, including a number of associated poor outcomes for the child's health and development (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). The UK Government (1999) introduced the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in order to reduce under 18 conception rates by half. After failing to meet this target, the UK Government continues to set this reduction as a priority (an objective in the Department of Health's Framework for Public Health Outcomes 2013-2016). A further policy to reduce the inequity in children's lives was introduced in 2004 (Every Child Matters: Change for Children): to improve the lives of children, young people and their families by improving the quality of, and accessibility to services, so that every child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

A disparity emerges between the policies just discussed and the cuts to public services under the current UK Government's austerity measures. According to Unison (2016), there has been an £82 million budget cut to children's centres and a £259 million cut to youth services, which ultimately means a reduction of opportunities for young people, a crucial support for young parents and the equity of healthy development in young children. Furthermore, the housing crisis presently being experienced in the UK has led to a shortage of housing which are unaffordable for young people (Large, 2014). Therefore, the implications for young maternal grandmotherhood are twofold: their young pregnant daughters may not be in a position, both financially and/or developmentally, to support themselves and their babies; and that the grandmothers may have to contribute substantial care time and financial support (for daughter and grandchild), as a result of cuts to services.

According to Age UK (2016), the cost of childcare in the UK is amongst the highest in the world. This then limits women's choices to work, even though there is political and policy pressures to do so. For instance, the 2010 budget

introduced a shift in lone parents' benefits from income support to job seekers allowance (once the youngest child reached 5 years of age). This placed lone parents as unemployed (and having to actively seek employment) rather than inactive (Age UK, 2016). The problem here is that young mothers have to find employment whilst formal childcare remains costly. It is likely that young mothers' mothers (maternal grandmothers) are also working as part of the UK government's targets to tackle pension provision for an ageing population by increasing employment rates in the over 50's (Gray, 2005). Grandparent childcare has emerged as an invaluable informal option of childcare, yet grandmothers are balancing their own working and family lives in order to help their adult children by caring for their grandchildren. It is only recently that the UK Government acknowledged the importance of grandparent childcare by planning to introduce shared parental leave and pay to working grandparents by 2018 (GOV.UK, 2015).

Whilst there have been dramatic cuts to public services, a recently new service provision has been introduced for first time young mothers. The Family Nurse Partnership Programme (FNP) was formed in 2012 to work with first time young mothers aged 19 years and under, offering support to the young mothers and families until the child is 2 years of age (Family Nurse Partnership, NHS, 2015). The FNP is a licensed programme based on 35 years of extensive research in the US and delivered by trained nurses using a psycho-education approach. The three main goals of the programme are to improve maternal health during pregnancy, improve child development and to increase maternal economic self-sufficiency. By exploring the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood, there is potential to inform this service and to develop interventions that may work towards achieving the aforementioned goals.

In summary, this research will make an important contribution to society in three identified ways:

1. To inform future national policies regarding informal grandparent childcare and womens' working and family life balance;
2. To raise awareness of how grandmothers can, and do contribute to the UK Government's objectives of improving maternal health, child health and development and economic independency for young mothers (Every Child Matters, 2004; Department of Health - Framework for Public Health Outcomes 2013-2016);
3. To identify the needs of the families of young mothers and more particularly, the needs and beliefs of young maternal grandmothers. By identifying these needs, there is potential to enhance existing service

provisions for young mothers and their families. Enhancement of services may include development of intervention and training measures for mother and/or daughter, which will contribute to the effectiveness of such services and to help meet the objectives of point 2.

1.4 Research aim and question

The primary aim for this study was:

- To explore and interpret the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother

By answering the research question **‘what are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood?’** this research will make advancements in the grandmothing literature and make an important contribution to society.

1.5 Research design

To answer the research question, a qualitative design was deemed most appropriate. After considering several qualitative methodologies (grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative inquiry and phenomenological inquiry – discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.1), a decision was made to use Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA offers a qualitative approach with theoretical foundations grounded in hermeneutics and phenomenology. It is an idiographic approach appropriate for the current study in which each of the grandmother’s experiences are individually analysed before exploring across person case patterns of essential experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Idiography is concerned with how an individual makes sense of their experiences and acknowledges the experience as unique to them; that the particular, detail and context are very much part of the person’s sense making process (Cronin-Davis, Butler & Mayers, 2009). Therefore, focusing on hearing the individual voice of the grandmother from her perspective. The analytical process in IPA starts with the detailed analysis of each case and only then moves on to examine convergences and divergences across a number of person cases to produce detailed accounts of shared patterns of meaning and experience (Shinebourne, 2011). These features of IPA were considered particularly important for this research in that it distinctly recognised the diversity and richness of the grandmothers’ experiences while also enabling identification of common structures. For these reasons, IPA was determined as the ideal methodology to address the research question and aim for this study.

Methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews (most frequently employed in IPA research as a means to enter the participant's lifeworld and to produce detailed and experiential accounts of the phenomenon under study, Smith *et al.* 2009) with photo elicitation and prompt objects. The decision to use photo elicitation and prompt objects was informed by two areas of academic research: Smart's (2011) toolbox of concepts for family life and relationships where photos and material objects can offer rich and meaningful insights into the relationality, biographical and embeddedness of personal lives; and the developments in research with children where participatory methods are increasingly being explored in order for the child to be heard whilst also limiting researchers' assumptions (Tangen, 2008). Photo elicitation has also been used effectively with IPA (Lachal, Speranza, Taieb, Falissard & Lefevre, 2012; Capewell, 2014; Silver & Farrants, 2015), exploring various phenomena: the role of food in family relationships; living with body dysmorphic disorder; and experiences of ongoing glue ear. Hence, photo elicitation and prompt objects were considered useful additional methods to stimulate discussion in the interview and to reveal meaningful insights into the young maternal grandmothers' experiences. Furthermore, grandmothers could bring their own meanings of their experiences to the interview, where photos can be regarded as "*a tool to help understandings develop*" (Cook & Hess, 2007, p. 43). Thus, minimising any preconceptions that the researcher may inadvertently be harbouring within the interview schedule.

Residing in England, ten white British young maternal grandmothers participated in this study. The participating grandmothers were at least 7 to 14 years younger than the UK norm of 49 to 54 years (Sciplino *et al.* 2010; The Grandparents' Association, 2012) with ages ranging from 35 to 42 years at their first transition to grandmotherhood.

1.6 Researcher's positioning and reflections

I started my PhD journey with a BA (Honours) in Psychology with Health Studies, a couple of year's experience of teaching psychology at Further Education and 41 years of life experience. My relationship with academia was late, perhaps considered "off-time" and at odds with socially prescribed normative trajectories. After 15 years of working for a High Street bank and during that time, becoming a mother to two sons, I somehow found the courage to fill in a UCAS form and at the age of 36 years, I enrolled upon my undergraduate's adventure.

My interest in psychology mainly derived from my experiences of motherhood. My eldest son was certainly a challenge and by the age of 2 years was demonstrating a strong will (and temper), intelligence far beyond what was expected of his chronological age, idiosyncrasies and oddities in his behaviour and the start of autism ruminations and musings from his Health Visitor. Following the mention of the 'A' word came a few stressful and emotional years of various appointments with Healthcare professionals, clinical psychologists and CAMHS with an eventual diagnosis made of high functioning autism. Shocking as it was, I also felt a sense of relief that my son's behaviours could be explained. And like any concerned mother, I researched the matter to a point of near obsession, trying to find strategies that might be effective in making all our daily lives somewhat easier.

In the final year of my undergraduate's degree, I worked on two assignments about the grandparent-grandchild relationship and how identities are shaped and constrained by gender and families. This made me reflect on my parents and their grandparenting of my sons and also my own relationship with my paternal grandmother: a relationship that was extremely meaningful to me in my childhood and young adulthood. This interest in grandparenthood lay dormant for a couple of years until the opportunity to undertake a PhD became available. Initially, my thoughts were broad, focussing on the experiences of the transition to grandparenthood. However, with time, literature searches and pilot interviews, the aim of exploring and interpreting the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother emerged.

I have entered and progressed through this research as a single, white British mother. From living life, of my interactions within the social world, I have observed the vast differences in family dynamics and structures (in the lives of my own family, colleagues, friends and strangers) and I knew that a qualitative methodology was required to address the aim and to answer the research question. I chose Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) because the approach acknowledges the uniqueness of human experience. From a mainly quantitative background, I have found it both daunting and challenging as a novice IPA'er. I have struggled to learn the language of phenomenology, the shift from third to first person, the move from categorical, conceptual and theoretical to the experiential. Taking guidance from the writings of Max van Manen (1984, p. 44), I feel that I have (to the best of my ability and from my own positioning within the world) represented the "whatness" of the experiences of young maternal grandmothers participating in this study.

1.7 Thesis structure and chapter content

Highlighted previously in this chapter, the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood remain absent within the grandparenting literature. It is for this reason that two literature chapters are presented. The first (chapter 2) offers a critical review of grandparenting literature from the 1970's to present. It draws on many disciplinary areas resulting in research findings from differing ontological and epistemological positions. This is further complicated by differences in the social, cultural and historic constructions of grandparenthood. Nonetheless, it was considered important to review the existing understandings of grandparenthood in order to contextualise grandmotherhood today. The second literature chapter (chapter 3) also draws on academic research from a number of disciplinary areas in order to build a picture of young maternal grandmotherhood. By doing this, there develops a rationale for the importance of studying the experiences of the **young**, and the **maternal grandmother**.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature on grandparenthood in general. It reviews the literatures on the social, cultural and historic construction of grandparenthood; the normalisation of grandparenthood from the 1970's onwards, the effects of changing demographics on the evolving grandparent and the transition to grandparenthood.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the literature more specific to young maternal grandmotherhood. Exploring the age of grandmotherhood, age normative frameworks, social representations of grandmotherhood and young grandmotherhood from a life-course perspective. Within this chapter there is also a review of the maternal grandmotherhood literature from a social perspective and a review of sociological perspectives of family life and relationships, mother-daughter research and young motherhood, good motherhood and stigmatisation literature.

Chapter 4 is an in-depth presentation of the methodology and methods used in this study. It demonstrates the decision making process in shaping the best research approach to answering the research question and addressing the aim. The rationale to employ a qualitative methodology, namely IPA, is supported as well as the decision to use semi-structured interviews, photo elicitation and prompt objects as data-collection methods. Recruitment, stages of the data collection, analytical processes and ongoing ethical considerations are explained in detail.

Chapter 5 introduces the ten participating grandmothers. This chapter presents the grandmothers' demographic information and an idiographic profile for each

of the grandmother's essential experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood. The profiles include a family tree to exhibit family members mentioned in their interviews, mind maps of their essential experiences of grandmotherhood, and a written passage discussing the idiographic analyses resulting in an identification of their essential experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood.

Chapter 6 presents analysis of 'becoming' a young maternal grandmother. This stage of the analysis focuses on across case patterns, exploring convergences and divergences in the grandmothers' experiences of their transitions. Two essential experiences are interpreted: experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her daughter's pregnancy and experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her grandmotherhood.

Chapter 7 presents analysis of 'being' a young maternal grandmother. The analysis focuses on across case patterns, exploring convergences and divergences in the grandmothers' experiences of being a young maternal grandmother. Three essential experiences are interpreted: experiencing grandmothing through time, distance, places, spaces and inanimate objects; experiencing grandmotherhood in the social world (the influence of others and on others); and owning and romancing the grandchild, experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness.

Chapter 8 presents a critical discussion of the findings and their significance in relation to existing research and literature. Reflections are applied to the research design with a discussion of the study's strengths and limitations. Wider implications of this research and potential future directions are considered in conclusion.

Chapter 2 Understandings of grandparenthood

In order to understand the experiences of young maternal grandmothers living in contemporary society, it is relevant to explore the growing area of grandparenting research emerging from the 1970's onwards. By doing this, identification of gaps in the grandparenting knowledge helped to frame the research question in order for new understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood to emerge. This chapter presents a review of the existing grandparenting literature, focusing on grandparenthood in general, whilst chapter 3 attends more specifically to young maternal grandmotherhood. This chapter starts with a discussion of grandparenthood as a social, cultural and historic construction, before moving on to the literatures surrounding the normalisation of grandparenthood dominant in the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research, reflecting on the vast demographic changes experienced since the 1970's, the evolving roles of grandparenthood and the relatively unexplored transition to becoming a grandparent.

2.1 Social, cultural and historic grandparenthood

Grandparenthood (both grandmotherhood and grandfatherhood) has been acknowledged as a social, cultural and historic construct (Tarrant, 2010). Therefore it is important to consider the changes experienced in grandparenthood and the social and cultural differences in the meanings and enactment of grandparenting in order to contextualize contemporary grandmotherhood. There is no historically distinct body of knowledge on grandparenthood (Kornhaber, 1996). According to Smith (2004), the reasons for the increased interest in grandparenthood towards the latter quarter of the twentieth century were; demographic changes (increase in life expectancy), a less common view of families as nuclear (parents and children only), a move away from a central focus on child development within developmental psychology and overcoming methodological issues regarding older participants (such as ill health and suitability to participate in research).

2.1.1 The changing grandparent

Previous to the 1980's, the limited research on grandparenthood proffered generally negative views of the grandparent (Smith, 2005). In the 1950's, grandmothers were reported to be stricter than mothers, taking on an authoritarian and instructive role within three-generation households (Staples & Smith, 1954). Three-generation households are a rarity today in many

western societies, with advances in technology, demographics and economy resulting in less restriction in where grandparents and their adult children live. Working life does not abruptly end at a certain age, communication systems allow ease of contact and economic independence, for both grandparents and adult children, has led to a decrease in the bonds of obligation between generations (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992; Kimmel & Kimmel, 2007).

Certainly, there has been a significant shift in intergenerational transfers (financial and care exchanges between generations). According to Cherlin and Furstenberg (1992), the two way flow of money and services (to children when young and back to parents when they aged) has altered over the last century. Due to economic growth, increasing numbers of elderly parents are able to support themselves financially (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992). Increasingly, emotional bonds are being valued over bonds of obligation. Emphases on love, affection and companionship have overtaken the past roles of grandparents as emotionally distant but respected (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992), possibly as a result of changing perceptions of ageing within western societies.

Acknowledging an absence of a systematic history of grandparenthood, Hagestad (1985) conducted content analysis on issues of the Good Housekeeping magazine to explore representations of grandparenthood over the years: two issues from the 1880's and two from the 1970's. In the 1880's, Hagestad found that any mention of grandparenting pertained mainly to grandmothers. This is likely due to the target female population that the magazine was, and still is, produced for and additionally, from an historic context when women were more likely to live long enough to be a grandparent. The analysis from the 1880's issues suggested that there was a taken for granted standpoint that the reader knew grandparents were old. Grandmothers were frequently described as silver haired with a hard life etched over their facial features and often sitting in a chair by the fire.

"Seldom, if ever, was the 1880s grandmother described as dealing with the nitty-gritty aspects of everyday family life. The frail figure by the fire was not withdrawn from everyday living, but was above it. She had a place on a pedestal, and she had earned it" (Hagestad, 1985, p. 33).

In contrast, the 1970's painted a very different picture of grandmothers. There appeared to be no uniformity and consistency in the grandmothering role. Grandmothers were portrayed as more active and performing differing roles. The age range was vast from 50 to 100 years. From the 1970's issues, Hagestad (1985) identified an overwhelming uncertainty about what

grandparenthood actually meant which was strikingly opposite to the findings from the 1880's. It appeared that the meanings of grandmotherhood had become ambiguous with no clear definitions of what grandmothers were supposed to do, what they should look like and what their rights and obligations were.

Changing demographics have not only contributed to this ambiguity associated with grandparenthood but also resulted in a reversal of the ratio of grandparents to grandchildren. In the past, grandparents were in short supply. Today, grandchildren are in short supply (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992). By the 1970's, family sizes had reduced in Britain, with one third of families made up of two children (Anderson, 1985). Indeed, housing planners started to design homes for two child families rather than six (Anderson, 1985). Therefore, over the last 100 years, the dramatic changes experienced in patterns of the life cycle have impacted on the concept of grandparenthood and its enactment, although grandparenthood remains biologically unchanged; child becomes parent, parent becomes grandparent (Kornhaber, 1996).

2.1.2 Cultural and social grandparenthood

It is acknowledged that the concept of grandparenthood is heterogeneous and cultural differences (including religious beliefs) in the relationships between grandchildren and grandparents have an influential part to play. Between and within different cultures, grandparenting holds differing meanings but people who are grandparents share commonalities with other grandparents within a given society because of their role as grandparent.

For instance, King, Burgess, Akinyela, Counts-Spriggs and Parker (2006) examined African American grandparents and the role they played. Historically, African American families have developed important relationships with their churches since the times of slavery. King *et al.* (2006) proposed that because the African American grandparents in their study placed great value on their religious beliefs, enacting a religious role with their grandchildren was greatly satisfying. The authors reported that grandparents provided grandchildren with religious guidance, model religious behaviour and the promotion of religious significance within family relations. Cole (2003) described 'prolepsis': a process in which knowledge is culturally reshaped and passed on from generation to generation; that babies are born into an adult cultured world. Parents of a new-born child use information from their cultural pasts to assume cultural continuity in order to "*project a probable future for the child*" (Cole, 2003, p. 184). Ruby's (2012) study of intergenerational learning practices between

grandparents and third-generation Bangladeshi children in East London supported the process of 'prolepsis', finding that grandparents played a significant role in continuing the Bangla language in the new generation. In this sense, grandparents can be viewed as early educators and that in western societies the contribution that grandparents may have to a child's development often goes unacknowledged (Ruby *et al.* 2007).

Differences in cultural beliefs and customs are highlighted in further grandparenting studies. In China and East Asian countries for example, grandparents are viewed as elder wisers and held in esteem (Arber & Timonen, 2012). Alternatively, in contemporary western societies there is an expectation that older people will be active and productive, representing the relatively recent emerging cultural norm of "active" and "successful ageing" (Arber & Timonen, 2012, p. 252).

2.2 Normative grandparenthood

Since the 1980's a substantial amount of research has focused on the categorization of styles, roles and meanings of grandparenthood: reflecting a social trend at that time for social scientists to normalise human experience (Anderson, 1985). However, overgeneralising grandparenthood becomes problematic; that there is a risk of missing important variations and oversimplifying the role due to the great diversity of grandparenthood (Bengston, 1985). This then highlights the need for more nuanced understandings of grandparenthood. Despite the generalisations of grandparenthood, the following section will discuss the existing literatures, which have attempted to categorise and typify grandparenthood.

2.2.1 Styles of grandparenthood

Silverstein and Marengo (2001) suggested that grandparenting is a paradox in family sociology; that there is an acknowledged heterogeneity to grandparenthood (with the differences discussed in the previous section) that affects the intricacies of daily family life. The broad spectrum of styles and types of grandparents can be affected by various factors including the ages of the grandparents and grandchildren, lineage of the grandparent, geographical distance between the grandparent and grandchild/ren and the duration of grandparenthood (Mann, 2007). Consequently, the existing literature proffers multiple styles of grandparenting ranging from surrogate parenting to having no contact with grandchild/ren at all (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001).

Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) first presented their paper, "The Changing American Grandparent", in which five major styles of grandparenthood were identified: formal; the fun seeker; the surrogate parent; the reservoir of family wisdom; and the distant figure. Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) further suggested that grandparenting styles were associated with the age of the grandparent. For instance, the formal style occurred significantly more often in older grandparents, whereas the fun seeking and distant grandparent associated highly with younger grandparents. Whilst it is not certain if these findings are a consequence of age or cohort effect, this research was the beginning of the expansion of academic interest into grandparenthood from the late 1970's. Whilst it is acknowledged that this field of research has clearly enriched and expounded the understanding of many aspects of grandparenthood (within different cultures), categorising people into styles becomes problematic; grandparents may not fit neatly into one style. For example, if a grandparent falls under the category of surrogate parent, this arguably disregards the possibility that they also fit into one or more of the alternative styles.

This issue of inflexibility was acknowledged by Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985), who argued that grandparenting styles are dynamic and change according to the age of the grandchild, the age of the grandparent and the life course perspective. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985) proposed that styles of grandparenting should not just be based on individual characteristics but also the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The authors reported three styles of relationship: *companionate* (the relationship with grandchildren is easy going, friendly and playful); *remote* (the relationship is distant mainly due to geographical distance between grandparent and grandchild in which contact is infrequent); *involved* (the relationship mainly entails daily and active child rearing with more authority by the grandparent). Nonetheless, this categorisation also appears fixed; that is, the relationship is categorised as one or the other. Furthermore, categorisation of grandparenting types and styles tends to disregard the grandchild as a reciprocal being. However, Cherlin and Furstenberg (1992, p. 53) reported that a grandparent might experience "*different types of relationships with different grandchildren*". Hence, the grandchild's characteristics may be a coercing influence on the style that a grandparent adopts at a particular time, in a particular context. Potentially, the relationship between grandparent and grandchild can be a distinctive and influential factor in both child and adult development. It is therefore important to consider the relationality of grandmother and grandchild when studying the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood.

2.2.2 Roles of grandparenthood

Grandparenting roles have received plentiful attention since the late 1970's with grandparenthood often described as ambivalent, empty, tenuous or roleless (Clavan, 1978; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992; Mason, May & Clarke, 2007). Clavan (1978, p. 351) suggested that the "roleless" role of grandparenthood has *"no normative rights and obligations attached to it."* Grandparenthood is created and negotiated within the individual family unit and not a role that is adopted by one person alone. Kornhaber (1996, p. 99) described the roles of grandparents as existing on a continuum from socially and symbolic (living ancestor and family historian), instrumental (mentor, role model and nurturer), sentimental and emotional (playmates, soul mates, wizard, or hero) through to spiritual (the love and affection that cannot easily be translated into words – *"the smiles, the good times, the joys, and the warmth"*). Kornhaber (1996) suggested that the spiritual role is the true essence of grandparenthood, arguably a highly romanticised notion that is often disregarded and left unsaid. According to Kornhaber (1996, p. 88), *"These roles are flexible and kinetic, varied and dynamic; they shift and change through the years"* as a result of the changing developmental needs, individual characteristics and situational factors of grandchild and grandparent.

This earlier research provides strong foundations for the growth in the grandparenting knowledge base whilst also highlighting the heterogeneity that exists within the grandparenting role. In more recent years, the roles that grandparents' play in relation to changing demographics such as caregiving and custodial care have also received ample attention.

2.3 Caregiving grandparents

Grandparents in the UK are becoming increasingly more significant in family lives, particularly in terms of their time given to childcare arrangements (Statham, 2011). This is particularly relevant to examine with relation to the experiences of young maternal grandmothers where their own work and family commitments may, or may not, interfere with grandchild care arrangements. In the UK, early childcare has changed dramatically over recent decades (Fergusson, Maughan & Golding, 2008). According to Gray (2005), Britain maintains a low provision of formal childcare services in comparison to other European countries and regions such as France and Scandinavia. This results in family and friends often providing informal childcare for the UK working parent/s. Herlofson and Hagestad (2012) reported that grandparental care is frequently part-time and complements other types of part-time formal

childcare. It is estimated that grandparents undertake 20-25% of regular childcare for working mothers in Britain (Gray, 2005). Gray (2005) reported that this informal type of childcare is often given without reciprocation by parents. In this respect, grandparents can be seen as coming to the rescue of their adult children in order for them to remain in paid employment (Arber & Timonen, 2012).

Herlofson and Hagestad (2012) explained that in the UK and Scandinavian countries, there is no legal obligation for grandparents to be responsible for their grandchildren. However, in some European countries such as Germany, grandparents do have an obligation to support their grandchildren. In Scandinavian countries and France, parental leave is long and formal childcare services are accessible and affordable. For instance, in Norway, grandparents are generally called upon in times of need and in this instance; grandparents are described as “family savers” or a “reserve army” (Hagestad, 2006, p. 326; Herlofson & Hagestad, 2012, p. 41). Alternatively, grandparents in Southern European countries such as Italy and Spain can be described as “mother savers”, where childcare services are scarce and grandparents feel responsible for their grandchildren’s care in order for their daughters to be “economically active” (Herlofson & Hagestad, 2012, p. 41). In contrast to this European picture, Arber and Timonen (2012) reported that recent focus in the US is on the grandparents as “child savers”. This is due to the higher incidence of incapacitation of the middle generation in their parenting abilities for reasons such as imprisonment, mental illness, substance abuse and addictions and therefore, in these incidences, grandparents may take on primary childcare of their grandchildren (Arber & Timonen, 2012).

UK grandparents represent a mixture of both “family savers” and “mother savers” with “mother savers” appearing prominent in lone parent families (Herlofson & Hagestad, 2012). Indeed, Dench and Ogg (2002) reported that grandparents in the UK are more likely to partake in childcare at least once a week if parents are separated (29%) compared to if parents are together (20%). Statham (2011) published that the majority of grandparenting childcare provision in the UK is for 10 hours or less per week. Family and Childcare Trust, Grandparents Plus and Save the Children (2014) reported that 1.9 million grandparents have either given up their paid employment, reduced their working hours or taken time off work to care for their grandchildren with a loss of income in some cases. Gray (2005) suggested there is a risk that grandparenting childcare will diminish in the UK due to employment policies. The UK government’s targets to increase employment rates in senior members of society in order to tackle difficulties in pension provision and to improve

labour supply may affect grandparenting childcare. In contrast, the UK government also wants to increase the rates of mothers working. Therefore, the policy objective to raise employment rates amongst the over 50s may lead to a conflict with the grandparenting role of childcare (Gray, 2005). Indeed, Glaser, Price, Montserrat, di Gessa and Tinker (2013, p. 1) have more recently supported Gray's (2005) prediction in a published report for Grandparents Plus:

"Younger grandmothers who are fit, healthy and with younger grandchildren are the most likely to be providing care for their grandchildren, however they are also the very women who governments across Europe are aiming to encourage to stay in paid work for longer, in order to grow our economies and fund pensions, social care and other welfare provision in later life. Their vital but invisible role in providing childcare, whether intensive, regular or occasional, is likely to conflict with their ability to self- finance their old age, especially as widows' benefits in both state and employer pension schemes are eroded. The risk is an emerging care gap as older women remain in work longer, become less available to provide childcare and so adversely affect mothers' labour market participation."

Van Bavel and De Winter (2011) reported that the timing of retirement involves various factors. One factor is the desire to spend more time with grandchildren (Higgs *et al.* 2003). Therefore, it is more likely that the grandparent who is retired or working fewer hours is more available for childcare services. What is less understood is how this increasing childcare role challenges the younger grandparent who may very well be in paid employment and actively still parenting (Grace, 2012). However, according to Silverstein and Marengo (2001), younger grandparents tend to have more contact with their grandchildren, live closer, care for their grandchildren frequently and partake in recreational activities. In contrast, older grandparents provide more financial support and identify with the grandparenting role more strongly (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001). Whilst there is an uncertainty around the terms 'younger' and 'older' (that is, what ages constitute these classifications?), grandparenting childcare is undoubtedly influenced by the grandparent's health, age, employment status and working hours as is the grandparenting experience in general (Severino *et al.* 1986).

2.3.1 Custodial grandparents

In the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of grandparents experiencing custodial and main care giving of their grandchildren (Grinstead, Leder, Jensen, & Bond, 2003). It is estimated that 200,000

grandparents and other family members are raising children in the UK (Gautier & Wellard, 2012), and in the US, approximately 1.3 million grandparents are providing primary childcare in the absence of the middle generation (Population Reference Bureau, 2011). Climo, Terry and Lay (2002) investigated the consequences of this role on American families and communities. The authors raised concerns with regards to the health, finances and social networks of elderly grandparents. Indeed, Grinstead *et al.* (2003) suggested that the health of custodial grandparents was concerning and that anxiety and depression are major mental health problems within this population. The authors reported that the changes in lifestyle to accommodate grandchildren can cause considerable stress and may result in marital problems as well as financial burdens. Furthermore, grandparents may be concerned about not living long enough to continue the care of their grandchildren.

A qualitative study by Orb and Davey (2005) analysed grandparents' perceptions of parenting their grandchildren. The study was conducted in Perth, Western Australia with a specific sample of 13 women and 4 men, all Caucasian and from the same geographic location and support group. The findings are worth summarising here in view of the knowledge they contribute to the process of becoming an unexpected parent again in this particular time and location. There were nine key findings; being a grandparent is like being a parent, thinking about the future, searching for support, struggling with money, hitting a brick wall, learning the system, confronting an unexpected parenting role, being under stress and being consumed and changing lifestyle. Whilst these findings portray a generally negative experience, positive aspects of the parenting role by grandparents have also been reported. Grinstead *et al.* (2003) noted that grandparents' self-esteem can improve and that grandchildren give them love, joy and an added purpose for living. There are some limitations to the aforementioned custodial grandparenthood research that requires some attention. This research tends to be cross-sectional and therefore from only one point in time. Whilst a single point in time presents a snapshot view, it is still, nonetheless, confined and does not consider constant changes in characteristics, feelings and relationships as well as establishing causation. Follow up studies, in these instances, would tackle the issues of cross-sectional data and allow for time triangulation (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Furthermore, the circumstances for which the grandparent/s takes on the role of parent/s may vary significantly and will obviously be a contributing factor in the transition process.

2.3.2 Grandparents rights in the UK

Recognising grandparents' contribution to childcare in the UK, George Osborne (ex-Chancellor) announced his plans to extend shared parental leave and pay to working grandparents by 2018 (GOV.UK, 2015). This has been welcomed as a significant step forward by the Grandparents Plus charity but Chief Executive, Dr Lucy Peake (2015), reported that there is still more to be done to support grandparents in their invaluable contributions to childcare in the UK:

"While we welcome the proposals to support families in the first year of a child's birth, we know that 1 in 4 working families depend on grandparents for child care while their children grow up, and 2 million say they would give up work if grandparents were unable to care for their children. At the same time, people are working longer. We need to take action to enable grandparents to combine work and care. Giving working grandparents the right to flexible working and entitlement to leave to care for their grandchildren as they grow up would make a huge difference to families and to the economy."

As mentioned previously in this chapter, there are no legal rights for grandparents in the UK. If grandparents lose contact with their grandchildren for reasons such as a family breakdown, they can ask permission to apply to the family courts for a contact order (The Grandparents' Association, 2014). According to Smith (2005), an order for contact under the Children Act 1989 still does not guarantee the grandparents contact with their grandchild/ren. The order of contact does not mean that the parent has to, or will abide by the court ruling and so grandparents may still be left without rights and access to their grandchildren.

Lawson and Raine (2015) reported on the childcare arrangement options for grandparents that take on the primary care of their grandchildren. Informal kinship care is an informal arrangement made between the child's parents and close relatives where the child is not under the care of the local authority and without a legal order. For children that are under the care of the local authority, kinship foster care is an alternative option for grandparents to take on full-time care of their grandchild/ren. In both arrangements the parents retain parental responsibility. More formal arrangements can be processed through the courts with a child arrangements order (previously known as residence order) and/or a special guardianship order. In the former, parents share the responsibility with the holder of the order. In the latter, parents rights are severely restricted with the holder given greater ability to make parental decisions. The option of

adoption is rare for grandparents due to the change that would occur in family relationships i.e. grandparents become parents and the child's mother becomes sister that potentially could result in a crisis of both family structure and identities. It is clear that grandparents have limited legal rights within the UK and it is important to understand this when exploring the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood.

2.4 The meanings of grandparenthood

When studying the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood, consideration of existing literatures encompassing the meanings of grandparenthood is essential. This is because studying the lived experiences of a phenomenon (in this research, young maternal grandmotherhood) "*is inevitably 'always already' enmeshed with language and culture*" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 194). Indeed, the findings from previous research have highlighted the cultural differences around the meanings and experiences of grandparenthood. Kivnick (1983) developed a framework for the meaning of grandparenthood in the US using a mixed methods design; the first study involved qualitative analysis of life history interviews followed by a second quantitative study of questionnaires. The resulting five dimensions of meaning were: *centrality*, how central is the role of grandparenthood in terms of activities, feelings, identity and meaning of life; *valued elder*, held in esteem, their grandchildren's regard for them and how they will be remembered; *immortality through clan*, continuity of their family line, responsibility for their family and likeness to their grandchildren in physical appearance or characteristics; *reinvolvement with personal past*, reliving moments and events from their past, reminiscing about their own grandparents; *indulgence*, lenience and indulgence, stereotypical of grandparenthood.

In comparison to Kivnick's (1983) quantitative study that is reported in great depth, the details of the qualitative study lack detail. The interviews and analysis appear to be skimmed over with no use of extracts although previous published papers are referred to. Furthermore, an assumption is made by the author that the reader will take their word that the qualitative research supported the initial framework for conceptual validity for the quantitative measures. Consideration must also be applied to the overrepresentation of the upper end of the socio-economic class (meanings of grandparenthood may differ according to socio-economic status due to differing grandparental practices), particularly as this research has instigated further research with reference to the resulting 5 dimensions of meaning (Miller & Cavanaugh, 1990; Hayslip, Henderson & Shore, 2003).

Timberlake (1980) also studied the values of grandmotherhood for European American women with a resulting eight conceptual dimensions: *social identity* (grandparenthood gives stability and structure to life); *expansion of self* (live on through grandchildren); *altruism and morality* (to give of oneself); *affiliation* (grandchildren help to feel part of the community and its activities); *stimulation and fun* (grandchildren offer new experiences); *accomplishment and competence* (grandchildren provide a goal in life); *power and influence* (effects on own life and/or the lives of others); and *social comparison and competition* (the accomplishments of grandchildren reflect on grandparents). Further studies by Fung, Siu, Choy and McBride-Chang (2005) and Timberlake and Chipungu (1992) highlight the problems of applying these grandparenting measures for different cultures. Fung *et al.* (2005) explored the meaning of grandparenthood among a sample of Hong Kong Chinese, measuring Timberlake's (1980) values of grandmotherhood based on European American grandmothers.

Designing a questionnaire based on focus groups, the quantitative study by Fung *et al.* (2005) was reported in detail, the procedures clearly defined for replication. The analysis resulted in 3 dimensions of grandparenthood: Obligation and accomplishment (consistent with Timberlake's (1980) social identity and accomplishment values); Beneficial gains (consistent with Timberlake's (1980) power and stimulation values); and the Absence of Grandparenthood as a perceived loss (consistent with Timberlake's (1980) affiliation value). Therefore, the 3 dimensions among Hong Kong Chinese grandparents and Timberlake's (1980) 8 values based on European American grandparents did present with similar cultural meanings. However, Timberlake's (1980) value of morality and altruism is absent from the resulting 3 dimensions in the Hong Kong study and this questionably may be a result of cultural differences in the meaning of grandparenthood and/or an artefact of the positivist approach to the study of meanings.

Similarly, Timberlake and Chipungu (1992) conducted a quantitative questionnaire based around Timberlake's (1980) 8 values. Studying the meaning of grandmotherhood among African American middle-class grandmothers, the same research instrument was used for all participants. The questionnaire measured variance in the symbolic meaning of grandparenthood associated with two interpersonal role constructs: personal circumstances (age at which the participant became a grandparent) and situational context (geographical proximity to grandchildren, childcare and living situation). One of the main findings was the statistical significance (t -value=4.52, $s=.001$) for

older grandmothers (46 to 60) to rate higher values of grandchildren than their younger counterparts (30 to 41). Therefore, these findings cannot be compared to the Chinese Grandparent Meaning Scale (Fung *et al.* 2005) due to the differences in cultures and variables measured, yet they both are based upon the 8 values of grandparenthood (Timberlake, 1980). However, the findings here may be tentatively compared to Miller and Cavanaugh's (1990) results, where there does appear to be support for role-overload in younger grandparents. Indeed, Miller and Cavanaugh (1980) reported that retirement age corresponded positively with meanings of grandparenthood and Timberlake and Chipungu (1992) proposed that older grandparents had more available time to accept and invest in the role of grandparent.

The dramatic demographic changes that have been experienced over the last three to four decades raise the question of whether these classic understandings of the meanings of grandparenthood are still valid (Mahne & Motel-Kingebiel, 2012; Hayslip, Henderson & Shore, 2003). Additionally, with the diverse nature of grandparenthood, generalisations about the empirical and conceptual aspects of grandparenthood should be explored with a sensitive consideration (Szinovacz, 1998). Furthermore, less attention has been paid to the meanings of grandparenthood for younger grandparents. In an age where grandparents have been reported to play a significant part in daily family life (Statham, 2011); particularly with regards to their vital contribution to childcare and consequently, the economy, it is important to understand if these previous meanings and values of grandparenthood are applicable in the current experiences of young maternal grandmothers.

More recently, Mason, May and Clarke (2007) proposed that the grandparenting experience implies a certain freedom from parenting responsibilities but a lack of control over the relationship with their grandchildren; that is, their adult children have the control over the transition to grandparenthood and the grandparent's relationships with their grandchildren. Based on analysis of 46 interviews with grandparents in the UK, May, Mason and Clarke (2012) identified two main cultural norms of good grandparenting practice within Britain: to *not interfere* yet to *be there*. The study focused on the meaning of contemporary grandparenthood and more specifically on the "*publicly expressed norms about grandparenting*" (May *et al.* 2012, p. 142).

'Not interfering' is a widely known use of vocabulary about grandparenting (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Mason *et al.* 2007; Mann, 2007; Bates, 2009). Not interfering suggests that grandparents let their adult children bring up their grandchildren in their own ways. Indeed, a regular parenting norm is the desire

for adult children to be independent and autonomous. However, parents also feel that they have ample experience in parenting and can recognise good parenting practice (Mason *et al.* 2007). The ethic of care for children is an essential social norm in contemporary western societies (May, 2008) and this then leads to a tension between not interfering and the norms of parental practice (Mason *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, if a grandparent is performing a replacement parent role involving disciplinary action, this may also lend itself to a contradiction in terms of the non-interference norm (Harper & Ruicheva, 2010).

According to May *et al.* (2012), there is certain extenuating circumstances when grandparental interference is acceptable. In times of family crisis such as divorce and separation, grandparents may be called upon for support to both their adult children and grandchildren. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1992, p. 206) termed this protector role that grandparents serve as “latent support”, that grandparents play a minor role unless in times of crisis when they can and may draw on more resources for their grandchildren.

“This latent support never may be activated; but, like a good insurance policy, it is important nevertheless. In fact, given the growing affluence of the elderly, the rise in divorce, and the declining number of grandchildren, the protector role is likely to become more salient in the future” (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992, p. 206).

‘Being there’ is the other main cultural norm of grandparenting (Mason *et al.* 2007). Being there may involve practical, emotional or financial support (May *et al.* 2012) and often raises tension with the grandparent’s self-determination (having time to oneself and being in control of their own lives). Self-determination is a central ideal for grandparenthood and indeed personhood; grandparents choose how to live their lives without expecting adult children to be too responsible for their ageing (Mason *et al.* 2007). In turn, adult children should be independent and only assume a certain amount of support. This is a reflection of contemporary society and the emphasis on self-reliance, in contrast to the two way intergenerational transfers experienced in the past (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1992). Mason *et al.* (2007) found that some grandparents wanted time to themselves after bringing up one generation. Other grandparents who were retired expressed a desire to enjoy their retirement and have a “well-earned rest” (Mason *et al.* 2007, p. 698). It is of importance to explore how becoming and being a young maternal grandmother may affect the ideal of self-determination and how the norm of ‘being there’ is integrated into the young grandmothers daily life, particularly when the

transitions to grandmotherhood and motherhood are potentially earlier than expected.

Grandparents are being grandparents and parents. The norms associated with grandparenting and parenting are not frequently connected and often result in ambivalence (Mason *et al.* 2007). Being involved as a grandparent but 'not interfering' and the ideal of self-determination but 'being there' are engulfed with contradictions. According to Attias-Donfut & Segalen (2002), bringing a child up the "right" way is the biggest source of intergenerational conflict. From the research in this area, it becomes apparent that the grandparents relationship to their grandchildren is markedly contingent on their relationships with their adult children. In this sense, adult children hold a powerful position as gatekeeper (Dunifon & Bajracharya, 2012) in the intergenerational relationships within a family unit and therefore, grandparenting can be viewed as *"a role characterised by negotiation and restraint"* (Clarke & Roberts, 2003, p. 4).

2.5 The transition to grandparenthood

The transition to grandparenthood is not self-initiated; it is a life change that is brought about by the transition of another – their adult child (Hagestad & Lang, 1986). This uncontrollable or counter transition (Hagestad & Lang, 1986) is a new beginning, which is arguably involuntary. Bridges (1996) suggested that every transition begins with an ending; that is, a requirement to let go of an old life both inwardly and outwardly. From this perspective, the transition to grandparenthood requires adaptations: to a new identity and changing family relationships (Severino *et al.* 1986). This may pose a challenge for the younger grandparent who may not feel ready to start being a grandparent (Grace, 2012).

Whilst becoming a grandparent is a distinct stage in the life cycle (Severino *et al.* 1986) there is a noticeable absence of research exploring the transition to grandparenthood. Cunningham-Burley (1984, 1985, 1986) conducted a prospective qualitative study into becoming a grandparent; three published papers reported the findings. A major finding within this study was that the role of grandparenthood is a taken-for-granted phenomenon and for this reason, describing the meaning of grandparenthood was ambiguous. Cunningham-Burley (1986) explained that the reasons for the taken-for-granted attitudes towards becoming a grandparent were due to the natural order of life; that children would grow up and have children of their own. In this sense, individuals do not train or plan for grandparenthood and they do not

reflect on the skills needed to perform grandparenthood, rather there is an assumption that grandparenthood will be a natural process. Therefore, the transition to grandparenthood is inevitable and will make a family whole (Cunningham-Burley, 1986). A further main theme for the meaning of grandparenthood was that of continuity: a symbolism of eternity. It was found that the grandparents in this study held notions before becoming a grandparent of what they could and could not do. The grandparenting role, although a new experience to the participating grandparents, was still familiar based on existing knowledge. Kornhaber (1986) supported these findings when it was found that grandparents rehearse the role before the grandchild is born. Furthermore, the Cunningham-Burley study highlighted that changing demographic trends (more money, more time, fewer grandchildren and consequently, more patience) helped the grandparents to feel younger. Whilst becoming a grandparent is stereotypically associated with an ageing self-image (further discussion follows in chapter 3), this was not the case for the grandparents in this study.

Cunningham-Burley (1984, 1985, 1986) conducted the study in Aberdeen with a sample of 18 couples that were to become grandparents for the first time. The participants were interviewed as couples, once before the birth of the grandchild (at hearing the news of the pregnancy) and twice after (soon after the birth and after a period of routinisation). Although the reader is made aware of the location and number of participating grandparents, further detail such as age, socio-economic status, ethnicity and religious beliefs are not explicitly stated. Furthermore, all the mothers-to-be were 25 years of age or younger and married; this does not allow consideration to be made about single parent families and grandparenthood. However, it does allow conclusions to be drawn regarding a tightly defined population. Additionally, it is also not clear whether the participants were paternal or maternal grandparents, a factor that requires consideration when exploring the transition to grandparenthood, as experiences may be different between a son becoming a father and a daughter becoming a mother. Although this is a well written, reflective and informative study, the author neglects to fully present the methods and theory behind the analysis. The reader can only make an assumption that a descriptive phenomenological approach has been employed with a few references to Schutz made.

A further study to explore the transition to grandparenthood was conducted by Fischer (1983). According to Fischer (1983), grandmothers are more involved with the functioning of families than grandfathers. For this reason, the transition to grandmotherhood was explored, specifically investigating the role conceptions of grandmotherhood and how they might be modified by family network variables. The study was conducted using qualitative data, collected

through interviews with 43 daughters during transition to parenthood and their mothers (n=39); a relatively large sample for qualitative methods although the method of data analysis was not specifically reported. The participants all lived in small towns in Western Massachusetts but details such as socio-economic class and religion are not reported. 61% of the 39 mothers became grandmothers in their 40s, more than half of these were still active parents. The findings suggested that grandmothers perceive their role as emotional and symbolic rather than interactional or instrumental; that is, their role primarily focused on raising children and interpersonal relationships rather than partaking in activities and work (Mann & Leeson, 2010). It was also found that grandmothers who lived more than 50 miles away from their grandchildren did not view the transition as a life-changing event. The study highlights the multitude of variables involved in the grandmothering experience with particular reference to the effects of geographic proximity to grandchildren. However, the research is titled 'transition to grandmotherhood', but did not actually explore this in great detail and focused more on the roles and relationships.

Hence, limited understandings of becoming a grandparent are apparent. Clarke and Roberts (2003) found that a common reaction to becoming a grandparent is a feeling of oddity, that a prospective grandparent rarely considers themselves as 'typical' grandparents. In this instance, 'typical' was often associated with old age and ill health (Clarke & Roberts, 2003). Bosak (2012) also reported that first time grandparents present with a mixture of emotions including pleasure, anxiety, resentment, tension and gratitude. Becoming a grandparent is *"a long term process open to many possibilities: grandparenthood takes on more and more the sense of adventure, or at least a life experiment"* (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007, p. 168). Considering this and the significance that grandparents now play in contemporary family lives, it is of importance to explore the transitional period to grandmotherhood further and especially how it plays out in becoming a grandmother at a younger age.

2.6 Concluding comments

Since the late 1970s, research into many aspects of grandparenthood has blossomed. This is mainly due to the occurrence of considerable changes in social demographics. In particular, increased longevity and variations in family structures lead to a longer time in the grandparenting capacity and an evolving role. The field of research encompassing grandparental roles, styles and meanings has formed a strong basis for further grandparenting research.

However, the main body of this research was undertaken in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's and therefore, the question of validity for contemporary grandparenting experiences has to be raised. The emphasis that researchers have more recently applied to grandparenthood in terms of informal childcarers (specifically within the UK and Europe) is an indication of the new and emerging social expectations that grandparenthood is continuing to adapt to. This in turn implies that grandparenthood is a socially constructed role that is constantly changing. However, it is also acknowledged that grandparenthood is a negotiated role within individual family units. Therefore, grandparenthood can be regarded as a unique and often ambiguous experience for the individual and one that is difficult, and inappropriate, to generalise.

Hagestad and Lang (1986) suggested that the timing and transition to grandparenthood is an unexplored area. Nearly 30 years on and this still appears to be the case. The great diversity in the concept and enactment of grandparenthood may explain, to some extent, the lack of research into the transitional process and period of becoming a grandparent. Only two studies have been identified that directly address the transition to grandparenthood (Cunningham-Burley, 1986; Fischer, 1983). Both studies were conducted in the 1980's and therefore, in light of changing family structures, changing demographics and the increasing experience of grandparenting childcare, it is questionable whether these existing understandings can be applied to contemporary experiences of becoming a grandparent. Furthermore, Cunningham-Burley's study involved interviews with grandparent couples in Aberdeen, Scotland where the timing of grandparenthood was an anticipated life course transition for the participating grandparents. Alternatively, Fischer's study involved grandmothers in Western Massachusetts, USA. The study, entitled "*Transition to Grandmotherhood*", focused more on the grandmothers' roles and relationships than the transition itself.

It is therefore important to study the transition to grandmotherhood in an age where grandparents are reported as playing integral parts in daily family life. It has been highlighted throughout this chapter that younger grandparents lack representation in the classical understandings of grandparenthood and it is here, that this research will make an important contribution to grandmothering knowledge by exploring the lived experiences of becoming and being young maternal grandmother. Acknowledging that no research to date has been identified that specifically explores young maternal grandmotherhood, the following chapter discusses literatures drawn from several disciplinary areas in order to form a picture of the young grandmother and the maternal

grandmother. By doing this, an argument is developed which emphasises the special attention that is required in this area.

Chapter 3 Understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood

This chapter presents a review of existing literatures more specific to young maternal grandmotherhood. The first section of the chapter focuses on the age of grandmotherhood, discussing age norms and 'social clocks', where societal expectations and constraints of family life cycle events may affect the experiences of the earlier than expected transition to grandmother. It further examines the representations of grandmotherhood most associated with social old age and the implications that this may have on the younger grandmother and her grandmothering identity. Literature is then viewed from a life-course perspective, highlighting an absence of research that considers younger grandmothers within the midlife psychosocial concept of generativity (Erikson, 1963), life transitions and psychological turning points.

The second section of this chapter develops the argument to study maternal grandmotherhood by exploring the literatures suggesting greater involvement of the maternal grandmother (in comparison to the maternal grandfather and the paternal grandparents) in family life from a social perspective. It is highly probable that a young maternal grandmother was a young mother and/or her daughter is a young mother. Therefore, literature on the mother-daughter relationship is reviewed to establish understandings of, and potential implications for, their relationship when the transitions to motherhood and grandmotherhood are earlier than expected. The final part of this section presents literatures relevant to young motherhood (and potentially young maternal grandmotherhood). It evaluates how adolescent pregnancies tend to be stigmatised, deviating teen mothers from the socially constructed norm of 'good' motherhood. Considerations are applied to how this may consequently affect the young maternal grandmother, as a previous young mother, a mother of a young mother and a young grandmother. Accordingly, the relational qualities of grandmotherhood are discussed from a family life sociological perspective, where recent British sociologists have started to conceptualise family life as multi-dimensional. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research presented.

3.1 The age of grandmotherhood

The timing of the transition to grandmotherhood (when in the life span the transition typically occurs) is scarcely researched. According to Hagestad and Lang (1986), if a life course transition happens earlier or later than socially expected, then it is considered "off-time". In this respect, Hirshorn (1998, p. 210) suggested:

"While roles experienced "on-time" usually are shared with peers, those experienced "off-time" may leave the individual feeling deviant, isolated or lacking in social support."

The timing of the transition to grandparenthood received scrutiny in the late 1980's with researchers suggesting that the "off-timing" to grandparenthood or the "out-of-phase" grandparent was deviant and pathological (Kornhaber, 1986). The "off-time" grandmother (in particular the young grandmother) may not have the time or mental capacity to fill the role of grandmother. This may be due to potential work commitments and active parenting of younger children (Kornhaber, 1986). Despite these negative portrayals of early and late transitional grandparenthood there is a lack of research that has probed or supported this assertion of deviance, consigning the timing of grandparenthood to a contentious subject matter. Further, it is important to understand the experiences of young grandmotherhood and the impact on young grandmothers' perceived identity; when the role is frequently associated with older age (Kaufman & Elder Jr., 2003) and restricted and constrained by socially imposed age normative frameworks (Neugarten, Moore & Lowe, 1965).

3.1.1 Young Grandmotherhood in an "age irrelevant society"

An area of research that requires consideration when studying early or "off-time" life transitions is the implicit constraints of age norms within given societies. According to Neugarten *et al.* (1965, p. 711), age norms can be considered:

"...A prescriptive timetable for the ordering of major life events: a time in the life span when men and women are expected to marry, a time to raise children, a time to retire."

Neugarten *et al.* (1965) pioneered this area of research by conducting a quantitative questionnaire, investigating peoples' opinions of appropriate ages of major life events within three categories of occupational career, family cycle and recreation, and appearance and consumption behaviours. These three categories were chosen as a balanced selection of adult behaviours through previous testing to evoke age discriminations. In a pilot study, there was a high concurrence that most people should become grandparents between the ages of 45 to 50 (Men N=50, 84% concurrence, Female N=43, 79% concurrence). The main study revealed more than 80% of participants making age discriminations when asked for 'most people's opinions'. The sample used in this study (N=400) were all middle class and it is not made clear as to where

the respondents resided, although pilot studies were conducted in Midwestern cities and a New England community. An equal gendered sample was selected, divided into age groups of 20 to 30 years, 30 to 55 years and 65 years and over.

The research by Neugarten *et al.* (1965) incited further research into social timetables and age norms (Fallo-Mitchell & Ryff, 1982; Gee, 1990, 1991; Byrd & Breuss, 1992; Peterson, 1996). All made use of questionnaires with a mixture of variables and cohorts measured, most cross-sectional in design. One critique here is that the use of questionnaires allowed for descriptive findings but did not enable further interpretation or individual experiences and accounts. A further critique of the Neugarten *et al.* (1965) study was the forced choice design of the questionnaire.

Burton (1996) attempted to address these methodological concerns by conducting a qualitative longitudinal study, using grounded theory. Interviewing African American women in two communities, rich data over different points in time was produced. It was found that role expectations and family timetabling were very different between the urban and rural communities. The study produced sound comparative data that explored and highlighted the contrast in family timetables between two communities of the same racial origin. For instance, females in the rural community expected to become parents between the ages of 15 to 18 years whereas the urban community was 20 to 23 years. Becoming a grandparent in the rural community was expected at 35 to 36 years, the urban community 42 to 45 years. Furthermore, the role of parent in the rural community was not behaviourally experienced until they became grandparents; it was the grandmother's role to raise the grandchildren. This was not the case in the urban communities, where parents raised their own children and took care of their parents. Whilst this was an informative study, highlighting the different normative grandparenting behaviours between two communities within the same ethnic population, the principles of grounded theory and the process of data analysis are only briefly detailed. Hence, while Burton (1996) does evidence some of the findings with data extracts, it is unclear how the author processed her data to reach the findings discussed.

Despite the aforementioned methodological concerns, the age-normative framework indicates culturally constructed life course timetables, which intrinsically educate an individual about the expected timing of events throughout the life course. However, three decades following on from the Neugarten *et al.* (1965) study, Settersten and Hagestad (1996) found that

there are no perceived consequences of missing a deadline for family transition events; that timetables for family transitions had become more flexible. Furthermore, in 1996, Neugarten went on to report that a more 'fluid life cycle' is now apparent due to the changes in lifestyles and events; that society is becoming accustomed to "*a lack of synchrony among age-related roles*" (Neugarten, 1996, p. 48). Therefore it is not uncommon to know of a retiree who has taken up full-time study or a 50 year old first time mother. This "age-irrelevant society" that Neugarten (1996) described, suggests that the off timing of such transitions is of little consequence to the individual and society alike.

However, a recent study into parental satisfaction reports a close link between micro social and macro social variables (Mitchell, 2010); that is, personal experiences and circumstances (micro social) interplay with expectations and timing of developmental tasks and sociocultural norms (macro social). According to Mitchell (2010), most parents hold social timetables for when life events and transitions should approximately occur and that a child's achievements and failures have a direct affect on parental wellbeing. Hence, a transition to early grandmotherhood has the potential to be perceived (by the mother) as a failure to achieve developmental success for both her and her child. This may be particularly relevant when exploring the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood.

3.1.2 Grandmotherhood as a marker of social old age

Becoming a grandmother is a significant event in the life cycle, an important factor associated with self identity (Kulik, 2007). Indeed, becoming a grandmother involves an additional identity, a further role to adapt to and incorporate into ones existing persona (Severino *et al.* 1986). Additionally, there is an intrinsic societal assumption that grandmotherhood will be a role taken on willingly and enjoyed.

The transition to grandparenthood is frequently associated with later life and therefore, must have an impact on self-perceptions of age identity and status. Kaufman and Elder Jr. (2003, p. 271) hypothesized that earlier aged grandparents will result in older age identities than "on-time" grandparents, reporting, "*the transition to grandparenthood is likely to be smoother if it occurs at the normatively expected time.*" Through quantitative analysis of questionnaires, it was found that the results supported this hypothesis. With a relatively large sample (N=666, mean age 70 years) taken from two large surveys, the findings give a good indication and description of the rural

population in north central Iowa. Measuring experience of the grandparenting role in years (less than 25 years and 25 years and over) as an indication of the transitional timing, the authors reported that less experienced grandparents felt older than the more experienced grandparents. In this sense, "*an accelerated timetable may act to accelerate aging*" (Kaufman & Elder Jr., 2003, p. 279).

According to Douaire-Marsaudon and Howard (2007), grandparenthood is still viewed as an indication of social old age. Tarrant (2010) reported that a typical stereotype of a grandparent is of an elderly person in a devalued role. Indeed, with today's youth-obsessed cultures, grandparenting is perceived to be synonymous with old age (Bosak, 2012). However, grandparenthood can be viewed more customarily as a mid life transition. In developed societies, men and women are becoming grandparents in the prime of their lives (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007).

Sciplino *et al.* (2010) explored the representations of grandparents in children's books. Previous research found that grandparents were represented as elderly, not in good health and sedentary. This perception of old age and grandparents relays a negative image to children of ageing and older adults. British children's books were found to show a significant difference between the estimated age of the illustrated grandparent and reality; that is, the represented grandparent was significantly older. Sciplino *et al.* (2010) expected more recent books to show grandparents as younger, however, this was not the case. It can be argued that the findings from the Sciplino *et al.* (2010) study are representing a social reality with the delay in childbirth being experienced in contemporary western societies. However, the UK has the highest rate of teen pregnancies and single parent families than any other European country (Public Health England, 2015) and hence, the younger grandmother may not be realistically represented.

Rayner (2002, p. 134) questioned where this stereotype of the grandmother comes from and why it has not evolved in line with the demographic changes experienced in the last 40 years. "*Yet there sits the stereotype, glorified in children's storybooks, in greetings cards, in advertising, in knitting patterns, everywhere.*" Grandmothers are represented as elderly ladies or as Rayner (2002, p. 133) depicts, "*Apple-cheeked white-haired darlings wearing black bombazine over their ample laps and full of wise saws and sweet stories inhabiting their chimney corners...*"

In this respect, representations of grandparents in contemporary society may be viewed as structurally lagging; a term coined by Riley, Kahn and Foner (1994) to explain social structures that do not keep up to date with changes in the population. The findings from Sciplino *et al.* (2010) study suggest that grandparents in British children's books illustrate grandparents as significantly older than they actually are, resembling the more traditional grandparent stereotype associated with older age. Indeed, Kornhaber (1986) and Kaufman and Elder Jr. (2003) proposed that becoming a grandparent has a significant impact on age identity. Human beings have unique and individual identities that are shaped not only by individuality but also by the events of daily lives and relationships with family members, work and community (Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino & Carnaghi, 2006). Important others help form cognitive representations of ourselves (Castano *et al.* 2006) and hence, identity is a dynamic balance between the social world and the self (Whitbourne & Connolly, 1999). Therefore, grandmotherhood and ageing are arguably subjective and based on circumstances that are placed within a larger, social context.

Age is associated with constraints, roles, statuses within society and opportunities and is inevitably part of identity, a component of self-conception (Barrett, 2005). According to Barrett (2005), whilst approaching a next life stage, an individual may try to postpone the transition by identifying with younger ages in order to nourish a positive conception of themselves. Furthermore, role transitions such as parenthood and retirement have been reported to shape age identity although findings are frequently inconsistent (Barrett, 2005).

Representations of grandparents do not necessarily embody reality and encourage a continued predominant stereotyped grandparent who is antiquated with an inability to understand the lives of their grandchildren. This points to the need for attention to be applied to the experiences of young grandmothers and how they adapt to a role that is socially designated and represented as an older age life stage.

3.1.3 Young grandmotherhood and life-span development

Grandmotherhood receives little mention within the life-span literature on midlife. This may be due to the out-dated societal association of grandparenthood and older age, however, for many Western societies, it frequently occurs within the midlife stage. For instance, in the UK the average age to become a grandparent is between 49 and 54 years (Sciplino *et al.* 2010; The Grandparents' Association, 2012), placing a normative transition

approximately half way through middle adulthood. Hence, an early transition to grandmotherhood would be towards, at, or before the beginning of middle adulthood.

Midlife is a clear life stage that represents both physical changes and socially expected norms for the roles undertaken in middle adulthood (Moen & Wethington, 1999). Whilst this life stage is clear, the entry age for midlife is not; variations in the literature suggest that midlife starts anywhere between the ages of 35 to 40 years and exits around 60 to 65 years. In recent years, midlife has received growing attention from life-span developmentalists due to increased longevity and declines in fertility (Moen & Wethington, 1999; Santrock, 2006). For instance, when Jung (1933) described midlife as the 'afternoon of life', the average life expectancy was only 47 years (Santrock, 2006). Today, the average life expectancy at birth (2012 to 2014) in England is 79.5 years for males and 83.2 years for females (Office for National Statistics, 2015), inferring midlife to be more of a long luncheon rather than an entire afternoon duration.

Whilst midlife itself is a distinct stage, recent research suggests that there are few defined structural markers for middle age (Allen, Blieszner & Roberto, 2000). According to O'Connor and Wolfe (1991), midlife is a crucial time for possibilities in personal growth and development. This life stage often presents a period of diverse and unique challenges that require negotiation through a complexity of biological, social and psychological changes (Allemand, Gomez & Jackson, 2010). The majority of the research focuses on concerns of work, marriage and child rearing (Van Aken *et al.* 2006); the most commonly suggested challenges to be negotiated are role changes in work and family domains, children becoming independent and leaving home (frequently referred to as the empty nest period), more choices for self direction, physical changes and appearance and personal relationships that may require renegotiation (Klohn, Vandewater & Young, 1996). Less is understood about how young grandmotherhood fits with these challenges and concerns associated with midlife.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial developmental stages (1963) proposes a series of crises throughout the lifespan in which the individual has to successfully resolve in order to move on to the next developmental stage. According to Erikson (1963), middle adulthood is a period of conflict between generativity and stagnation. Generativity is a psychological construct in which concern and care for future generations is predominant, particularly in early midlife where there is a preoccupation with parenting and work (Vandewater & Stewart,

2006). It may be suggested that grandmothering is a fitting role for generativity, conjuring up images of the caring and nurturing grandmother who idolises her grandchildren. However, if the transition is early, the individual may be resolving the previous developmental task of intimacy, or may be at the very early stages of midlife, where parenting is still active and/or work commitments and goals are a priority. For this reason, there is potential for conflict to arise, particularly when there is a requirement to adjust to the additional identity of grandmother.

Studies have supported 'continuity' as one of the main meanings of grandparenthood, for example, Kivnick's (1983) framework for the meanings of grandparenthood (discussed in chapter 2, section 2.4). Further studies such as Timberlake and Chipungu (1992) and Fung *et al.* (2005) have implicated that the meaning of grandparenthood is generative in nature. Although implied as a midlife construct, generativity has been evidenced across the life span and is positively associated with psychological wellbeing, life satisfaction and successful ageing (Frensch, Pratt & Norris, 2007; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011). Erikson (1963) proposed that the psychological constructs from each developmental stage would be present at some degree at all ages, with generativity peaking at middle age and waning towards old age.

McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan (1993, p. 222) formulated a theoretical model of generativity that "*conceives generativity as a psychosocial space linking the developing person and the evolving social world.*" The psychosocial space is made up of seven features: cultural demand (societal norms and constraints that may or may not motivate generativity), internal desire (a desire of symbolic immortality and a desire to be needed by others), concern (for the next generation), belief (in the goodness of the human species), generative commitment, generative action (that primarily stems from an individual's generative commitment) and narration (the individual's subjective narration of generativity). The authors found no support for a decrease in generative commitment and narration from midlife to old age. However, findings revealed that the daily lives of middle-aged adults were strongly directed by generative concerns, more so than young adults. Therefore, the transition to grandmotherhood within middle adulthood can be suggested as suitable timing. Nevertheless, an early transition to grandmotherhood just before or at the early stages of midlife may have an affect on the psychosocial features of generativity that are expressed through nurturing, teaching, leading and promoting the next generation (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams *et al.* 1993; Jones & McAdams, 2013).

The life course approach frequently refers to life pathways, role and developmental transitions, trajectories and turning points (Moen & Wethington, 1999). This approach implies that social and psychological associations between transitions and individual lives over time are essential components; that is, the timing of roles in midlife as well as the duration, other roles occupied and comparisons to others within the social structure all contribute to individual shifts in physical health, emotional and psychological wellbeing and subjective orientations (Moen & Wethington, 1999). As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.5), the transition to grandmotherhood is one of few life events that are arguably uncontrollable, hence if the transition is early, it may pose difficulties for the individual to accept this unanticipated new role and let go of an old life both internally and externally (Bridges, 1996). Furthermore, the degree of predictability with regards to the timing of the transition can be consequential in the adaptation to a new role; is the transition expected? (Moen & Wethington, 1999). This then bears question as to the intrinsic societal assumption that grandmotherhood is a positive life transition.

According to O'Connor and Wolfe (1991), the many changes that can occur in midlife challenge the individuals existing systems of assumptions, perceptions, expectations, beliefs, feelings and values. The authors referred to this set of systems as personal paradigms; an individuals meaning making. There is the potential, through the transition process, for a paradigm shift to take place. A transition may provoke questioning of beliefs, values and assumptions and if past formulas fail then a search for new arrangements may begin. Therefore, a paradigm shift involves a change in existing systems (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1991). However, the authors found that the scope and intensity of the transition is conducive to a paradigm shift. A transition may impact on just one life context/domain or it might involve more.

A similar and more recent phenomenon to paradigm shifts is that of turning points (Pillemer, 2001).

"Psychological turning points are major changes in the ways people feel or think about an important part of their life, such as work, family and beliefs about themselves and about the world. Turning points involve people changing their feelings about how important or meaningful some aspect of life is or how much commitment they give it" (Allemand, Gomez & Jackson, 2010, p. 149).

It can be argued that turning points and paradigm shifts describe and explain the same phenomenon although it appears that turning points are more

definitive than transitions. A turning point has a lasting change to the individuals' developmental trajectory; it may open up or exclude new opportunities, change existing lifestyles, roles and self-concept and change views of people and the world (Ronka, Oravala & Pulkkinen, 2003). Leonard and Burns (2006) likened turning points to story lines, that they make crucial changes into the life story or self narrative.

Wethington, Kessler and Pixley (2004) proposed that psychological turning points fell into two major categories: self insights into one's motives, talents and limitations; and insights into situational factors which include limited control over a situation and characters of others. If becoming a grandmother is perceived as a psychological turning point by the individual, it is suggested that it will fall into the latter of the two types; situational factors. Whilst exploring turning points in adults in their 30s, Ronka *et al.* (2003) proposed that there is a difference between a turning point and a transition: a life transition involves transformed, redefined or left behind roles; a turning point means that the transition must hold personal significance and a change to the developmental trajectory. Therefore, a turning point is an important psychological shift that can be either positive or negative (Sutin, Costa, Wethington & Eaton, 2010). With the exception of Leonard and Burns (2006) who identified ten women who perceived grandmotherhood as a turning point, becoming a grandmother, on or off time, has received limited attention within this area of research.

An alternative concept to psychological turning points originates from the Timescapes' programme of research; a series of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) projects, which examine,

"the dynamics of personal, intimate and family relationships, the identities that flow from these relationships and how they are worked out across the life course and within different generations" (Holland & Edwards, 2014, p. 7).

Within the Timescapes' programme, Thomson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe (2002) and Holland and Thomson (2009) conducted and reported on QLR exploring young people's transitions to adulthood. Developing Gidden's (1991) concept of 'fatefulness', Thomson *et al.* (2002) identified a descriptive construct of 'critical moments' within the young people's narratives. These critical moments identified by the researchers and the participating young people were biographical moments, which were seen *"as having important consequences for their lives and identities"* (Thomson *et al.* 2002, p.

339). By mapping critical moments in time and space, transitions appeared to fall somewhere on the continuum from choice (the presence of agency) to fate (absence of agency). Thomson *et al.* (2002) observed that family related critical moments were most often placed at the fate end of the continuum; that family related situations were associated with limited choice. As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.5), the transition to grandmotherhood is not self-initiated and whilst the research into critical moments (Thomson *et al.* 2002; Holland & Thomson, 2009) is based on young people's experiences of transitioning to adulthood, it is of interest to explore this descriptive construct in relation to young maternal grandmothers experiences.

Furthermore, the early transition to grandmotherhood may lead to discontentment and a less gratifying experience. There is a likelihood that the role-set of grandmother may lead to role conflict and/or role overload (Burnette, 1999; Grigoriadis & Robinson, 2007) and the unfulfilment of expectations (Hagestad & Lang, 1986). Becoming a grandmother whilst still an active parent can be a difficult transition (Cervera, 1989) and parents of teen mothers present with initial shock and anger with associated feelings of doubt, conflicting emotions, hesitation and quandary (Borcherding, Smithbattle & Schneider, 2005). This is likely due to tensions and disagreements with regards to additional childcare arrangements as well as mixed feelings about becoming a young grandmother. Kulik (2007) proposed that in this instance the 'happy grandmother' is a myth or stereotype due to these problematic role-based interactions.

Moreover, Kivnick (1982, p. 63) proposed that the later life grandparent has had time to overcome "inadequately resolved psychological conflicts" and therefore, their psychological wellbeing is balanced. An older grandparent is more likely to have resolved the previous developmental task of intimacy and be prepared for the grandparenting role through generativity. As a consequence, the proverbial expectations and portrayals of a typical grandmother (Apple, 1956) do not correlate with the "off-timing" of grandmotherhood. However, it is increasingly difficult to describe and typify a 'typical' grandmother. Due to the changing demographics previously discussed, grandmothers can be anything from the age of 30 to 110 years, leaving the matter of "off-timing" rather questionable (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001). Further, there is limited research that presents a positive picture of the young grandmother; a younger grandmother may have more energy to be active with her grandchildren and less tired in her grandmothering activities as a result of her younger age.

3.2 Maternal grandmotherhood

Mann and Leeson (2010) have recently ignited interest in the roles of grandfathers, reporting a 'new grandfatherhood' with recently emerging norms for this role, a role that has been frequently underestimated (Mann, 2007). According to Mann and Leeson (2010), the existing research proffers a gendered depiction around the concept of grandparenthood. Harper (2005) observed that research suggests that grandmothers are the primary grandparents in the grandparent-grandchild dyad whilst grandfathers hold a subsidiary role. The literature presents many and various roles of the grandmother including grandmother as carer, replacement partner, replacement parent and family anchor (Harper & Ruicheva, 2010). Hence, earlier research tended to exclude grandfathers from analyses with the assumption that men were less interested and involved in family life (Tarrant, 2012). Furthermore, Clavan (1978) suggested that the past higher survival rates for women and younger death rates for lower class men has also played a part in the omission of grandfathers. These reasons have led to a portrayal of grandfathers sitting on the outskirts, passively looking in.

The gendered understandings of grandparenthood have been mostly drawn from the experiences of grandmothers. Cunningham-Burley (1984) interviewed grandparenting couples as they moved through the transition to grandparenthood and observed that the grandfathers did not engage as much as the grandmothers. Indeed, Cunningham-Burley (1984) found that the grandmothers most frequently dominated the interview setting. The grandmother dealt with negotiating the interview, with the grandfather's involvement being peripheral from the very start. The author also noted that the grandfathers were more likely to answer questions with general statements rather than personal statements or anecdotal stories. Discussing the reticence of the grandfathers throughout the interviews, Cunningham-Burley (1984, p. 331) noted:

"Men, it was stressed, did not speak about grandparenting or grandchildren all that often. The grandfathers would often laugh at questions on 'grandparenting as a topic of conversation', and joke about grandmothers' involvement in such talk.....In this light-hearted fashion, chatting was seriously defined as a woman's activity."

However, Mann (2007) and Harper (2005) have both proposed that grandfathers do have specific roles that do not necessarily fit the feminised construction of grandparenthood. Thomas (1989) queried the differences in

gender responses to a grandparenting satisfaction questionnaire, raising concerns about data collection methods and whether measures are gender biased and if gendered attitudes between the researched and the researcher are intrinsically entwined into the research process. Mann (2007) intimated that if so, men may be downplaying their caregiving contributions in the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

Consideration must be applied to the failure to explain the effects of masculinity on grandfathers' perceptions of the role and how they present themselves within the research context (Mann, 2007). Tarrant (2012) addressed this issue and found that grandfathers do want to be involved in their grandchildren's lives and partake in a number of activities with their grandchildren that reveal their identities as men such as playing together, educating, accompanying grandchildren to appointments and taking them on activities. However, whilst grandfathers still perform more traditional and instrumental masculine roles, Tarrant (2012) observed that some of the grandfathers within her study were involved in more nurturing and caring tasks. Waldrop *et al.* (1999, p. 39) termed this as an "*alternative discourse of masculinity*."

Therefore, more recent studies have started to challenge the conventional notions of grandfatherhood as an indifferent and inconsequential role. A new picture is starting to emerge of an emotionally engaged and involved grandfather, particularly when retired (Mann & Leeson, 2010). Alternately, although younger grandfathers have more recent experiences of parental care, they are more likely to be in full time employment.

Whilst acknowledging these new and emerging insights into contemporary grandfatherhood, there is agreement maintained within the literature of the central position of women within the family unit. Women are frequently referred to as the 'kin keepers' (Thomas, 1989; Mann & Leeson, 2010) and family matriarchs (Silverstein & Marengo, 2001) as well as an association with higher role expectations and primary responsibilities in the home (Gropel & Kuhl, 2009). For example, in Finland, the mother is seen as the heart of the family, "*Its emotional anchor and glue that keeps a family together*" (May, 2008, p. 473). Indeed, women are socialised from an early age to value and maintain family ties (Fingerman, 2003) and that maternal grandmothers are more frequently considered the most involved grandparent in the grandchild's life (Svensson-Dianellou *et al.* 2010; Coall & Hertwig, 2011).

3.2.1 Mother-daughter relationships

It has been documented that gender differences exist in the parent-offspring relationships and regardless of geographic proximity; women are more likely to maintain closer ties to their parents than men (Fingerman, 2003). The mother-daughter relationship has the potential to be one of the most important in the lives of both mother and daughter (Bojczyk *et al.* 2011) and according to Fingerman (2003, p. xv),

"Few relationships endure with the strength of the mother daughter tie throughout life. Demographic, psychological, and social structural factors render unique qualities to women's intergenerational ties. Their shared "femaleness" contributes to the nature of their ties."

As life expectancy extends, the mother-daughter relationship is at its longest when they are both adults. Different life stages lead to changes in developmental needs for mother and daughter. However, according to Fingerman (2000), throughout adulthood, mothers appear to be more invested in their daughters than their daughters in them: that is, the generational status remains the same, mothers will always be the parent and daughters will always be the child.

Through a daughter's adolescence, mothers may (or may not) intervene to help their daughters with the physical and behavioural changes associated with the transition to womanhood (Trad, 1995). Maor (2012) proposed that the mother-daughter relationship can potentially play a central role in the construction of identity and body image for the adolescent daughter, the *"epicenter of women's development"* (Fingerman, 2003, p. 48). Less is documented about the mother-daughter relationship when the daughter and mother transition to motherhood and consequently, grandmotherhood earlier than expected. These early transitions may come at a time when the young adult daughter is still progressing through developmental changes associated with adolescence; where the mother-daughter relationship may be pushed emotionally into conflicts or can be adaptive, where the daughter is comfortable with mother as confidante (Trad, 1995). Further, there has been less attention applied to the mother's development within the adult mother-daughter relationship with researchers focusing primarily on the developmental needs and changes of the daughter (Fingerman, 2003). Fingerman (2000) suggested that as family roles change (e.g. daughter becomes mother) the mother and daughter may feel a closer connection as they share the commonality of motherhood. Alternatively,

the daughter may focus on her children and rely less on her mother for a sense of who she is.

Studying the perceptions of young adult daughters and their middle-aged mothers, Bojczyk *et al.* (2011) proposed that there is a “bridge period” in their relationship. This stage of their relationship involves the shifting from nurturing mother – dependent daughter (emotional support is unidirectional from mother to daughter) to mutual reciprocity and a shared interest in the larger family network. Indeed, younger mothers and their daughters are both focused on the daughter’s entry into adulthood and the mothers continued need to nurture her child (Fingerman, 2000). This may be particularly relevant to this research of younger maternal grandmothers where young mothers/daughters are perhaps self-absorbed and view their mothers as a source of help and advice rather than sharing a reciprocal relationship (Fingerman, 2000).

Research by Harper and Ruicheva (2010) identified two roles that grandmothers may play for their lone parent daughters and their children: replacement parent (satisfies the needs of the grandchild/ren) and replacement partner (satisfies the needs of the lone mother). The grandmothers in the study held little awareness of the replacement partner role, viewing the support given to their daughters as primary parental responsibilities. Harper and Ruicheva (2010) proposed that there is a potential for disruptive effects on the daughter – mother relationship in this instance as the role of surrogacy does not fit with the grandmother’s expectations of grandparenthood: if the grandmother cannot attain the idealisation of the grandparenting role then their identity may suffer a significant crisis. These research findings may be relevant to this study, where younger daughters may be single and still dependent upon their mothers.

3.2.2 Young motherhood, ‘good’ motherhood and ‘stigma’

In 1999, the UK government acknowledged their growing concerns about teenage pregnancies by implementing The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in order to half the under 18 conception rates by 2010 (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007). An ambitious target which was not achieved, with a reduction of 13.3% for births to under 18’s reported (Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department of Health, 2010). In 2013, the under 18-conception rate had decreased by 47.9% in England, although vast variations in conception rates exist within different areas of the country (Public Health England, 2015). Whilst teenage pregnancies continue to decrease, they remain a key priority outlined in the Department of Health’s (2012) Framework for Public Health Outcomes 2013 – 2016. It can be inferred that the age of

motherhood and indeed, grandmotherhood, is still being constrained and timetabled within the intrinsic realms of social norms. Noticeably, much research to date has attended to the adolescent mother and child whilst grandmothers of the children of teen mothers have remained relatively unheard (Sadler & Clemmens, 2004).

Indeed, as part of the Timescapes' programme, Emmel and Hughes (2014) studied grandparents between the ages of 35 to 55 years. Over a 3 year period, life history interviews were conducted with 12 grandparents from 8 families living in a Northern English city. From a precariat social class of low-paid low-skilled employment, underemployment and unemployment, Emmel and Hughes (2014) explored intergenerational exchanges and how young vulnerable grandparents supported their grandchildren in order to improve their grandchildren's life chances. Focusing on the experiences of Bridget (a 13-year old mother) and Ruth (Bridget's mother), Emmel and Hughes (2014) highlight the complexities experienced as a result of the mother and daughter's young ages. In this case study, the timing of motherhood and grandmotherhood was perceived as 'wrong' and as a consequence, Ruth's identity as a grandmother,

"is undermined through her everyday interaction with friends and acquaintances. Her experiences of caring for daughter and grandchild reinforce a mothering, not grand-mothering role" (Emmel & Hughes, 2014, p. 167).

Emmel and Hughes (2014, p. 173) also reported that service providers tend to focus on the young mother and neglect to consider the support offered by the grandmother, making the *"grandparent generation invisible"*. As Sadler and Clemmens (2004) reported, mothers of teen mothers are underrepresented and it is here, that this research will make an important contribution to the understandings of the experiences of young maternal grandmothers.

It is likely that the young grandmother will have transitioned to motherhood at a young age herself and/or her daughter will be a young mother (Seamark & Pereira Gray, 1997; Redwood, Pyer & Armstrong-Hallam, 2012) and therefore, it is important to consider the young motherhood literature. Seamark and Pereira Gray (1997) reported that pregnant teenagers are more likely than non-pregnant teenagers to have a mother who had been a teenage mother, using the phrase *"like mother, like daughter"* to highlight the family history of teenage pregnancy. According to Turnage and Pharris (2013, p. 74), the commonality of young motherhood shared by mother and daughter puts the pregnant adolescent in *"comfortable territory"* whether consciously or unconsciously. Whilst a mother's support of her teenage pregnant daughter may contribute to

her daughter's positive self-image (Turnage & Pharris, 2013), Cervera (1989, p. 72)) reported that becoming a grandparent "*while maintaining a parental relationship with a teenage parent is a difficult transition.*"

Despite the difficulties that may be experienced in the simultaneous transitions to young mother and young grandmother, literature suggests that the maternal mother can be a primary support (emotionally and physically) to the pregnant adolescent (Borcherding, Smithbattle & Schneider, 2005; Turnage & Pharris, 2013). DeVito (2010) reported that mothers are likely to be consistent and dependable sources of support for their pregnant teenage daughters and that previous mother-daughter conflicts, often experienced in adolescence, are put on hold as mother and daughter share a commonality; pregnancy and motherhood. Borcherding, Smithbattle and Schneider (2005) proposed that the support provided by mothers leads to a positive maternal identity for the young mother. However, the authors suggested that conflict and disagreements are also frequent, resulting from childcare issues in which the teen's expectations are unrealistic. Additionally, further conflict may arise with the daughter's expectations that motherhood is a right of passage to adulthood and thus, previous parental discipline and rules should be discontinued. In these instances, there is a greater risk of maternal depression and negative maternal identity. In this sense, Smithbattle (1997) proposed that grandparent care can be a 'gift' or a 'curse'.

A further Timescapes' research project by Kehily and Thomson (2011a, 2011b), explored new motherhood in contemporary society. Initially recruiting 62 expectant mothers from heterogeneous backgrounds and following 12 case studies through into the first year of motherhood, Kehily and Thomson (2011a) reported on the diversity of women becoming mothers for the first time. Age was a key factor in the participating mothers' experiences, with young mothers portraying a sense of loss of their childhood, older mothers discussing their motherhood as a last chance for reproduction and middle age group mothers expounding on "*effective biographical planning*" (Kehily & Thomson, 2011b). Kehily and Thomson (2011a) described one of the case studies in which Kim, a 16 year old mother, and Gillian, Kim's mother, negotiate Kim's young and unplanned pregnancy and motherhood. Originally from Zimbabwe, Kim's family had been affluent and Kim had been enjoying high achievements at school. Moving to the UK, the family had experienced downward social mobility, placing Kim's teenage pregnancy within the typically associated working class experience. With their recently affluent past, the family struggle to come to terms with this. Gillian takes charge of Kim's pregnancy and motherhood, becoming a central figure whilst being haunted by her own young pregnancy

and the feelings of guilt and shame that she had experienced. Gillian viewed Kim as a child with a child and according to Kehily and Thomson (2011a, p. 5), *"Gillian remains the mother allowing Kim to continue to be a child"*.

The problem of teen pregnancy is expounded in contemporary society, with the existence of maternal discourses that project a 'normative' trajectory for women to complete their education, establish a career, secure a home and a stable relationship and then to start a family (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). These "fertility timing norms" (Geronimus, 2003) have changed since the early 1970's, with an increase in delayed childbirth and a UK average age of first time mothers of 28.3 years, with just over half (51%) of all live births to mothers aged 30 years and over (Office of National Statistics, 2014). Associated with these demographic changes is the socially, historically and culturally constructed concept of 'morally good' motherhood (May, 2008); that a 'good' mother is related to a 'normative' mother and that 'teen' motherhood can be seen as the deviant (Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

Teenage pregnancies are frequently viewed and reported within contemporary western societies as a major social concern; not only for the health and wellbeing of mother and child but also for the economic, social and political agendas of respective societies (Smithbattle, 2013). Smithbattle (2013, p. 236) reported that teen mothers are stigmatised, labeled as different and socially portrayed as *"irresponsible and inept parents"*. Wiemann, Rickert, Berensen and Volk (2005, p. 353e1) wrote on the stigmatisation of teenage mothers:

"Pregnant adolescents today face far different circumstances than their historic counterparts 35 years ago. In contrast to being sequestered in maternity homes or sent to live with relatives, most pregnant adolescents remain in their homes or communities, choose to raise their children rather than adopt, and continue to attend regular schools. Thus, despite recent declines in rates of teenage pregnancies, the adolescent who becomes pregnant today is highly visible to her family, school, and community."

Indeed, frequently negative outcomes of teenage motherhood are reported through media sources and policy documents which have included the risk of adverse obstetrics, poverty, an end to schooling and further education, lower participation in the workforce, increased welfare recipience, and a number of poor outcomes for the child (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). Kelly (1995) proposed that these negative reports of teen pregnancy result in stereotypes of teenage mothers as poverty stricken, promiscuous, ignorant, welfare dependent, childish, love-starved and emotionally unbalanced.

Due to this negativity of young mothers, it is not surprising that teen mothers have reported feelings of stigmatisation, resulting in social exclusion, moral condemnation and negative rumination (Whitley & Kirmayer, 2008). Scambler (2009, p. 441) defined stigma as:

"...A social process that is experienced or anticipated and characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation and results from experience, perception or reasonable anticipation of an adverse social judgement about a person or group."

Scambler and Hopkins (1986) proposed that there are two forms of stigma; *enacted* and *felt*. *Enacted* stigma involves instances of blatant enactments of discrimination and rejection whilst *felt* stigma involves feelings of shame and the fear of discrimination and rejection (Gray, 2002). Developing this further, Neill, Cowley and Williams (2013) proposed a minor form of stigma; that of *felt* or *enacted criticism*. Studying parent's help seeking in acute childhood illness, Neill *et al.* (2013) found that negative parental encounters with healthcare professionals lead to *felt criticism*. Parents in these circumstances, felt that they had been criticized and made to feel stupid even when no direct critical comments from the healthcare professional had been made. The authors reported that the consequences of *felt* or *enacted criticism* in these negative encounters were for parents to avoid future encounters that they perceived would involve criticism. According to Neill *et al.* (2013), the social hierarchy between healthcare professionals (more specifically doctors) and parents was the precursor for the parents' *felt criticism*.

Not only do media reports and policy documents contribute to the stigmatisation of teen pregnancies but Smithbattle (2013) also suggested that professionals in healthcare and education might treat the individual differently. Stevens (2015) found that primary healthcare providers in reproductive health relayed normative discourses surrounding the readiness of starting a family, these being: out of teens, completion of education, married or in a long-term relationship and a stable job.

Redwood, Pyer and Armstrong-Hallam (2012) conducted focus groups with young mothers in Northamptonshire, UK and found that the mothers believed that they had been treated differently by the professionals working with them because of their age. One mother felt that the professionals *"...look a bit funny at them, sort of 'Well it's your own fault' kind of attitude..."* (Redwood *et al.* 2012, p. 22). This *felt criticism* is concerning, particularly when implicit or explicit judgements made by professionals working with these young people

may contribute towards poorer maternal emotional health and wellbeing – a main reason for the UK government concern (Department for children, schools and families and Department of Health, 2010). What is less understood is how this judgemental behaviour (whether felt or enacted) from practicing professionals (such as healthcare, social work, and educational professionals) and the general public alike affects the family members supporting the teenage mother. More specifically, how it affects the maternal grandmother who potentially is a primary source of support for the young mother and may too have experienced stigma or criticism in her own young motherhood.

The concept of the 'good' or the 'bad' mother, like grandmotherhood, is socially, culturally and historically constructed. There is evidence to suggest that throughout history, the concept of the 'good' mother has always existed. Exploring motherhood in seventeenth-century England, Wiedenbeck (2015, p. 183) researched published funeral sermons from this era, noting:

"Good mothers not only fulfilled the expectations of femininity, but early modern motherhood contained significant spiritual significance as well. The majority of published funeral sermons for women with children contained some sort of discussion of their motherhood, and for some this was one of the most notable aspects of their life...The importance of emphasizing a woman's maternal abilities primarily lay in her role as teacher...mothers were considered the significant spiritual teachers and nurturers of their children, and funeral sermons often praised deceased women in their successful completion of this duty, marrying their abilities to be industrious with their abilities to nurture."

According to Thurer (1994), the twentieth century mother fell from grace with advances in science. Between 1900 and 1940, Thurer (1994, p. 226) stated that *"motherhood underwent a technological face-lift"* as mothers adopted the use of developmental milestone measures, brought forth by the surge in developmental psychology and child studies. Child development became standardized and subsequently so did motherhood. A rapid change followed between 1940 and 1980, where mothers moved away from this scientific method to a more permissive and emphatic motherhood. Only then to be re-invented again from the 1980's when women were expected to work outside the home. Thurer (1994) proposed that either through choice or necessity, women were allowed to be ambitious but that ambition and motherhood were historically challenging opposites. How can one be a good mother when pursuing a career? - When good motherhood entails a complete dedication to her children, sacrificing herself to rear and educate them (Borovska, 2015).

Further, with the increase in single motherhood, May (2008) reported on the “spoiled identity” (Goffman, 1963) of Finnish lone mothers; that social norms still prescribe a ‘proper’ family as a two-parent family. May (2008) found that lone mothers justified and presented themselves as morally good mothers regardless of their family form. It can be argued that young motherhood also results in a spoiled identity and as a consequence, perhaps young grandmotherhood too, particularly when young grandmothers may be balancing work and family commitments as well as grandchild care.

Less is known about how good motherhood extends into young adult children’s lives and whether good motherhood evolves into, and incorporates good grandmotherhood. What is relevant here is that an early transition to motherhood likely leads to an early transition to grandmotherhood.

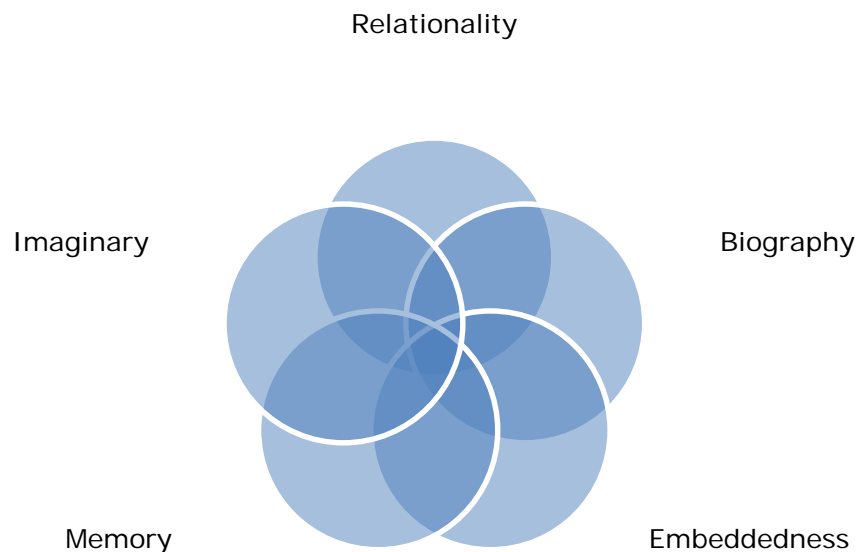
3.3 Grandmotherhood, family life and relationality

Kehily and Thomson (2011a) reported on the concept of re-configuration, where the arrival of a new generation generally involves a family experiencing significant change in relationships and perspectives. Indeed, Borcharding *et al.* (2005, p. 290) proposed, “*When a birth occurs to a teenager, all family members are thrust into new relationships and responsibilities.*” The word ‘thrust’ implies the imposition of the subsequent family transitions; that grandmotherhood in these instances, is far from a taken-for-granted experience that Cunningham-Burley (1986) reported. As Borcharding *et al.* (2005) and Kehily and Thomson (2011a) indicated; the transition to young maternal grandmotherhood is not an isolated life event within the family. The simultaneous transitions to motherhood and grandmotherhood (as discussed previously in section 3.2.2) are linked with relationships to other family members, who also experience transitions to new roles, relationships and identities. Therefore, to understand the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood, it is important to consider the grandmothers’ experiences in their relationships to other family members.

In recent years, British sociologists (Finch & Mason, 1993; Smart, 2007, 2011; May, 2013) have turned to the ‘relational’ in the study of family and personal life (Roseneil & Ketokivi, 2015). Rejecting theories of individualization, where individual experiences have been studied in isolation from others (Mason, 2004), these recent conceptualisations of relationality view family life as a web of connections, a multi-dimensionality of ‘linked lives’ (Bengston *et al.* 2002).

With the relational and the multi-dimensionality of family and personal life in mind, Smart (2007, 2011) has developed a Toolbox of Concepts (Figure 1) which offer conceptual tools (relationality, memory, biography, embeddedness, imaginary) to open up new ways of exploring and seeing family life. The concepts overlap and connect with each other to form a picture of family life that is connected, contextual, historical and social.

Figure 1 – Illustration based on Smart's Toolbox of Concepts (Smart, 2011, p. 16)



Smart (2011) described the concept of relationality as the self as a connected being to others: that relationships with others are essential to the way in which we see ourselves and how we behave and act. Relationality is dynamic but situated within the everydayness of life. Whilst this portrays a positive picture of familial relationships, Mason (2004, p. 172) reported that relationality is often associated with constraint and conflict: that *"relationships with kin and others are not always harmonious or supportive, and questions about the balance of priorities and needs are not always agreed upon or easily accommodated."* With potentially unanticipated life transitions within the family, it is important to attend to the experiences of young maternal grandmothers from a relational perspective.

According to Smart (2011), the concept of memory is social. We are born into a process of socialisation, with parents, carers and siblings as important individuals in this process (May, 2013). Memory plays a significant part in creating our identities and our earliest memories are generally of family and relationships (Smart, 2011). The importance of grandparents in the lives of

contemporary families has been discussed previously in chapter 2, section 2.3. It is proposed that the concept of memory will be a useful tool to understand how young maternal grandmothers perceive their own experiences, based on their own memories of family, and how involved they view themselves in their grandchildren's lives.

The concept of biography relates to the experiences of living through certain times (Smart, 2011). The stories that young maternal grandmothers tell may illuminate the meanings they hold in relationships with others. Further, their accounts may grasp at movement through time: from being a young mother themselves to their daughters' young motherhood. Smart (2011) also proposed that materiality is an important tool to capture biographical accounts; how objects and things are invested with meaning.

Embeddedness (or connectedness) is a concept relating to the web of connections, of relationships in the lives of families, in the context of surrounding circumstances (Smart, 2011). Embeddedness is not just about the now, but connections between the generations, past and present, through family resemblances, possessions and continuity. May (2013) reported that families encompass a set of important relationships that incorporate a sense of relational belonging, although this is often not the case in experiences of violence or adoption for example. Indeed, Smart (2011, p. 24) wrote,

"Of course these links and feelings of embeddedness – especially within a genetic family – can be experienced as psychologically and emotionally suffocating. These signs can remind one of how hard it is to be free of one's family and kin. Where lives have become interwoven and embedded it becomes impossible for relationships simply to end."

Imaginary is a concept related to *"the ways in which relationships exist in one's imagination and thoughts"* (Smart, 2011, p. 25). It is where comparisons may be made between the relationships we imagine other people experience and our own experiences of relationships. This may be particularly pertinent in the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood where the stigmatisation of young motherhood may involve comparisons to others, of presenting oneself as a good mother and grandmother, *"formed by and influenced by dominant ideals at any given time"* (Smart, 2011, p. 27).

3.4 Concluding comments

It is important, therefore, to acknowledge that the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood are both familial and socially contextual. It has been evidenced throughout the literature that grandmotherhood is an historic, socio-cultural, relational and gendered construct. Grandmotherhood continues to be socially associated with older age and retirement (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007; Bosak, 2012), although the transition often happens earlier in the life course. In this sense, the connection with old age and grandmothereing may not necessarily represent a social reality and further, may negatively affect the young grandmother's transition to grandmotherhood and her grandmothereing identity.

Furthermore, young grandmotherhood has previously been labelled within academic literatures as deviant (Kornhaber, 1986). However, since these assertions of abnormality were made, an absence of research remains into young grandparenthood. Additionally, life-span development research has rarely attended to grandmotherhood within midlife. This is important to address in terms of young grandmothers and their commitments to family and work, whilst considering the midlife construct of generativity (Erikson, 1963; McAdams *et al.* 1993) and the current cultural norm of grandparent childcare (Statham, 2011).

Maternal grandmothers are represented in the existing literatures as the most involved grandparent in the lives of their grandchildren (Svensson-Dianellou *et al.* 2010; Coall & Hertwig, 2011). It was partly for this reason that the decision to explore the lived experiences of young maternal grandmothers was made, despite the historically gender biased depictions of grandparenthood and the recently emerging research into "new grandfatherhood" (Harper, 2005; Mann, 2007; Mann & Leeson, 2010; Tarrant, 2012). Further reasoning was drawn from the literatures on the mother-daughter relationship and the stigmatisation of young motherhood. It has been reported that mothers of pregnant teenage daughters are potentially the primary source of support in their daughters' pregnancy and beyond (Trad, 1995; Fingerman, 2000, 2003; Borchertding *et al.* 2005; DeVito, 2010; Kehily & Thomson, 2011a; Turnage & Pharris, 2013; Emmel & Hughes, 2014), yet there is limited research exploring the experiences of the mothers of young mothers (Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). It is here that this research will make an important contribution to society by: exploring how the stigmatisation of young mothers may have an affect on the mother and daughter's experiences; understanding the support that grandmothers may, or may not, contribute to their daughters and grandchildren and how this fits with

the current UK Government's objectives to improve maternal health, child health and development and economic independence of young people; identifying the needs of young maternal grandmothers, their daughters and their families with the potential to enhance present and future support networks and service provisions.

Chapter 4 Methodology and methods

This chapter discusses the various research methodologies considered and the reasons for choosing a qualitative methodology for this study. More specifically, the choice of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the most fitting methodology and approach to address the primary aim of this study is presented. Following on from this, details of the design, the grandmother participants and the procedures are discussed. The chapter concludes with a deliberation of ethical considerations, reflexivity, and evaluation criteria for qualitative research.

As a result of the absence of academic research into becoming and being a young maternal grandmother, a primary aim was identified for this study:

- To explore and interpret the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother

It is proposed that by answering the research question 'what are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood?' this research will give voices to a silent and neglected population, adding an important contribution to the grandmothing knowledge. Furthermore, this research will contribute to society by presenting important understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood, which can inform future policies on grandparent childcare and womens' working and family life balance as well as informing existing service provision to help in the UK Government's objectives of improving maternal health, child health and development and young peoples' economic self-sufficiency. This research will focus on the experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother. It will explore the diverse stories of young maternal grandmothers to identify and recognise experiences, needs and beliefs of young maternal grandmothers.

4.1 Rationale for a qualitative methodology

In general, research methodologies are split into two groups: quantitative and qualitative. In psychology, quantitative research has long been the dominant methodology, mainly influenced by the nineteenth century advances in the natural sciences (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010; Willig, 2010). This positivist approach to science was based on the belief of universal laws and attempts to portray an objective picture of the world (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Quantitative research is concerned with descriptive and inferential statistics, cause and effect relationships, preconceived variables and objective measurements. Research conducted under this hypothetico-deductive paradigm generates empirical data that is tested in order to support a hypothesis but also secludes people from their natural context (Willig, 2010).

Alternatively, qualitative research is concerned with meanings and focuses on the qualities of an experience (Willig, 2010). In contrast to the quantitative approach of scientific rigour and objectivity, qualitative research offers a more creative and subjective approach (Willig, 2010). Frost (2011, p. 195) defines subjectivity as:

"The personal perspectives brought by individuals to the ways in which they view their world. This is applicable to researchers' experience of the research process as it is to the data elicited and gathered from the research participants."

This is unlike the quantitative approach, which distances the researcher from the researched to avoid biases (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Therefore a key principle for qualitative researchers is to capture the very essence of an experience through working as closely as possible with the participants (Langdridge, 2007).

Hence, qualitative research in psychology resulted from growing discontent with objective measurements in the dominating quantitative paradigm, resulting in an absence of rich descriptions of human experiences (Frost, 2011). Callaghan (2006) proposed that qualitative research aims to make sense of the social context and that social experiences are not numeric; therefore, quantitative translation into numbers strips away the underlying meanings.

As presented in chapter 3 (section 3.3), personal and family life is multi-dimensional (Smart, 2011). To explore the experiences of becoming and being a grandmother required a methodology that acknowledged the connectedness, embeddedness, relationality and diversity of grandmotherhood; Who the person is, where they are from, how they perceive grandmotherhood, their experiences of their own grandparents, how grandmotherhood affects their working, family and social lives, how grandmotherhood affects their identity and what it means to them to experience grandmotherhood. There is arguably, an infinite list of layers and meanings that interplay in becoming and being a young maternal grandmother and, therefore, these experiences must be considered unique. Quantification of grandmotherhood would strip away all underlying meanings and take away the exclusivity of such experiences. Hence, this research required an inductive approach without hypotheses and a reduction of the experience to numbers. It was essential that the methodology allowed an in depth exploration of what it is like to become and be a young maternal grandmother and how the individuals make sense of their grandmotherhood. Thus, given the primary aim of this study and to best

capture the very nature and essence of the experiences, a qualitative method was regarded as pertinent.

4.1.1 Choosing a qualitative methodology

A number of methods within the qualitative paradigm were considered for this study. Grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative inquiry and phenomenology will be discussed briefly in turn with regard to their epistemological and ontological positions and the reasoning for choosing IPA.

Grounded Theory is a popular qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, specifically within healthcare research, and aims to generate a theory grounded in data (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). This method is particularly useful when the phenomenon under study is relatively new and limited knowledge exists. As there is little research into young maternal grandmotherhood, grounded theory was assessed as a possible methodology. Willig (2010, p. 34) described grounded theory as a process of discovery in which knowledge is derived through constant comparison. Comparison is not used to support an existing theory but to unearth new categories and theories by comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between the data to make clear what the meanings and processes are for that phenomenon (Nolas, 2011). For this research, constant comparison might lead to interviews and other data collection methods that become too cumbersome, the grandmothers may be discouraged by this and impede on the procurement of rich, detailed data.

Traditional grounded theory established by Glaser and Strauss (1967) leans towards a realist and positivist approach: to provide information about the world and how it really is. However, more recent developments in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) hold more constructionist concepts where views of reality are explored through the use of language and other symbolic representations (Nolas, 2011). Generally in grounded theory, the researcher uses different methods of data collection to achieve 'saturation' through a systematic process of categorization and theorizing (Willig, 2010). In grounded theory, saturation refers to theoretical or conceptual; no new concepts for categories can be identified which are of importance to the study (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Whilst it was acknowledged that a study using grounded theory could produce useful and valuable data, the production of a theory could prove difficult because of potential problems with saturation. As discussed previously, grandmotherhood is diverse in concept with many probable factors affecting individual experience. Indeed, Holloway and Wheeler (2010, p. 147) reported that, "*Many approaches aim for data or theoretical saturation but fail to achieve*

it." Furthermore, Willig (2010) recommended that the research question for a grounded theory approach be focused towards action and process: the *how* rather than the *what*.

A further qualitative methodology considered was that of discourse analysis (DA), used frequently to explore the underlying meanings of taken-for-granted knowledge (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). DA sits at the other end of epistemological scale to traditional grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in that it challenges realism. It supports a constructionist ontology that makes no assumptions about the social world. Discursive psychology resulted from a growing dissatisfaction with cognitive psychology (within the experimental paradigm), which views language as an internal state and neglects to consider language as a social process (Willig, 2010). According to Holt (2011, p. 67) this "*turn to language*" was due to an epistemological crisis, leaving social psychologists searching for alternative methodologies. Discursive psychologists approach language as a social performance, which both constructs social reality and achieves social objectives (Willig, 2010, p. 92). In this sense, language and reality are socially constructed through interactions and actions (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

There are two main versions of DA, the first looks at how people use discursive resources: what people do with language and how they perform it (Discourse Analysis, DA). The second is based on the work of Foucault (Foucauldian Discourse Analysis) and examines the discursive resources that are obtainable to people and how discourse can construct selfhood and power relations (Willig, 2010). DA would provide information about the various constructions of grandmotherhood through social interactions, media sources, politics and documentation. However, this study is exploring the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother rather than the social constructions of grandmotherhood and for this reason, DA was considered an unsuitable method to help meet the primary aim of the research.

Comparable to DA, narrative inquiry is an additional qualitative methodology, which has grown from constructionist ontology but is also influenced by phenomenology during its development (Smith *et al.* 2009). Narrative inquiry views stories as reflections of people's experiences and the meanings that they have applied to life events (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Langdridge (2007, p. 130) stated, "*Narratives involve the ordering of events into some meaningful whole.*" Despite the existence of many different approaches to narrative inquiry, narrative researchers tend to share a conviction in the structure of peoples' stories frequently referred to as "*story grammar*" (Willig, 2010, p. 133). The

data collection method most commonly used in narrative analysis is semi-structured interviews, often known as biographical, narrative or life history interviews (Langdridge, 2007).

Notwithstanding the necessity to gain detailed accounts of the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood through the participant's own stories, the emphasis of the analysis in this study was on the lived experience; what it was like for the grandmothers. Data from a narrative inquiry may very well yield rich descriptions and creation of meanings of the experience, but nonetheless focuses on how the story is told and the story content rather than delving in to experiential understandings and meanings that were fundamental to this research.

In contrast, phenomenology affords an experiential ontology that meets with the primary aim of this study. Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that originates from the early part of the twentieth century with the works of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (Langdridge, 2007). In basic terms, phenomenology

"...emphasizes the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense a whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experienter" (Moran, 2000, p. 4).

There are a variety of differing strands under the heading of phenomenology that will be discussed further in the following IPA section (4.2.1). Briefly, there are three schools of thought: descriptive, hermeneutic and existential. Descriptive phenomenologists are concerned with describing phenomena rather than explaining phenomena (Langdridge, 2007): that is, the essence of an experience can be revealed as it presents itself (Langdridge, 2000; Finlay, 2009). In contrast, hermeneutic and existential phenomenology accentuates the importance of interpretation, that we are embedded social beings and that *"we experience a thing as something that has already been interpreted"* (Finlay, 2009, p. 11). However, whilst there is divide between the emphases that these varying schools of thought uphold, there is a shared epistemological position that experience is a consequence of consciousness. Experience is flexibly constructed and not determined and the experience is 'real' to that individual (Willig, 2010). Therefore, phenomenology does not pursue a definitive truth about experience but affirms that individuals bring their own exclusive views of how they see and understand the world (Frost, 2011).

Holloway and Wheeler (2010) proposed that phenomenology is the study of phenomena and not necessarily a method of investigation. Indeed, with the exception of phenomenologists such as Giorgi (1985), Colaizzi (1971), and van Manen (1990) who have proposed guides to both descriptive and hermeneutic analysis, phenomenological methods, in general, appear loosely defined. Langdridge (2007, p. 85) argued that this seemingly lack of systematic methods of inquiry is due to the concurrence amongst phenomenological psychologists that methods are not to be definitive; that reducing phenomenological psychology to "*mechanical procedures*" is going against the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology. Therefore, whilst the experiential ontology of phenomenology harmonized with the aim of this research, the concerns about differing phenomenological approaches and issues surrounding methodical and consistency of analysis were duly considered. IPA acknowledged these matters in question by offering a combination of phenomenological approaches and further, a systematic method of inquiry, which allowed for flexibility as an analytical tool (Larkin, 2011). IPA was regarded as a perfect fit for the primary aim of this study in that the grandmothers lived experiences would be explored in depth whilst acknowledging the experience as individual to them. The following section discusses the decision to employ IPA in more detail and examines the theoretical underpinnings central to the methodology.

4.2 Choosing IPA

Psychologists conceived IPA in the mid 1990s in response to the traditional psychological approaches that invariably excluded important understandings of lived experience. According to Willig (2008), IPA makes accessible a phenomenological method to psychology for those without a philosophical background. Additionally it has a well-defined structure and step-by-step procedure to the analysis (that is often lacking in other theoretical frameworks) but remains flexible and allows for creativity. IPA entails an in depth investigation of the phenomenon under study whilst maintaining an important focus on theoretical and philosophical underpinnings. It commits to the idiographic exploration of the particular in detail; it looks at the individual and examines what the experience is like for that person and how that person makes sense of their experience. It then allows for exploration of commonalities and differences between each person's experiences.

IPA thus shares Harre and Secord's (1972) view that individuals are experts on their own experiences and enables insight into a person's life world. This was apposite for studying young maternal grandmotherhood where a regard for the

individual was acknowledged and further, to view the grandmothers as experts by experience was imperative. IPA is an intersubjective inquiry, an understanding of the first person perspective from the third person position (Larkin, 2011). It commits to place personal meaning in context and to make sense of a few individuals experience in great depth. It captures the essence of peoples' experiences through both description and interpretation (Smith *et al.* 2009).

In relation to ontological and epistemological positioning, IPA falls centrally between the experiential approaches of descriptive phenomenology and the discursive approaches such as DA (Shinebourne, 2011). Larkin *et al.* (2006) proposed that ontologically speaking, IPA is broadly realist in that there is an underlying assumption that a real world exists and that the world is made up of structures and objects (Willig, 2010). Hence, IPA can be employed when real world problems are to be explored. IPA embraces a phenomenological position that accepts a reality dependent on the individual's view of it; it is real to that person. Therefore, IPA falls somewhere on the relativist spectrum epistemologically. It is more relativist than traditional grounded theory in that it asks 'how' people make sense of what happens rather than 'what' happens but more realist than discursive psychology in which the focus is on language as a social action that constructs and creates social worlds (Larkin *et al.* 2006; Shinebourne, 2011). However, Shinebourne (2011) suggested that IPA could be considered to sit on the social constructionist continuum in that it concedes to the socio cultural and historical processes that influence an individual's life and the stories that they tell about their life. Additionally, Larkin *et al.* (2006) approved of Madill *et al.* (2000) approximating IPA to contextualism; in which an understanding of persons-in-context is a key component. Thus, there is a certain "*epistemological openness*" (Larkin, 2004) that IPA offers, which allows for flexibility in the engagement of differing forms of knowledge (Larkin *et al.* 2006).

4.2.1 IPA – Theoretical underpinnings

IPA is a recently evolved approach to qualitative research (Smith *et al.* 2009). At the fundamental level, IPA is a phenomenological study into human beings experiences and the meanings of the experience that can be applied consciously. Whilst phenomenology results in detailed descriptive accounts of these meanings, IPA allows for higher order interpretation (Cronin-Davis, Butler & Mayers, 2009). Interpretation is a core principle for IPA, eliciting the dynamic relationship between the essential whole and the essential parts of experience (Smith, 1996). Furthermore, how an individual makes sense of their

experiences at an idiographic level acknowledges the experience as unique to them; that the particular, detail and context are very much part of the sense making process (Cronin-Davis *et al.* 2009).

In order to better understand the theoretical foundations of IPA the three key areas of philosophy of knowledge that inform IPA: descriptive-transcendental, hermeneutic-existential and idiography will be discussed in turn.

4.2.2 Descriptive-transcendental

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is most commonly referred to as the founder of the phenomenology movement (Langdridge, 2007). German born Husserl was primarily concerned with the world as it occurs to us as humans, to return to the things themselves and to reduce our understanding back to the core. Intentionality is the central characteristic of human consciousness, that human beings are always aware of something. It focuses on objects becoming visible as phenomena and that perception is always intentional and therefore, constitutes experience. This means that people's perceptions of the same environment can be vastly different (Willig, 2008). Things mean nothing until they have been perceived with intentionality. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010), three phases of contemplation are required in order to move from the *natural attitude* (the everyday way in which we see reality) to the *phenomenological attitude* (to question everyday taken-for-granted reality): *epoche*, suspending assumptions (bracketing) to become fully aware of what is before us; *phenomenological reduction*, a description of the phenomenon in its entirety, what is experienced (*noema*); *imaginative variation*, the manner in which the phenomenon is experienced through time and space (*noesis*), to question what is necessary for something to be what it is. These contemplation phases can be used to reveal the essence (*eidos*) of a phenomenon (Willig, 2008) and the phenomenon's essential properties (*eidetic*). Larkin (2011) elaborates that by reducing human understanding back to the core and suspending assumptions, a question such as '*What is the essential treeness of the tree*' can lay bare the essence of the tree.

Husserl's phenomenology informs IPA in several ways. According to Smith *et al.* (2009), IPA shares Husserl's belief that phenomenological research is systematic and reflective to everyday lived experience. Husserl enlightens the IPA researcher on how to attend to the process of reflection and the way in which to examine and comprehend lived experiences (Shinebourne, 2011). However, Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 16) accentuate that "*whilst Husserl was concerned to find out the essence of experience, IPA has the more modest*

ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people."

4.2.3 Hermeneutic-existential

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was also a German philosopher, initially studying theology before turning to philosophy. In 1919, Heidegger worked with Husserl as his assistant, influenced by Husserl's ideas of phenomenology as a science of essences. Heidegger was later to reject Husserl's thinking and by doing so, the hermeneutic tradition took form. Following on from the Greek etymology of phenomenon, '*to show itself*,' Heidegger believed that phenomenological inquiry must be interpretative. The process of revealing (*aletheia*), to show what is hidden, suggests interpretation; we can never bracket off our own way of seeing the world, therefore we have to interpret. Heidegger's philosophy introduces the word *Dasein* (there being). We are thrown into the world in a particular historical, social and cultural context (Frost, 2011), we are always engaged in the world and within relationships to other people, we cannot move away from this (worldliness). Heidegger philosophized that temporality (experience of time), facticity (limits of being, of what we have been given, our bodies), mood (pre-reflective way of experiencing the world), being towards death (limit to existence), care (concern for things in the world), authenticity or existentiality (recognizing reality and the potentiality of our existence), being-with (being in the world with others) and discourse (language as disclosing being) are all essential to human existence (Langdridge, 2007). Smith *et al.* (2009) reported that Heidegger's phenomenology primes IPA in two key areas:

1. Phenomenology as an unequivocal interpretative procedure;
2. Bracketing preconceptions is never truly achievable.

One of Heidegger's main contributions to phenomenology is arguably his influence on French philosophy (Cohen, 1987). Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was probably the most influential figure in French phenomenology (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010), although he preferred to call himself an existentialist rather than a phenomenologist. Sartre believed that we are always becoming ourselves, an ongoing project to be opened up. This project guides us through life and takes shape early in childhood (Langdridge, 2007). According to Langdridge (2007, p. 34) Sartre thought, "*We are free to choose who and what we want to be within the limits of the facticity of our existence.*" *Nothingness* is a term coined by Sartre to suggest that what is absent in our lives is just as important as what is present in defining who we are and our perspectives of the world. The world is shared and perceptions of the world are influenced by

others and their ongoing projects. Extending on Heidegger's worldliness, Sartre emphasizes the importance of the presence and absence of relationships to other people (Smith *et al.* 2009). As suggested by Smith *et al.* (2009), Sartre's analysis of people involved in projects in the world can be a rich guide to the IPA researcher who seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of experience and meanings. Sartre informs the IPA researcher of the interpersonal; that experience comes from being with other people in the world.

"While IPA analyses will usually be of different topics than those which were presented so vividly by Sartre, his portraits show a penetrating analysis of people engaged in projects in the world and the embodied, interpersonal, affective and moral nature of those encounters" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 21).

A further influential French philosopher was Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) who believed that human beings are embodied and embedded in the world. Our body is in the world as our heart is in our bodies. Interpretative knowledge about the world is due to our embodied nature in the world, which leads to our own individual perception of the world. We can always feel empathy for another but we can never truly share the other's experience because their experience is their own embodied position in the world (Smith *et al.* 2009). Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 19) proposed that IPA research should never underestimate or overlook the lived experience of being a *"body-in-the-world"*.

Hans-Georg Gadamer was influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger and believed that fore-conceptions are constantly being revised and changed in the process of interpretation. We may not be aware of our prejudices or they may not be what we expect them to be, therefore, interpretation is a dynamic and iterative process (Shinebourne, 2011). *Horizons* is a term used by Gadamer, which implies that we are embedded, contextual beings and that preconceptions change frequently with experience and reflection (Hunter, 2010). Indeed, we may only become aware of our preconceptions once we start to interpret. However, the main point here is that we recognize our preconceptions and prior knowledge; *historically affected consciousness* (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Gadamer believed that interpretation and understanding of existence come from language (Langdridge, 2007) and that intersubjectivity is achieved from the text and the interpreter of the text; Gadamer called this *fusion of horizons* (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). This *fusion of horizons* is an important part of the analytical process in IPA, where the researcher must maintain an awareness of the two conscious minds, of the researcher and participant, coming together with *historically affected consciousness*.

Hermeneutics emerged in the 19th Century with the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Schleiermacher presented a theory of general hermeneutics: a holistic interpretative process with both Grammatical (exact textual meaning) and psychological (individuality and intention of the speaker) interpretation (Moran, 2000). Through this holistic interpretative process, there develops an understanding of the writer as well as the text. Gadamer challenged Schleiermacher's "psychologizing" by arguing that concern should not be applied to the intention of the author but the meaning within the content (Smith, 2007, p. 4). However, for the IPA researcher, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics can be utilized to present a perspective on the text that the author may not, bringing forth meaningful insights which exceed the detailed accounts of the author or speaker (Smith *et al.* 2009; Shinebourne, 2011).

"In the context of IPA research, some of this 'added value' is likely to be a product of systematic and detailed analysis of the text itself; some of it will come from connections which emerge through having oversight of a larger data set, and some of it may come from dialogue with psychological theory" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 23).

Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) also recognised language as a fundamental tool in the interpretative understanding of human existence (Langdridge, 2007). Ricoeur identified two central approaches to understanding and meaning. The first, *empathic hermeneutics*, involves an engagement in the text where we bring our preconceptions to the fore with that which is obvious in the text. The second, *hermeneutics of suspicion*, makes necessary a search for hidden meanings because Ricoeur believed that the real meaning of discourse is never truly evident (Langdridge, 2007). This results in an interpretation that is descriptive and empathic, a rich experiential description and critical questioning which leads to a deep interpretation.

Double hermeneutics is essential to IPA, whilst the participant is making meaning of their experiences; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant making meaning of their experiences (Smith *et al.* 2009). This is one reason why IPA does not insist on the researcher bracketing any preconceptions. Interpretation is a result of an engagement with the participant and their world through reflexive practice, with the researcher's conceptions aiding this interpretative process. This reflects Gadamer's philosophy, where interpretation is integral to human existence (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

The hermeneutic circle attends to the dynamic relationships between the whole and the part: that is, to understand the whole, one must look at the parts and to understand the parts, one must look at the whole (Smith *et al.* 2009). This circularity allows for deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenon through back and forth movements in text, interpretations and procedure. Therefore, there is flexibility to go back and forth between and within stages of analysis to gain richer insights and interpretations. Arguably this emphasises the non-prescriptive nature of IPA, in which the researcher has a certain amount of independence to move in and out of the analytical stages.

4.2.4 Idiography

IPA is an idiographic approach in that each of the participant's experiences are individually analysed and engaged with before exploring cross case patterns. The analytical process in IPA starts with the detailed analysis of individual experiences and only then moves on to examine commonalities and differences to produce detailed accounts of shared patterns of meaning and experience (Shinebourne, 2011). This feature of IPA was particularly important for this research in that it distinctly recognised the diversity of the participating grandmothers' experiences.

4.2.5 Criticisms of IPA

IPA has clearly emerged from a variety of theoretical backgrounds although it has been previously criticised for lacking a theoretical basis. Indeed, Giorgi (2010) proposed that the originators of IPA have not shown how the method is related to continental philosophical phenomenology. Smith (2010) replied to this critique by suggesting that Giorgi's argument was based on only two book chapters and that the aims of these chapters were to make IPA accessible to psychology students. Smith (2010) further argues that there is now a substantial collection of literature that clearly elaborates the theoretical foundations of IPA and suggests that Giorgi cannot possibly make this review based on two book chapters alone. This critique may arise from the fact that IPA draws on various phenomenological ideas from both the descriptive-transcendental phase and the hermeneutic-existential phase (Larkin, 2011). Consequently, IPA poses problems of acceptance for the pure phenomenologists and hermeneutic phenomenologists who follow the path of a single phenomenology.

The combination of theoretical underpinnings may raise concern with regard to the distinction between IPA and hermeneutic phenomenology; that IPA is

comparable to a hermeneutic approach, which adopts idiographic profiles. However, there is a significant difference between IPA and a hermeneutic approach; IPA does not adhere to a single theory but draws on the work of a number of thinkers; Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Gadamer, Schleiermacher and Ricoeur. Therefore, IPA stresses an importance to "*the plural vision of the thinking*" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 38). This allows for the IPA researcher to focus on experience as central by relating to a number of thinkers and to engage in a multifaceted phenomenological approach.

A further difference to be acknowledged between IPA and a hermeneutic phenomenological approach is that IPA has a commitment to the individual, to the particular and does not attempt to generalise or create a theory. IPA does not conclude anything but aims to add voices to existing or non-existing research. This may also be said of other phenomenological approaches that employ idiographic analysis, however, this is arguably not the case. Idiographic analysis may be used in phenomenological studies but the eventual aim is to develop an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole with little regard for the individual and hence, idiographic details are generalised (Shinebourne, 2011). "*In a good IPA study, it should be possible to parse the account both for shared themes, and for the distinctive voices and variations on those themes*" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 38). Hence, IPA embraces the individual and celebrates the unique perspective that the individual brings to the phenomenon under study.

4.2.6 IPA – Data collection and sampling

Semi-structured interviews are used most often in IPA studies to produce rich, detailed and first person accounts of experiences (Shinebourne, 2011). However, other forms of data collection have also been successful and compatible with IPA. These include focus groups, diaries, email correspondence and the use of drawings and images (Shinebourne, 2011), all of which may potentially produce rich sources of dialogue.

Most commonly, sampling is purposive and small in numbers; this is in line with qualitative research, and in particular, the primary objectives of IPA (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010), purposive sampling, also known as criterion based sampling, involves selecting participants for the information they can provide on the phenomenon under study; one that they have experienced. Smith *et al.* (2009) suggested that employing as uniformed a sample as possible allows for a detailed analysis of similarities and differences within the sample group. There is a tendency for

IPA researchers to define their research samples as *homogeneous*. However, the word *homogeneous* is defined as “*of the same kind; alike*” and “*consisting of parts all the same kind*” (Oxford University Press, 2016) and hence, it is questionable as to whether a true homogeneous sample is achieved. In this sense, it is preferable to describe the sample as individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study and who fit the inclusion criteria for participation.

Small sample sizes are indicative of IPA; less is more (Reid *et al.* 2005). Unlike the quantitative perspective where sample size does matter in the attempt to avoid sampling bias, IPA sample sizes are often small, not only because of the in depth and detailed analysis that IPA entails, but also to make clear to the reader, the context of the participants’ experience and the content of the research process. This allows the reader to ‘*estimate transferability*’ for themselves (Larkin, 2011). Elaborating on transferability, Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 51) state:

“The reader makes links between the analysis in an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature. The analyst should provide a rich, transparent and contextualized analysis of the accounts of the participants. This should enable readers to evaluate its transferability to persons in contexts which are more, or less, similar.”

Larkin (2011) discussed the concept of saturation, suggesting that data saturation is irrelevant for IPA research where generalisability is not the aim. IPA is inductive but does not claim there is a definitive place to stop; that the data collected is enough (Larkin, 2011). Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) have written that frequently, pressures to include more participants in IPA studies is a result of pacifying research committees who remain influenced and informed by quantitative standards. Unfortunately, this then de-emphasizes the idiographic commitment of IPA. Indeed, sample size is a reoccurring topic of discussion in the IPA forum (www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk), with a general consensus within the IPA community that “*more is not always more*” (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 51) proposed a “*rough guide*” to sample size: three to six participants at undergraduate and Masters levels; four to ten participants for professional doctorates; PhD sample sizes are less clearly defined. Indeed, there is a noticeable variation in IPA Doctoral sample sizes and data collection methods. Table 1 has been constructed to illustrate this variance with a selection of IPA Doctoral studies.

Table 1 – Variance in IPA sample sizes and data collection methods for Doctoral studies

Author and year	University	Study title	Sample size	Data collection
Harris, C. (2012)	University of East London	The experiences of adoptive mothers: an interpretative phenomenological analysis.	9	1 x face-to-face semi-structured interview per participant.
Allen, D. C. (2013)	De Montfort University, Leicester	Changing relationships with the self and others: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of a Traveller and Gypsy life in public care.	10	Semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and/or telephone), letters, emails and poems. Data collection differed between participants.
Bennett, C. (2015)	Cardiff University	Talking to Ten Year Olds about Puberty, Relationships and Reproduction: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Fathers' Perceptions and Practices.	8	1 x minimally structured face-to-face interview per participant.
Hannan, J. (2015)	Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute	Older mothers' experiences of postnatal depression. An interpretative phenomenological analysis.	4	2 x face-to-face semi-structured interviews per participant.
Williams, H. (2015)	University of Birmingham	Using a sociocultural framework to explore the experiences of visually impaired young people who leave school; their transition experiences, feelings of independence and sense of identity during the transition process: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.	5	1 x face-to-face semi-structured interview per participant.

4.2.7 IPA – Data analysis

Analysis is a complex process and according to Larkin (2011), it is collaborative-personal, intuitive-systematic, laborious-creative, intense and conceptually demanding. Smith *et al.* (2009) list a thorough step-by-step guideline to the analysis process but clearly suggest that there is room to be creative and flexible. Again, reiterating that these are guidelines to good practice rather than a prescriptive procedure. Some steps in this process share common features with other qualitative methods such as thematic analysis, narrative inquiry, discourse analysis and grounded theory. Indeed, IPA has frequently been likened to that of thematic analysis due to many descriptive IPA published projects, which have neglected to embrace IPA's theoretical underpinnings (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011, p. 756) reported that,

"There is also an apparent lack of understanding in both students and supervisors that IPA is primarily an interpretive approach. This misconception, accompanied by a lack of confidence in raising the level of interpretation in analyses, results in broadly descriptive IPA that lacks depth and therefore demonstrates little difference to a standard thematic analysis."

However, this statement requires consideration. It is argued that thematic analysis is often conducted as an interpretative approach. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) stated that thematic analysis *"minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic."* Braun and Clarke (2006) further argued that many qualitative methods of analysis seek patterns in the data and are fundamentally thematic (such as IPA, grounded theory, narrative inquiry and discourse analysis) and here is where the misconceptions arise. Misunderstandings of IPA are not simply a matter of the levels of interpretation that Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) proposed but more likely a consequence of researchers not adhering to IPA's theoretical positioning. Distinguishing IPA and grounded theory from thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 80 – 81) explained that,

"Both IPA and grounded theory seek patterns in the data, but are theoretically bounded...In contrast to IPA or grounded theory...thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework..."

The following presents the step-by-step guideline to IPA analysis outlined by Smith *et al.* (2009). Consideration is applied to the similarities and differences between the stages of analysis in an IPA study and other qualitative methods. The first differentiation is that steps 1 to 7 of IPA analytical procedure entail idiographic analysis of individual experiences: that each case is analysed in isolation.

Step 1: Reading and rereading - This involves the transcription of the interview data, data immersion, making notes of random thoughts on a separate sheet of paper or an electronic document file and aiming to become thoroughly familiar with the data (Smith *et al.* 2009). It is the starting point in the process of entering the participant's life world by actively engaging with the data.

Step 2: Initial Noting - This step entails noting initial ideas and reflecting on the researchers own preconceptions. According to Larkin (2011), the researcher can be wrong with 'free' and 'open' coding. This step merges with the first and continues to bring forth a growing familiarity with the data. These first two steps can be likened to phase 1 of thematic analysis in which the researcher familiarises themselves with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, one noticeable difference is the IPA researcher's conscious efforts to reflect and identify any preconceptions: to engage in *epoche* through a phenomenological attitude. Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 82) stated:

"Part of this might actually involve recording some of your most own powerful recollections of the interview experience itself, or some of your own initial, and most striking, observations about the transcript in a notebook, in order to help you bracket them off for a while."

Step 3: Descriptive Comments - A close, line-by-line coding in which descriptive or phenomenological illustrations are presented in the third person (Larkin, 2011). This step appears similar to the coding and categorising analysis stage of grounded theory and phase 2 of thematic analysis. However, grounded theory consists of constant comparisons between data sets resulting in theoretical coding and sorting (Nolas, 2011) and thematic analysis consists of coding across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006) whereas IPA, at this stage, is idiographic. Larkin (2011) suggested that in this step of an IPA analysis, the researcher should identify things that matter to the participant, the meaning of those things for the participant and the ways in which the researcher might portray the participant's way of thinking in relation to those things. It is here that Husserl's *phenomenological reduction* is applied as the researcher produces a description of the individual's experience, of what is experienced

noema and how it is experienced *noesis*. In summary, this stage explores the experiential claims, understandings and concerns of the participant whilst in comparison, grounded theory works towards an emerging theory and the development of an explanatory level account (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 45) through constant comparisons.

Step 4: Linguistic Comments – *"Pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of language, repetition, tone, degree of fluency (articulate or hesitant). Metaphor can be a particularly powerful component...."* (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 88). Gee (2011, p. 14) reported that language *"offered the richest contribution to my interpretation"* when employing IPA to study male retirement. Hermeneutics is essential in this stage of the analytical process, where the interpretation of language used by the participant and indeed the researcher, can reveal hidden meanings and preconceptions (Gadamer's *horizons*) in what is said, what is left unsaid and how the words are spoken. It is here, that Ricoeur's *hermeneutics of suspicion* play a vital role in the analysis as the researcher moves from the descriptive and *empathic* to a deeper level of experiential interpretation. It is acknowledged that this step in the analysis somewhat resembles that of narrative inquiry and discourse analysis. Smith *et al.* (2009) recognised the connection between IPA and the various forms of narrative research, which share a central concern of interpretative meaning making. Shinebourne (2011) also noted that IPA shares some similarities to discourse analysis, where at this stage of the analysis, the IPA researcher may question the participant's language through sensitivity to their sociocultural and historical life worlds. Distinguishing further, IPA explores the use of language as one part of the whole analytical process (the hermeneutic circle) and focuses on personal meaning and sense making in a particular context. Alternatively, narrative analysis focuses on how a narrative relates to sense making (Smith *et al.* 2009) through content, structure or performative function (Esin, 2011).

Step 5: Conceptual Comments - This step develops from the existing stages of analysis to an interrogative stance. Smith *et al.* (2009) emphasised that the researcher should not be too cautious with their interpretations; that working at an abstract level is desirable. By asking questions of the participant's life world, of being-in-the-world and the facticity of being, the focus will shift to the participants' underlying understandings and meanings of the experience being discussed. Smith *et al.* (2009) suggested that conceptual development takes time through a process of discussion, reflection, trial-and-error, refinement of ideas, deconstruction and an overview of initial notes. Personal reflection is encouraged throughout IPA but particularly at this stage where Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 89) described a *"Gadamerian dialogue"*: the researcher's

interpretations will evolve as a result of drawing on their own personal experiences and professional knowledge. Gee (2011, p. 17) reported:

"...Although most of my interpretations were organic, in that I did not strain to find them – they found me, they felt extravagant (by this I mean they felt too adventurous, too imaginative). I was, therefore surprised (and pleased) to find that, on auditing my case study, my supervisor found only one example where he thought breaking point had been reached (interestingly it was where I had tried to be clever!). I have learned from this that, so long as my interpretations are thoroughly grounded, that my steps to arriving at them are well documented for all who may wish to inspect them, and that they serve to illuminate what IPA is surely most concerned with, Husserl's 'the things themselves', then it is best to be adventurous."

Therefore, it is at this stage that a more questioning and abstract style to the interpretation is developed.

Step 6: Developing emergent themes - This calls for the identification of emergent themes and is a further area of contention between the differing qualitative methods of analysis. This step can be likened to phase 3 of thematic analysis (*searching for themes*, Braun & Clarke, 2006), *theoretical coding and sorting* in grounded theory (Nolas, 2011), *sorting material into categories* in narrative analysis (Esin, 2011) and *developing themes* in discourse analysis (Holt, 2011). The use of the word 'themes' creates confusion and again, clarification is drawn from the theoretical underpinnings of IPA. This stage of analysis is at the idiographic level, where the analysis is focused on the individual experiences rather than the whole data set. Smith *et al.* (2009) suggested that to complete this step, the analyst attempts to reduce the volume of detail but maintain the complexity of the exploratory notes. A succinct statement will be produced that represents various comments associated with a piece of the transcript.

"Themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 92).

Although IPA was created as a qualitative approach for psychologists to explore lived experiences, interest in IPA continues to grow in various other disciplinary research areas such as midwifery research (Charlick, Pincombe, McKellar & Fielder, 2016), library and information services (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015) and social work and social research (Del Quest, 2014). Therefore, the use of

the word '*psychological*' in the above quotation by Smith *et al.* (2009) can arguably be further misconstrued. In this instance, it is proposed that the development of themes clearly pertain to the phenomenological essences and emerging concepts of the experiences being interpreted.

Step 7: Searching for connections across emergent themes – The emergent themes from step 6 are ordered chronologically and then mapped or charted into how they might fit together. The task here is to look for patterns in the emerging themes and cluster them together into conceptual similarities (Shinebourne, 2011). Smith *et al.* (2009) put forward several strategies of abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration and function to aid the analyst in producing *super-ordinate themes*. The resulting *super-ordinate* themes will embody a number of *sub-themes*, which represent a conceptual idea. Shinebourne (2011) suggests that a table of themes is produced at this point, which includes *super-ordinate* themes and their accompanying *sub-themes* along with illustrative data extracts with line numbers to show the emergence from the data.

Step 8: Moving to the next case – This involves repeating the first 7 steps for the next participant. Smith *et al.* (2009) suggest that the researcher brackets the ideas emerging from the previous transcript (*epoche*) in order to keep IPA's idiographic commitment.

Step 9: Looking for patterns across cases - A master table of themes for the group is produced in order to identify recurrent themes but also to recognise differences (Smith *et al.* 2009). It is IPA's concern to identify and represent both convergence and divergence through the individual and the group voice. This is the result of an in depth analysis that is guided by a phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic framework. At these latter stages of the analysis, the hermeneutic circle is prominent as the researcher moves back and forth between the individual data analyses in order to identify the essential parts of the experiences that form the essential whole.

Step 10: Writing - "*Move straight from analysis to writing the analysis or results section because this keeps the momentum going*" (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 108). Writing up the analysis can clarify and develop the researcher's interpretations further and therefore, analysis continues to evolve at this stage. Indeed, Gee (2011) approximated that 30 to 50 per cent of her finer detailed interpretations were a result of the writing up phase.

4.2.8 Researcher's reflections

After developing the research question, I knew that I had to utilise a methodology that acknowledged the diversity of grandmotherhood; a methodology that did not aim to generalise such an ambiguous role influenced by a multitude of factors. I had limited knowledge and experience of IPA and turned to the Smith *et al.* (2009) book (the IPA bible as I have often heard it referred to) in my search for a suitable methodology. I became increasingly excited as I read; "*This could be the one*", I thought to myself. After reading the book and attending an IPA master class (2011) delivered by Pnina Shinebourne (a former PhD student under the supervision of Jonathan Smith), my decision to embark upon IPA was definitive.

Whilst phenomenology scared me (a whole new language to learn), IPA offered a well-defined structure and step-by-step procedure to the analysis that appealed to my need for logic and order. Coming from a quantitative background, I also became aware that IPA was opening up an inner desire to rekindle my creative side (passive since my early 20's and more recently, inhibited by quantification). Intimidated but enthused, I believed that IPA would help me to interpret what it means to be in the world as a young maternal grandmother: what it is to experience young maternal grandmotherhood through the participating young grandmothers' practices, emotions, cognitions and social, physical and relational environments.

4.3 Methods

After discussing the rationale for a qualitative methodology, the choice of IPA and more specifically, the theoretical groundings of IPA, the following section of this chapter refers to the data collection methods employed for this study, the criteria for participation, the participants themselves, the procedure followed and the on-going ethical considerations applied.

4.3.1 Developing the interview schedule

Whilst a well-devised semi structured interview entails a number of open-ended questions, which will elicit rich and detailed dialogue, there is still a questionable concern about the relationship dynamics that this involves. It was my intention to work collaboratively with the participants, that they would lead the way in recognition that they were the experts; that they had experienced. Therefore, I considered additional ways in which the participants could bring their own meanings of their grandmothering experiences to the interview. Thus,

attempting to minimise any preconceptions that I was inadvertently harbouring within the interview schedule.

Following these concerns of research relationships, I attended to the recent developments in research with children where questions have been raised about the positioning of the researcher and the researched (Lahman, 2008). As a result of this questioning, new and emerging participatory research methods continue to be explored. One such method is the mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2011), which utilises a number of different tools to gather insider views (Tangen, 2008) and establishes the researcher and child as "*co-constructors of meaning*" (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 1). For example, the use of stimulus material or object prompts has been shown to not only stimulate recall but also increase the production of data regarding an experience with little influence from the researcher. Acknowledging that the grandmothers in this study would be discussing their experiences retrospectively, the idea of using visual prompts to stimulate their recall was viewed as an appropriate tool to use. Furthermore, it would allow for the grandmothers to be somewhat active in the preparation of the interview material and to initiate thoughts of their experiences before the interview took place. For this reasoning, grandmothers were given the option to prepare several personal possessions/objects (prompt objects) that were meaningful to them as grandmothers and of which they would be able, and willing, to talk freely about.

It was at this stage that I also referred to Smart's (2011) multi-dimensional Toolbox of Concepts for studying family life and relationships. In particular, prompt objects were considered a useful tool to explore the concept of biography. By offering the participating grandmothers the opportunity to present and discuss meaningful *things* relating to their grandmothering experiences, the prompt objects could "*be seen as little anchors for memory which give shape to stories*" (Smart, 2011, p. 22).

Two pilot interviews were undertaken for two main reasons: to trial the interview schedule and to rehearse the interviewing technique. Both participants were young maternal grandmothers; one interview was conducted at the participants home whilst the other in a private room on the University of Northampton's campus. The grandmothers were informed both verbally and in writing about the aim of the research and who the researcher was. A signed consent form was obtained before both interviews commenced.

The pilot interview schedule (Appendix A) was constructed using six open-ended questions with various prompt questions to encourage as much detail as

possible from the participant's experience. According to Smith *et al.* (2009) the questions formulated will make few assumptions about the participants' experience and start with descriptive and narrative questions that lead to more evaluative and comparative. These open-ended questions will allow the researcher some control over the interview process in order to maintain focus on the research question but also allows for the participant to discuss their experiences and express their meanings. Willig (2010, p. 24) reported,

"The interviewer needs to find the right balance between maintaining control of the interview and where it is going, and allowing the interviewee the space to redefine the topic under investigation and thus generate novel insights for the researcher. This can be difficult. A carefully constructed interview agenda can go some way towards ensuring that the interviewer does not lose sight of the original research question."

The interview questions were formed with the phenomenological underpinnings of IPA (experiential and meaning making) and Smart's (2011) conceptualisation of family life and relationships (relationality, biography, embeddedness, memory and imaginary) in mind. Essentially, the questions were composed in the attempt to best answer the research question, what are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood? Table 2 illustrates the questions and possible prompt questions used in the pilot interviews (as well as my phenomenological and conceptual reasoning for asking the questions).

After conducting the two pilot interviews, the Question 5 prompt questions were revised. *How do you see grandmotherhood?* was removed as an ambiguous question and two further questions were added to help elicit experiential and conceptual detail: *What were/are your experiences of your own grandparents?* and *What does grandmotherhood mean to you?* Consideration was then applied to the potential for a further means of data collection. This was because the prompt objects failed to produce as much information as I had anticipated, although the process did reveal elements of the grandmother's experience that may not have been articulated otherwise. It was at this point in the research process that I turned to the literature into the use of photography. In particular, the photo elicitation interview (PEI) (also referred to as photovoice, autodiving, reflexive photography, photo novella and photographic hermeneutics) is a data collection tool of which participant-produced photographs allow experiences to become visible (Olliffe & Bottorff, 2007).

Table 2 – Pilot interview questions

Question	Possible prompts questions	Phenomenologica I and conceptual reasoning
1. Can you tell me about yourself?	<i>How old are you?</i> <i>What is your occupation?</i> <i>Can you tell me about your family?</i> <i>Marital status, number of children, number of grandchildren, ages, where do they live?</i> <i>At what age did you become a grandmother?</i>	Descriptive, biographical, embeddedness, relationality
2. Can you tell me about your experiences of becoming a grandmother from when you first found out to now?	<i>What happened?</i> <i>How did you feel?</i> <i>Can you tell me more about that?</i>	Narrative, experiential, memory, relationality, meaning making
3. What are the objects/possessions you have prepared?	<i>Why did you choose this?</i> <i>What does it mean to you?</i> <i>Why is it meaningful in relation to you becoming a grandmother?</i> <i>Can you tell me more about that?</i> <i>How did you feel?</i>	Evaluative, biographical, meaning making
4. How do you think your life has changed since finding out you were going to become a grandmother?	<i>How has it affected work, relationships (family, work, social, personal), finances, leisure activities, self-esteem, thoughts and feelings?</i> <i>How did becoming a grandmother fit in with your own life at the time?</i> <i>How did it affect your goals and ambitions? What was happening in your own life at the time?</i>	Comparative, experiential, embeddedness, relationality, meaning making, imaginary
5. What were your expectations of becoming a grandmother?	<i>What age did you think you would become a grandmother?</i> <i>How do you see grandmotherhood?</i> <i>Can you tell me more about that?</i> <i>How do you feel about that?</i> <i>How have your expectations changed?</i>	Evaluative, biographical, memory, imaginary, embeddedness, meaning making
6. Is there anything else you feel is important to say in relation to your own experiences of becoming and being a grandmother?		

4.3.2 Choosing photo elicitation

Collier (1957) first coined the term of photo elicitation after finding that the use of photographs heightened participants memories. Indeed, Harper (2002, p. 13) explained that visual stimuli of photographs initiate a different part of the brain to that of verbal stimuli:

"The parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionary older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brains capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words. These may be some of the reasons the photo elicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information, but rather one that evokes a different kind of emotion."

With the digital age upon us, taking photographs is a relatively simple procedure (Cook & Hess, 2007). Cook and Hess (2007) conducted research with children, asking children to take photographs, which revealed far more than from verbal discussion alone. Hence, asking participants to take their own photographs leads to a more collaborative approach to research (Klitzing, 2004) and by giving the participants a choice of what photographs to take and prepare will communicate what is important and meaningful to them (Clark, 1999; Cook & Hess, 2007). Blinn and Harrist (1991, p. 189) discussed the benefits of data produced through photo elicitation interviews.

"The interviews served as an opportunity for the informants to share ideas and feelings which were already well thought out. They were eager to communicate their new found perspectives on their lives. Conducting the interviews without this prior cognitive processing would have provided data which was at a much more superficial level."

Additionally, photo elicitation is a data collection technique that can reduce the 'strangeness' of an interview and minimise the assumptions and misinterpretations that the researcher may make (Olliffe & Bottorff, 2007). Lyon and Back (2012) and Steiger (1995) proposed that visual methods enable the researcher to explore and understand areas of the participants' lives that are difficult to articulate; that photos contain information that may not easily be translated into words. Therefore photos can clarify the words spoken and the words left unspoken. According to Back (2009), limiting research to what people say inevitably leads away from what remains unsaid.

Harper (2002, p. 23) advocated that photos lead participants and researchers towards a common understanding, "*When two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together.*" I considered Harper's statement above in terms of whether photo elicitation would fit with the theoretical underpinnings of IPA and the multi-dimensional concepts of family life and relationships (Smart, 2011).

The following refers to three separate qualitative studies that I have identified which employed both photos and IPA. The first is a study conducted by Lachal *et al.* (2012), exploring the role of food in family relationships among obese adolescents. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a participant produced photo of the family dinner table after a family meal (before the table was cleared but after family members had left the table). This photo was used to elicit discussion about the meal: the way the meal was experienced, the relationships with food and the use of food in family relationships. Data was then analysed using IPA. Whilst this research built on understandings of adolescent obesity within family environments, there are a number of limitations that require consideration: it is disappointing that the published article does not present the photos due to ethics committee recommendations that the photos were not to be published or stored; the publication also contributes to the misconceptions surrounding IPA in that the authors neglected to discuss the phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic underpinnings of IPA and indeed, how photo elicitation fits with IPA; and there is evidence of a further misunderstanding with regards to data saturation (a term not typically associated with IPA – see section 4.2.6 *Data collection and sampling*).

The second research study by Silver and Farrants (2015) explored the embodied experiences of 10 participants living with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). Participants were asked to take photos that were relevant to their BDD experiences (and did not have to be photos of themselves). A semi-structured interview was conducted where participants discussed their photos in an order of their choice. Unlike the previous study (Lachal *et al.* 2012), Silver and Farrants (2015) detailed the phenomenological underpinnings of IPA and perceived that photos and IPA helped to uncover deeper understandings of the lived experiences of BDD that are frequently neglected in psychiatry textbooks. A third study by Capewell (2014) explored the experiences of being a parent of a child with ongoing glue ear. Capewell (2014) asked the participants to produce a photomontage: to include a non-specified number of photos that identified important aspects of their parental experiences. Using IPA, Capewell

(2014, p. 50) reported that the participants' words and photos became *"intertwined so that both form an integral part of the analysis."*

Based on the aforementioned studies (and despite the identified limitations of the first study), I anticipated that the inclusion of photo elicitation as a data collection method in this current research would add value in a number of ways:

- Participant produced photos can reduce the pre-conceptions of the researcher and allow the participant to bring their own meanings of grandmotherhood to the interview;
- Contextualise lived experiences and meanings of young maternal grandmotherhood through the participants' words and photos – a potential for meaningful spaces, places, objects and others to become visible and articulated through the prompt of the visual stimulus;
- Fits with the theoretical foundations of IPA – for example, with Heidegger's *aletheia*, a process of discovery, to show what is hidden and to reveal meaning and *idiography*, a deeper interpretation of the experience at the individual level;
- Fits with Smart's (2011) multi-dimensional toolbox of concepts – photos may help improve the understandings of the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood by capturing the concepts of relationality, memory, biography, embeddedness and imaginary.

Therefore, I chose to include photo elicitation as part of the data collection. Amendments were made to the interview schedule (Appendix B), adding an additional question with regards to the discussion about the participants' photographs: *Can we now discuss the photographs that you have taken/prepared?* Ethical approval was then applied for and gained (in the use of photos) from the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C). Here, I noted and duly contemplated the additional ethical challenges that using photos would entail: a confliction between the researcher's commitment to protecting the participants' identity yet allowing the participants' experiences to be visible and heard (Lomax, 2015). These ethical concerns are discussed further in section 4.3.6 *Ethical considerations*. A further pilot study was then undertaken to test the procedure and to ensure that the instructions for taking the photos were fully clear and logistical for the participants.

4.3.3 Sample

In order to do justice to the detailed analysis that IPA involves and not to lose meaningful information (see previous section 4.2.6 *IPA – Data collection and sampling*), the sample size for this study was ten grandmothers. This was a result of a recruitment drive in which eleven grandmothers expressed their initial interest in participating and thereafter, one grandmother decided not to participate due to stressful family circumstances. To be able to recruit a purposive sample as recommended when conducting an IPA study (Smith *et al.* 2009), inclusion criteria for this research was as follows:

- Became first time grandmothers up to and including the age of 45 years (this is the median age reported between Szinovacz, 1998 and Dench & Ogg, 2002 for early grandparenthood). However, the eldest participating grandmother at first transition was aged 42 years (this is at least 7 years younger than the UK average age reported by Sciplino *et al.* 2010 and The Grandparents' Association, 2012);
- Maternal grandmothers. Maternal lineage was chosen because of two main reasons; to regulate similarity of the experience and to acknowledge studies that report maternal grandmothers to have more frequent contact and interaction with their grandchildren (May, Mason & Clarke, 2012);
- Residing in England, British citizens, with no ethnic and socioeconomic restrictions applied (in recognition of a unique experience, this research did not intend to be generalisable but transferable). However, all participants considered themselves white British. Further demographic information is reported in the following chapter (Chapter 5 – Introducing Participating Grandmothers, p. 100);
- Grandchildren should be no older than primary school age (11 years of age maximum) in consideration of literatures that suggest grandparent-grandchild relationship changes according to grandchild developmental stage (Silverstein & Marenco, 2001). The average length of time since becoming a grandmother for the participating grandmothers was 5.8 years (see Table 3 - Grandmothers' demographics at time of interview, p. 100). Here, it was acknowledged that the lived transitional experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood would be retrospective whilst being a young maternal grandmother was an ongoing experience. According to Berge, Loth, Hanson, Croll-Lampert and Neumark-Sztainer (2011), participants' retrospective accounts of life events may not be recalled exactly as they happened but nonetheless, have been experienced by the participant and are recalled

as the participants' remember and make meaning of them. Accuracy of memory is often a criticism of retrospection, however, according to Larkin (2014), *"The crystallisation of significant life events in one's experiences of oneself, one's relationships to others, and one's place in the world is not a crystallisation of remembered detail - it's a crystallisation of meaning. When we pick these topics, and think about samples and interview questions, we anticipate this. One might well interview people 20 years after a psychotic episode or after detention under the MHA, and expect to hear a powerful experiential account. One might interview people 20 days after receiving training in how to use a new computer system, or after visiting a neighbour, and worry whether they will have very much to tell us at all. The difference isn't a difference in memory"* (M. Larkin, IPA research interest group, 20th December 2014). Hence, it was expected that becoming a grandmother for the first time would hold enough meaning for the participating grandmothers to comfortably recall.

4.3.4 Recruiting grandmothers

The most common methods of recruiting participants in qualitative research are through referral from gatekeepers, personal contacts and referral by participants (snowballing) (Smith *et al.* 2009; Shinebourne, 2011).

At the beginning of the research design process, my intention was to recruit potential grandmothers through a number of gatekeepers (Appendix D) with a further potential to then recruit through snowballing. The gatekeepers selected were people within organisations considered having access to young maternal grandmothers and included Connexions, YWCA (Northampton) and Northants County Council, teenage pregnancy team. However, due to government cut backs, two of these gatekeepers' services were disbanded before recruitment could take place. The remaining gatekeeper did not have contact with young grandmothers as I originally anticipated and therefore after discussing participant criteria could not help with the recruitment of participants.

After further consideration, a flyer was designed for recruitment purposes (see Appendix E) and approval received from the University's ethics committee. Further recruitment strategies included attending local community groups (i.e. parents and toddlers groups) after gaining permission from the groups organisers and using various internet sources by posting a summary of the study onto the web page of the Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research (CHWR), now known as the Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of

Northampton. Potential participants were then directed to this web page through a range of online sources:

- Messages to facebook friends employing a snowballing technique for recruitment;
- Information posted to 'Grandparents plus' Facebook page (permission gained).

I had not considered the difficulties I encountered in recruitment. I expected that identifying and recruiting young maternal grandmothers would be relatively easy and straightforward. This was not the case. Eight of the ten participating grandmothers were eventually recruited through referral from family and friends, one from a facebook message and one from information posted on the Grandparents plus facebook page. All of the participating grandmothers resided in England with travel times to the interview varying between 10 minutes and 4 hours approximately.

4.3.5 Procedure

At every stage of the procedure, I continued to review ethical considerations (Appendix C). The following explains the stages of the research procedure:

Stage 1 – Setting the scene

An initial meeting or telephone conversation between myself and the grandmother took place so that I could explain the aim of the study and to discuss the research process as well as matters of confidentiality, audio recording, taking photos and the right to withdraw from the research. An information pack (Appendix F) and a photography instruction sheet (Appendix G) outlining the above were given or sent via email to the grandmother. The potential participating grandmothers were given the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research and if they were happy to continue, a digital camera was available if required (with both verbal and written instructions for use) and an interview date and time was arranged.

Herzog (2005, p. 31) proposed that the research interview comes with a "*pre-existing power differential*" and that giving the participant the choice of interview location may help to achieve a more equitable relationship between the researcher and participant. Eight of the participating grandmothers chose to be interviewed at their home, whilst the remaining two grandmothers decided to attend their interview on the University campus. Accordingly, every step was taken to ensure the safety of both the grandmother and myself by

adopting a lone working policy (further details are discussed in the ethical considerations Section 4.3.6).

Stage 2 – The interview

A semi-structured interview between the grandmother and me took place approximately two weeks after stage 1. Prior to conducting the interview, and after reiterating the details from stage 1, a signed consent was obtained (Appendix H). I maintained an awareness of the relationship between the grandmother and me to acknowledge that the interaction at this point was for the grandmother to tell her story and for me to listen and prompt (Smith *et al.* 2009). This does not imply that the interviews were not conversational and dynamic but that I was consciously aware of encouraging the grandmothers to talk freely and at length about their experiences. Influenced by a collaborative narrative approach by Arvay (1998, 2002), I considered the interview as collaboration between the grandmother and myself. With the inclusion of participant produced photos and prompt objects, the grandmothers had an active role and voice in the mean making and sense making; that the grandmother and myself were co-constructing meaning throughout the interview.

After the interview, a 'photo reproduction rights' form was signed by the grandmothers to give permission to use their photos in the research. Grandmothers were given the choice of all photos to be used, some photos or none. They were also asked to indicate if they required any identifying features in their photos to be masked (See appendix I). A copy of the photos was given to the grandmother for their own records (either electronically or hard copy). Three of the grandmothers presented some Internet images rather than photos and whilst these helped articulation of their experiences, I have not been able to present these in the following findings chapters due to copyrights (a critical discussion regarding this can be found in chapter 8, section 8.2.3). Following on from this, grandmothers were encouraged to feedback their thoughts about the research process to date. Interviews varied in time, ranging from 40 to 90 minutes.

Stage 3 – Transcription

I transcribed the interview data verbatim in order to proceed with the in-depth analysis that IPA entails (Smith *et al.* 2009). The transcription notation was loosely based on the work of Jefferson (1985), which includes the nuanced intricacies of the interview interaction. Although these fine details of intonation and timing are not necessarily crucial to IPA analysis (Smith *et al.* 2009), I felt that a detailed written record of the interview data would be beneficial for the

analysis. After proofreading, a copy of the transcription was sent to the grandmother. The grandmother was asked to read and verify the transcription for accuracy. This was a validation exercise that resembles Colaizzi's (1971) seventh step of descriptive analysis. My intention here was to ensure that the grandmothers were satisfied that the transcription was an accurate record of the interview, before I moved on to the analysis stage.

Stage 4 – Idiographic Analysis

This stage of the procedure followed the idiographic analysis (steps 1 to 7) of the data analysis guideline presented by Smith *et al.* (2009) and discussed previously in this chapter. The following chapter (chapter 5 – Introducing Participating Grandmothers) presents the idiographic findings from this stage in a detailed and coherent account.

Stage 5 – Starting Over

Moving on to repeat stages 1-4 with a further grandmother. This stage reflects Step 8 of the data analysis procedure produced by Smith *et al.* (2009) in which I made a conscious effort to bracket the ideas emerging from the previous transcript in order to keep IPA's idiographic commitment.

Stage 6 – Follow up dissemination telephone conversation

A follow up telephone conversation between the grandmother and me took place approximately 12 months after the initial interview to briefly discuss my interpretations and meanings that I had identified from their individual experiences. The conversations were undertaken after the idiographic analysis had been completed for all the participating grandmothers. This was because I wanted to ensure that the idiographic analyses were meticulously conducted and that I had made full use of the hermeneutic circle in my analytical procedure (back and forth between analytical stages and individual texts). The conversations varied in duration from 10 to 30 minutes approximately. Unfortunately, two of the grandmothers (Nikki and Sam, see chapter 5 for details on the participating grandmothers) were no longer contactable on the details originally provided and therefore, eight of the ten grandmothers took part in this dissemination stage. The telephone conversation was not intended to be a validation interview but if, on discussing the interpretations, there were a conflict of opinions, these would be reported in the findings. However, the eight grandmothers all expressed their satisfaction at the interpretations of their own grandmothering experiences and I was given the opportunity to thank them again for their participation.

Stage 7 – Across case patterns

Once stages 1-6 had been completed, I investigated patterns across cases, looking for both commonalities and idiosyncrasies. In line with step 9 of Smith *et al.* (2009) a master table of themes (named essential experiences in this study – a discussion of this decision can be found in chapter 5, p.100) for the group were produced (see Appendices O and P).

4.3.6 Ethical considerations

The study followed the ethical guidelines of the Ethics Code and Procedures of the University of Northampton. All grandmothers entered the research process voluntarily after being fully informed of the nature and procedures involved in the study, with signed consent obtained. The production of an information pack (Appendix F) and photography instruction sheet (Appendix G) aided the provision of written details of the study and what participation entailed to all potential grandmothers. Therefore, the aims and procedure of the study were clearly understood by each grandmother before consent was gained. Only participants that were regarded as capable of giving valid consent were invited to participate in the research. The young grandmothers that were approached were under no obligation to take part in the study and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study, up to 6 months after their initial involvement. At the beginning of each interview, I explained to the grandmothers that I was a student, why I was conducting the research and why it was important. It is also worth noting that no incentives were offered to encourage participation in this study.

It was acknowledged that data collected from the interviews was not anonymous, as I, as the interviewer had seen the interviewee. However, I asked the grandmothers if they wanted to choose a pseudonym in order to anonymise them in resulting written reports, presentations and thesis. All participating grandmothers did choose an alternative name for themselves. Further details that were presented in the thick description of the grandmothers' stories and considered as potentially identifiable, such as place names and all family member names, were changed/allocated pseudonyms to protect identity. Confidentiality was assured through the continual consideration of anonymity as well as the storage of produced data in a locked location in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Personal identifiable information was stored in a separate location to transcripts and other data, with typed work stored to an external hard drive with password protection.

The use of photos in research presented with added ethical concerns. Whilst there is no definitive law within the UK regarding photography rights, it is the photographer who owns the copyright to the photographs (UK Copyright Service, 2005). Therefore, I asked grandmothers to indicate their preference about photos to be used in the research and if they wanted identifying features such as faces, street signs and place names to be masked. A photo reproduction rights form (Appendix I) based on Wiles *et al.* (2008) was presented to the grandmother at the close of the interview to cover details of copyright, anonymity (although often difficult to achieve, Wiles *et al.* 2011) and to gain written permission for me to use (or not to use) the photos solely for this research. In this sense, the ethical procedures to anonymise the participant by using pseudonyms becomes futile as their photos become visible; here lies the disparity as many research ethics committees continue to be cautious (rightly or wrongly) regarding visual methodologies as highlighted in the Lachal *et al.* 2012 study (section 4.3.2).

Further ethical and moral considerations regarding the use of photos were raised. According to Fleury, Keller and Perez (2009) photography leads to the potential loss of privacy to participants, friends and family. Lomax (2015) reported on the ethical dilemma that visual methodologies pose to researchers; that participants and indeed, significant others in the lives of participants become visible and hence, identifiable. There then becomes a contrariety between being seen yet remaining unidentified. Fink and Lomax (2016) discussed the anxieties raised in their girlhood study, where a participant produced photo of two girls playing, raised the ethical concerns of publication. In this digital age, published photos and images will live on long after the research has been completed. This longevity of visual output becomes a concern when using visual images of children (Brady & Brown, 2013). In this study, many of the participating grandmothers presented photos of their grandchildren, who were too young to give consent and who were not participants. This then raised questions about how these photos of grandchildren will be seen and used after the research was completed. The ethics of care for these grandchildren, who indirectly became part of this study, produced a dilemma between gaining permission to use the photos of children and the vulnerability and status of these children as unknowingly involved persons in the research.

Furthermore, Currier (2011) outlined representational ethics and the apprehensions that visual researchers face with regards to visibility. Deliberating on Currier's (2011) discussion of Brighenti's (2010) visibility of recognition and visibility of control, pertinent questions were asked about the

visibility of the grandchildren in the grandmothers' presented photos in this research. There is potential for these grandchildren and others, in the future, to recognise themselves in resulting publications in which they have no memory of, and have no control over. Further, there is potential for harm to be caused to these grandchildren and indeed their familial relationships through recognition, in that some of the participating grandmothers' accounts can be viewed as negative experiences. In this sense, Irwin's (2006) anxieties about how representations of participants are structured within researchers' writing can be extended to the images of the grandchildren as non-participants in this study. Hence, whilst I felt an obligation to present the grandmothers' photos because they had given me their permission to do so, I also considered the ethics of care and representational ethics of presenting photos of young grandchildren. Similar to Fink and Lomax's (2016) discussion of their experienced dilemmas regarding the use of participant produced photos of girlhood, I too contemplated the disparity between my obligations to present the images of grandchildren to give voice to the participating grandmothers and the potential for harm to these grandchildren. Considering the grandchildren's vulnerability and status within this research, the decision was made not to present photos (or to obscure identifying features) of grandchildren and any relating photos that were perceived as at risk of recognition now, and in the future.

Additionally, taking photos in public or private places presents with a further array of potential problems (Wiles *et al.* 2008). It was because of these issues that a photography information sheet (Appendix G) was composed using information from Macpherson (2009) and the UK Copyright Service (2005) to guide the grandmothers when taking their photos and to help avoid any problems. The points to consider covered taking photos on private property, invasion of privacy, photos of family, friends and colleagues, and photos of children.

As mentioned previously in the procedures section of this chapter, a lone working policy was adopted for home visits to protect the grandmother and myself. The lone working policy involved me taking a university identity card to each interview to assure the grandmothers of my identity. For protection in home visits, I informed a colleague of times of visits and I made a call to a colleague once the interview had ended. The destination of the interviews with the grandmother's contact details was left with the identified colleague in a sealed envelope for use only if the confirmation call was not received from myself. These envelopes were destroyed at the conclusion of each interview. I also carried a mobile phone at all times. The contact mobile phone number

given in all correspondence was set up specifically for this research and was deactivated at the completion stage of the study. The follow up dissemination telephone conversation presented with an opportune time to fully debrief the grandmother and to reiterate that the experiences they had shared would be in no way used to judge them.

Generally, home visits went very well. However, there was an incident that increased my awareness of safety issues for the grandmother, her family and me. This escalated into a stressful situation for me as I tried to determine the correct course of action. I had arranged an interview with a grandmother, calling her the day before the arranged interview to confirm. The following is an extract from my research journal:

"After an hour's drive, I knocked on Tina's door. Two children (her daughter and son) shouted 'Who's there?' I replied 'Melinda' and they then opened the door. I heard Tina shouting 'Who is it?' and when I entered the living room, Tina was sitting in the far corner in her dressing gown, rolling a cigarette. The children were also in their onesies. I said 'Hello Tina, I'm Melinda, the grandmother's researcher'. She then explained that her ex-partner had been to her house the previous evening and that they'd had 'A terrible night'. Tina looked at her legs at this point, which were covered in bruises. She had also been off work recently with a broken wrist that was still bandaged. Her young son then told me that he didn't like this man coming to his house, being horrible and shouting. At this, I turned to Tina and asked if she'd contacted the police to which she replied 'No, I don't want to get them involved'. She told me that he had taken her phone but they were going to get dressed, go to her daughters and look up a refuge on the Internet. Tina apologised for my wasted journey to which I replied that she was not to worry and to get herself and the children safe. Her young daughter showed me out and as I drove home, I found myself in a dilemma, my mind in turmoil. Were these children at risk? Is it my duty as a researcher to report my concerns? Where do the boundaries lie? What if I don't report this and something happens to those children? This experience has certainly made me think about my own safety when visiting participants' homes. What if that man had still been there? What if he'd come back when I was there? This was an experience I had never expected when researching grandmothers and my eyes have well and truly been opened to the risk and unpredictability of researching. Whilst I discussed this incident with a number of colleagues, supervisors and an employee at Women's Aid, I have not breached any confidentiality...After due consideration and advice received, I have reported the incident to the relevant county council social services..."

Ethical considerations were continually appraised throughout the research process, with referral to the supervisory team and ethical approval gained for any required amendments to the research procedure. A detailed presentation of the ethical considerations can be viewed in Appendix C.

4.4 Reflexivity

While reflecting on her experience of undertaking IPA analysis, Hunter (2010, p. 30) wrote:

"There emerges a picture of the individual as an embedded, contextual being, influenced by and influential in social interactions with others. Our aim is to understand their experience of a phenomenon, and to achieve this, we have to interpret their account - a process which in turn is influenced by our position as an embedded, contextual being".

In qualitative research, reflexivity is becoming both a recognised and essential tool for the demonstration of trustworthiness (Finlay & Gough, 2003). It is an acknowledgement of the active role that the researcher plays throughout the research process; that their participation can influence the research. According to Finlay and Gough (2003), many qualitative researchers find it challenging to explore their self-awareness in terms of where they stand in the relationship between themselves and the research. Indeed, reflexivity contrasts strongly to the longstanding dominating quantitative paradigm where researchers have tended to distance themselves from the participants (Langdridge, 2007).

Various forms of reflexivity are becoming known as qualitative research extends itself from the *"margins to the mainstream in psychology in the UK"* (Willig & Stainton Rogers, 2008, p. 8). This is not by any means limited to psychology or the UK as other authors have clearly evidenced (Elliott *et al.* 1999; Bryman, 2006; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). However, these various ways in which to demonstrate reflexivity maintain a shared focus; that good practice results from the openness of the researcher to continue to ask questions throughout the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Indeed, Langdridge (2007, p. 59) documents the need for questioning by presenting a method box suggesting *"Questions to encourage a reflexive approach to research"* (see Figure 2).

These questions incorporate the five types of reflexivity that Finlay and Gough (2003) discuss in detail: Introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique and discursive deconstruction. Introspection is the

exploration of the researchers own personal experiences and meanings and how they influence the research and interpretations. Intersubjective reflection relates to the unfolding of the relationships between the researcher and the participants and aims for the researcher to view themselves in relation to others. For this research study in particular, mutual collaboration highlights the capabilities of the participant as being reflexive and co-constructors of data collection. It also, arguably, leads some way in addressing unequal relationships within the research process. Social critique extends on this relatively by exploring the balance of power between the researcher and the participant. Differing social positions such as class, gender and race should be acknowledged by the researcher. Lastly discursive or ironic deconstruction explores the multiple meanings that are inherent within language (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Finlay and Gough (2003, p. 14) illustrate this by articulating that the world is a *"babble of competing voices, none of which has privileged status."* It is therefore imperative that the researcher recognises that the findings may not represent the entirety of meanings that lay within the text.

Figure 2 - Questions to encourage a reflexive approach to research

Why am I carrying out this research?
What do I hope to achieve with this research?
What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?
Am I an insider or outsider?
Do I empathise with the participants and their experience?
Who am I, and how might I influence the research I am conducting in terms of age, sex, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and any other relevant cultural, political or social factors?
How do I feel about the work?
Are there external pressures influencing the work?
How will my subject position influence the work?
How might the outside world influence the presentation of findings?
How might the findings impact on the participants?
Might they lead to harm and, if so, how can I justify this happening?
How might the findings impact on the discipline and my career in it?
Might they lead to personal problems, and how prepared am I to deal with these should they arise?
How might the findings impact on wider understandings of the topic?
How might your colleagues respond to the research?
What would the newspapers make of the research?
Does the research have any implications for future funding (or similar research and/or related organisations)?
What political implications might arise as a result of the research?

For these reasons, I made use of a journal throughout the research process and extracts of this can be found throughout the writing of this study. By maintaining a journal my thought patterns, feelings and experiences enhanced

the research findings as suggested by Curtin and Fossey (2007). Furthermore, in order for me to look inwards and to view my position as the researcher within the research process and to elaborate on my own self-awareness of the relationships, which have unfolded, I have presented my reflections in the first person, interchangeably with third person writing.

4.5 Evaluation criteria for qualitative research

According to Smith (2011, p. 24) a good IPA study will be: well focused and offer an in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon; the data and interpretation are strong; and the reader engages and finds the research enlightening. After a review of published IPA papers, Smith (2011) created a guide to evaluate IPA studies and proposed that the following are indicative of good IPA research:

- The research should have a clear focus;
- The research will have strong data;
- The research should be rigorous;
- Sufficient space must be given to the elaboration of each theme;
- The analysis should be interpretative, not just descriptive;
- The analysis should be pointing to both convergence and divergence;
- The research needs to be carefully written.

More generally, a number of guidelines have been produced to evaluate the quality in qualitative research (Langdridge, 2007). However, with the differing qualitative methodologies come differing tools of judgement that can lead to confusion and be problematic. Indeed, Willig (2010) reiterated this point of contention by stating that each epistemological approach requires differing evaluation criteria. Nonetheless, it is of importance to recognise these guidelines for good practice within the qualitative paradigm (Langdridge, 2007). What follows is a discussion of two proposed guidelines. The first of these was developed by Elliott *et al.* (1999) and these are, according to Willig (2010), appropriate measures for hermeneutic phenomenological research. The second is a set of criteria developed by Yardley (2000) and is to date, endorsed by many qualitative researchers including Smith *et al.* (2009) in their dissemination of IPA's theory, method and research.

The evolving guidelines developed by Elliott *et al.* (1999) were mainly generated in response to the acknowledged need to reassure quantitative researchers that qualitative research is "methodologically rigorous" (Elliott *et al.* 1999, p. 217). With the rapid growth in the use of qualitative methods the guidelines also offered a much-needed evaluative tool and a form of quality control. At this point in time, qualitative research was frequently being assessed

using quantitative standards and therefore inappropriate criteria were frequently being applied. The authors also pointed out that the guideline was non-definitive: the aim being for the criteria to evolve through advances in qualitative approaches and methods. The 7 criteria are: owning one's perspective; situating the sample; grounded in examples; providing credibility checks; coherence; accomplishing general versus specific research tasks; and resonating with readers. A more detailed overview of the criteria can be found in Appendix J.

Additionally, Yardley (2000) developed a further useful set of guidelines for evaluating the quality of work in qualitative research. Yardley proposed four main principles for the assessment of quality of work: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance. According to Smith *et al.* (2009), this criterion is a valuable tool to the IPA researcher and the research process. Indeed, Shinebourne (2011) encapsulated how a good IPA research project can demonstrate the four principles in Yardley's (2000) criteria (see Appendix K).

The two aforementioned guidelines share many similarities. The requirement to be methodical and clear in the presentation of analysis that is grounded in the data is shared by both, as well as the importance of reflexivity and the necessity to clearly outline the research procedures and methods employed. The two guidelines were both used constructively in assuring quality within and throughout this study (see Chapter 8, *section 8.2.6* for further discussion).

It is also deemed good practice to leave a clear chain of evidence of the research process (Smith *et al.* 2009). Hence, I have endeavoured to maintain and evidence a clear process to this research within the text and appendices. According to Reid *et al.* (2005), an audit trail is an acceptable produce for the purpose of cross-validation.

4.6 Concluding comments

In order to best present the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother and to address the primary aim of this research, a qualitative approach was deemed necessary. Within this chapter, I have discussed the rationale for a qualitative methodology, more specifically, the decision to employ IPA and the data collection methods used to undertake it (semi structured interviews using photo elicitation and prompt objects). The theoretical underpinnings of IPA have been presented as well as attending to existing criticisms within the literature regarding IPA. My considerations and

the issues I have experienced through the research process including sample size, recruitment, ethical considerations, reflexivity and quality have been deliberated. The next chapter starts the first of 3 findings chapters in which the idiographic analysis of the ten participating grandmothers is presented.

Chapter 5 Introducing Participating Grandmothers

This chapter will introduce the ten grandmothers who participated in this research. The content of this chapter is the result of steps 1 to 7 of the IPA idiographic data analysis discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.2.7). I analysed each grandmother's interview data separately, with a continuing conscious effort to bracket off my interpretations of the previous grandmother's experiences (*epoche*). Each grandmother will be represented in an individual profile with an introduction and a brief written overview of my interpretations of their grandmothering experiences. Some of the grandmothers' photos have been embedded into their idiographic profiles to display the interpretative process. A family tree illustrating the family members mentioned in their interviews and mind maps exhibiting the results of idiographic analyses are also presented.

Influenced by Smart's (2011) concepts of family life, van Manen's (1984, p. 60) metaphorical writings of the structures of experience as *"the knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun as meaningful wholes"* and the hermeneutic circle (the whole and the parts), the mind maps are presented as visualisations of the intricate complexities of the participating grandmothers' experiences, at both the idiographic and across case stages (chapters 6 and 7). The grandmothers' experiences were intertwined with their relationships and everyday lives with other family members; that Grandmothering was located within a dynamic web of connections, in which their lives were paradoxically confined and autonomised by relationships with others and their own, and others' actions, cognitions, feelings and behaviours.

I found that, as the grandmothers recounted their experiences in a chronological order, the data and analyses were naturally transpiring into two areas of experiences: the transitional stage of becoming a young maternal grandmother and being a young maternal grandmother. Hence, two mind maps are presented for each grandmother, exhibiting these two areas of experiences.

The idiographic analysis was a long process, in terms of duration and commitment to the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of IPA. I decided to use paper and pen in my interpretations because of personal preference and for two further reasons. Firstly, I had previously used the NVivo software package in a separate research project and I felt that, whilst a useful resource, it tended to fragment the data. This led to my second reason, in that to be true to the hermeneutic circle and idiography pertinent to IPA, I wanted to be able to move back and forth within the data in order to visualize the whole and the parts of the grandmother's experiences. Printing the transcripts, sticking them

into A3 sketch pads and colour coding my notes helped me to see my emerging interpretations and to remain faithful to the individual grandmother's experiences. Appendix L and M evidence the analysis process for two grandmothers (Julie and Michelle), leading to a full written analysis.

As analysis progressed, I began to question the use of the word 'themes' that is employed within IPA. For me, themes evoke a sense of detachment and fragmentation and I became increasingly uncomfortable (and distracted) with the terminology of 'super-ordinate themes' and 'sub-themes'. I was attempting to explore the essential experiences of the young grandmothers with words and terminology that seemed not to fit the phenomenological inquiry entailed in IPA. After considerable contemplation and reassurances from Smith *et al.* (2009) that IPA is not prescriptive, I decided to re-name the super-ordinate and sub-themes to 'essential experiences' and their 'essences'; the parts that make up the whole.

At the beginning of each interview, the participating grandmothers were asked to complete a brief demographics form (Appendix N). This information has been amalgamated and is presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3 – Grandmothers' demographics at time of interview

Grandmother	Age (at transition)	Age (at interview)	Number of grandchildren	Number of adults in household	Number of children in household	Marital status	Country of birth	Ethnic group	Household income	Employment status	Education
Julie	36 years	40 years	3	2	2	Married	UK	White British	£40-50K	Working full-time (Managerial)	School, work
Nikki	35 years	41 years	2	2	1	Cohabiting	UK	White British	£20-30K	Looking after family at home	College
Natalie	36 years	48 years	2	1	0	Single	UK	White British	£20-30K	Working full-time (Retail)	School, college, work
Sarah	36 years	42 years	3	3	0	Married	UK	White British	£10-20K	Working full-time (Manual)	School, work
Sam	41 years	47 years	2	2	0	Cohabiting	UK	White British	£30-40K	Working part-time (Retail)	School
Michelle	36 years	42 years	4	1	1	Engaged	UK	White British	£40-50K	Working full-time (Managerial)	School, college, work
Catherine	42 years	43 years	1	1	0	Divorced/ Separated	UK	White British	<£10K	Long term sick or disabled	School
Amanda	35 years	40 years	2	2	2	Married	UK	White British	£10-20K	Working part-time (Retail)	College
Siobhan	40 years	45 years	3	3	0	Cohabiting	UK	White British	£20-30K	Looking after family at home	School
Toni	35 years	42 years	1	2	0	Married	UK	White British	£70-80K	Working full-time (Managerial)	University

5.1. Julie

At the time of interview, Julie was a mother to three children aged 22, 14 and 5 years. Julie was also a maternal grandmother to three grandchildren aged 4, 3 and 1 years and had become a grandmother for the first time at the age of 36 years. She lived with her second husband and two youngest children and described herself as white British. Her reported annual household income was between £50,000 to £59,999 and she worked full-time. Julie owned a car and her highest qualifications were connected with work.

Figure 3 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Julie's experiences of grandmotherhood

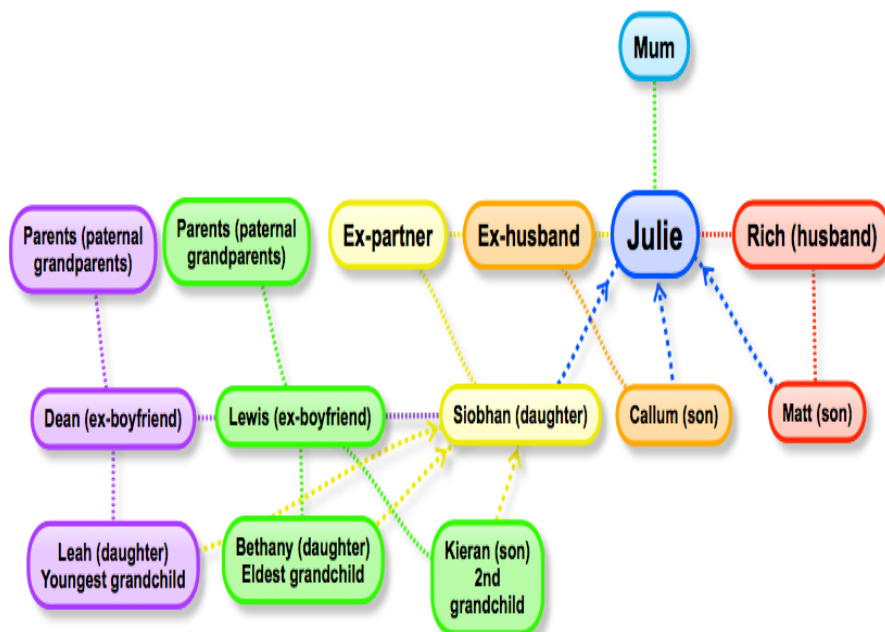


Figure 4 – A mind map illustrating Julie's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

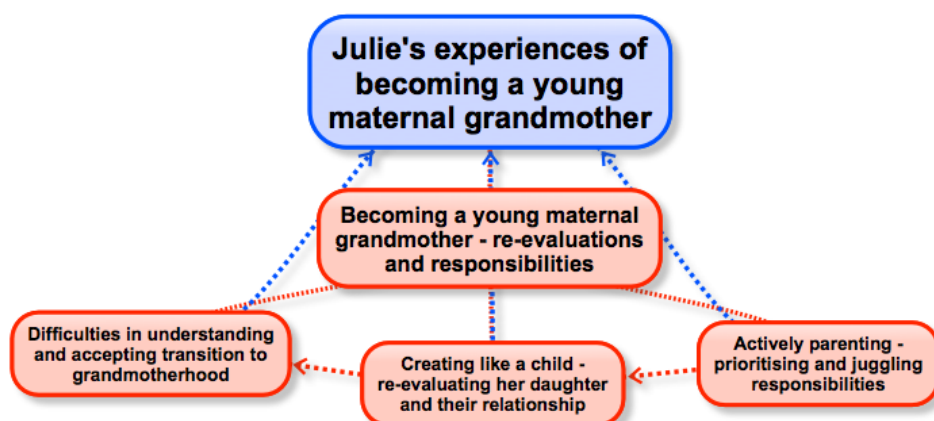
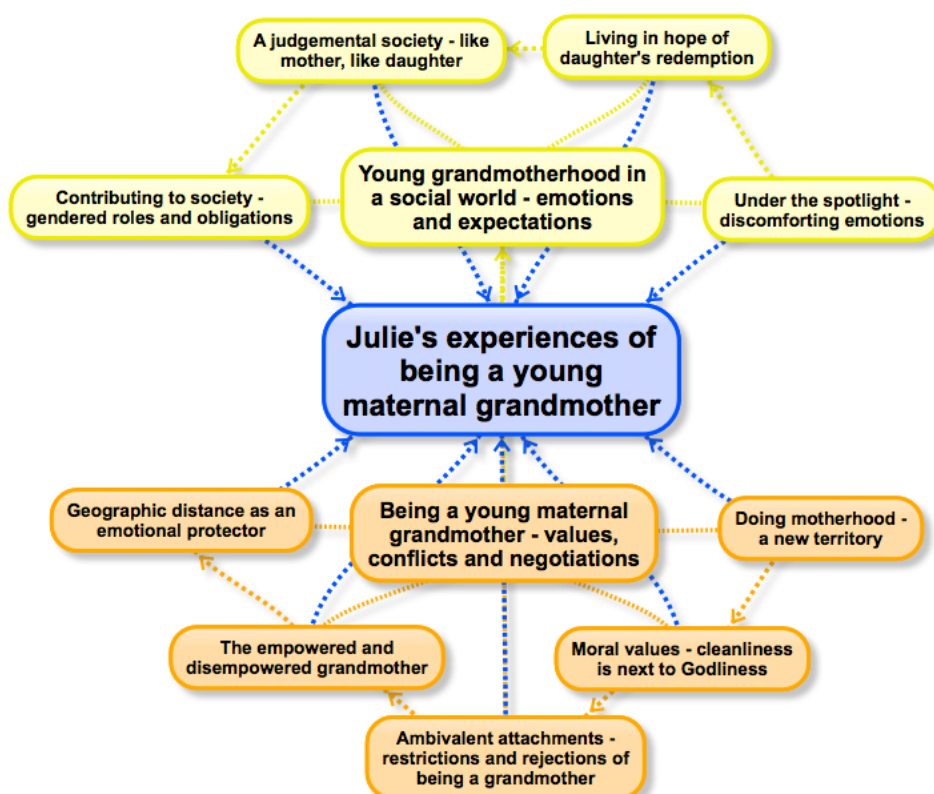


Figure 5 – A mind map illustrating Julie's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.1.1 Julie's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Julie's experiences of grandmotherhood have been greatly determined by her daughter's actions and behaviours. Julie had been a young mother herself and had expected her daughter to cope with her pregnancy and motherhood as well as she had reported herself to do years before. Julie talks with a certain disdain at her daughter's behaviour throughout the pregnancy, *'Siobhan (daughter) deemed that she was the only person in the whole wide world that had been pregnant before.'* There are many instances throughout Julie's narration where she exasperatingly describes her daughter's behaviours as childlike which appears to provoke Julie to re-evaluate her daughter and their relationship. Their relationship had become volatile before her daughter became pregnant and this may partly explain Julie's hesitancy to describe herself as a grandmother. Further, Julie was still actively parenting and working; a mother to a one-year-old son and ten-year-old son (who are her priorities) at the time of her first grandchild's birth, *'Having a little one myself and then being told you're a grand, you're going to be a grandmother as well, it was like wha:::t.'* Her daughter had two more children after the birth of her first child, all within a period of 5 years. Julie blatantly recalls with incredulity, the second and third times that her daughter tells her that she is pregnant again, the third time, *'I just turned around and said, "I can't believe, once ok, twice you know, okish, three, you're having a laugh." I said, "This is absolutely ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous."*

Julie's disbelief at becoming a grandmother three times is clarified when she talks of her concerns about her daughter's and boyfriend's parenting skills and abilities. Julie candidly discusses her daughter and boyfriend's uncleanness, their lack of housekeeping skills and consequently her grandchildren's dirtiness and lack of hygiene, *'She (daughter) handed Bethany (granddaughter) and she was wearing white, well I say white...and she was just absolutely filthy dirty...and Siobhan (daughter) really couldn't be bothered.'* Julie's concern for her grandchildren's welfare is evidenced further when she presented a photo in the interview of her three grandchildren. She talks of how she cherishes this photo because her grandchildren (when the photo was taken) are clean and well presented: a rarity according to Julie.

Julie experiences a new territory of motherhood, of mothering an adult daughter who she expects and wishes to be a responsible and independent young mother. As a result of these expectations not being actualized, Julie becomes increasingly concerned for her grandchildren's welfare. Not long after the birth of her second grandchild, Julie's daughter leaves her boyfriend and the two children and Julie arranges with her daughter, boyfriend and his parents to take her two grandchildren temporarily into her and her husband's care. At this moment, Julie finds herself doing motherhood again with her two grandchildren and her husband, who is not the children's biological grandfather, taking on a temporary fathering role. Momentarily empowering herself as a grandmother, this empowerment is quickly quelled when Julie's daughter and boyfriend report her to the police for taking their children, even though they had verbally agreed to it. It is only after an agreement and intervention of social services that Julie and her husband care for her two grandchildren for a further 3 months before returning them to their father as primary caregiver. Julie retells numerous instances where her attempts at empowerment are thwarted by her daughter, daughter's boyfriend, and authorities such as social services and the police.

Further on in Julie's experiences of grandmothering, after the birth of her third grandchild to a different father, Julie finds the paternal grandparents as her greatest adversary to empowerment. As a result of the conflicts she has experienced and her daughter's behaviours as a parent, Julie speaks of her ambivalent attachments to her grandchildren. This is reflected further when Julie, her husband and two sons move 120 miles away from her daughter and grandchildren to find work for her husband. This geographic distance between mother and daughter appears to be an emotional protector for Julie, it relieves some of the everyday stresses that she experienced as a grandmother and that could not be escaped from when she lived close by, *'They say out of sight out of mind, it's not out of mind 100% but a lot of it.'*

Julie continually portrays her daughter as a child and that she knew her daughter was not ready for motherhood. Further, perhaps Julie, as a result of her own young mothering experiences, was not ready for grandmotherhood. By becoming a young grandmother, Julie found herself being socially scrutinized again, uncovering her own young motherhood that she would rather remain concealed, *'When people say how old are you, you say 40 and they're like really and you're thinking are they being polite now. How old was she (Julie) when she had hers, is she a slapper?'* Julie may have managed to escape the stigma of young motherhood for some time and that being a grandmother to three grandchildren by the age of 40 years, plummets her back into the social

spotlight. As her daughter continues to replicate the negative stereotypes of young motherhood, Julie increasingly feels she has to justify and defend her own young mothering and grandmothering. Julie wants her daughter to be a good mother, to move away from the stigma of young motherhood, to not be what society expects of young mothers and perhaps, more importantly, to redeem Julie as a young mother and grandmother, *'You know, Siobhan (daughter) could become mother of the year next year, you never know'*.

Julie reflects back over her grandmothering experiences with negativity, talking with little emotion about events in her life that most certainly would have been emotional. Her emotional distancing and repression are evidenced in her frequent pronoun usage (you're instead of I'm). Julie also states that grandmotherhood means nothing to her. This is questionable, particularly as she discussed her and her husband's willingness to care for her grandchildren full time if the need arose. Maybe grandmotherhood does mean something to Julie, that she does care for her grandchildren and that she would give up her work and make room in her immediate family for her grandchildren, *'If it came to those (grandchildren) coming to me and me giving that (job) up, without a doubt.'* The 'nothingness' of grandmotherhood for Julie is rather a result of her tarnished experiences by the actions of her daughter and a subsequent numbness of emotions, heightened by her own awareness of the social positive perceptions of grandmotherhood.

5.2 Nikki

At the time of interview, Nikki was a mother to three adult daughters and one adult son. Nikki was a maternal grandmother to two granddaughters aged 5 years and 10 months and had become a grandmother at the age of 35 years. She lived with her husband, 20 year old son and her 5-year-old granddaughter and described herself as white British. Her household income was between £20,000 and £29,999 and she was looking after her family at home at the time. Nikki owned a car and her highest qualifications were from college.

Figure 6 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Nikki's experiences of grandmotherhood

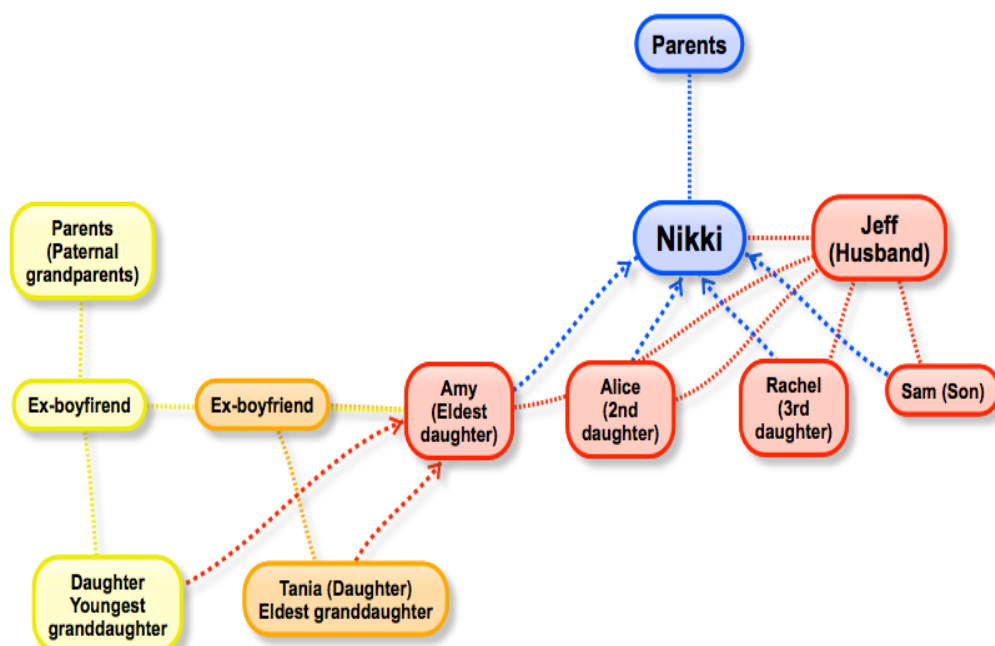


Figure 7 - A mind map illustrating Nikki's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

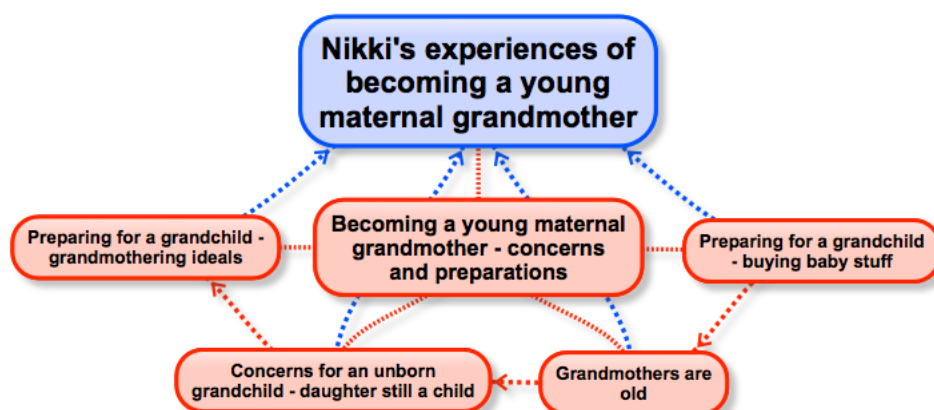
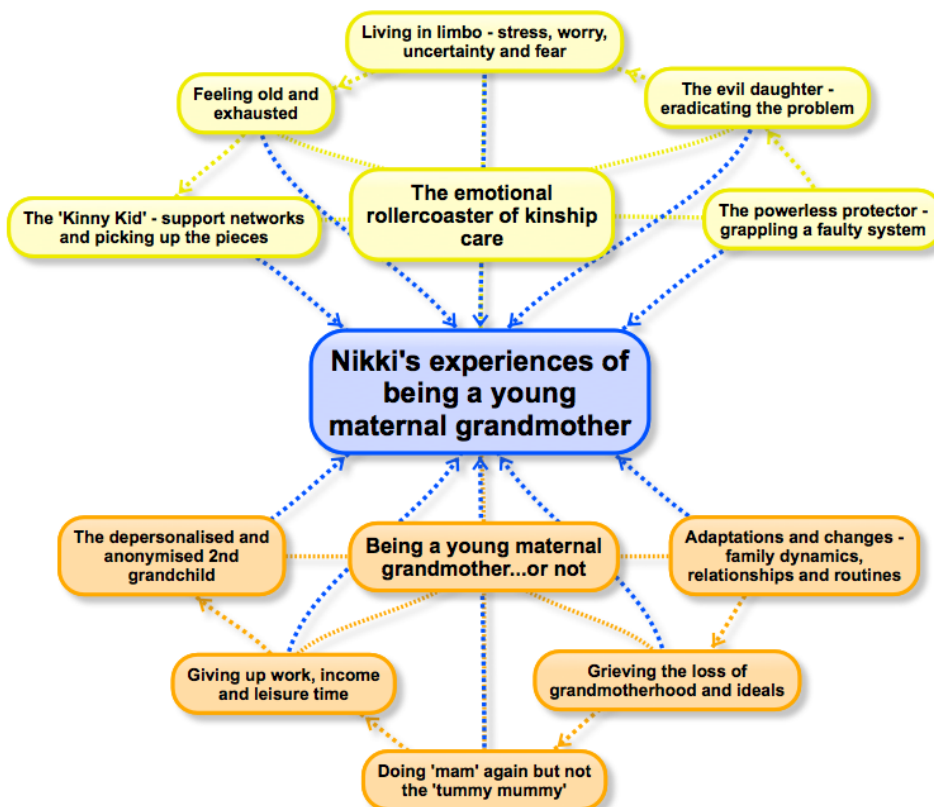


Figure 8 – A mind map illustrating Nikki's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.2.1 Nikki's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Nikki talks of her transition to grandmotherhood as scary and terrifying. For Nikki, grandmotherhood was associated with older age; that grandmothers are old women, *'You automatically think old...old woman sort of thing.'* Whilst she had concerns about her age and for her young daughter and her unborn grandchild, she looks forward to becoming a grandmother with expectations of how she will do grandmothering, *'To spoil a child, love it, to pass her back...been there, done it, now it's time to do what my mam did, to hand them back.'* Nikki helped her daughter prepare for motherhood by buying baby equipment; preparing for grandmotherhood in a manner reflecting her ideals but also making her feel older than her chronological age, *'Felt old, went overboard, bought everything for her (daughter).'* Nikki was present at the birth of her first granddaughter, describing it as an amazing experience but at the same time, wanting to take the pain away from her daughter who, for Nikki, was still a child.

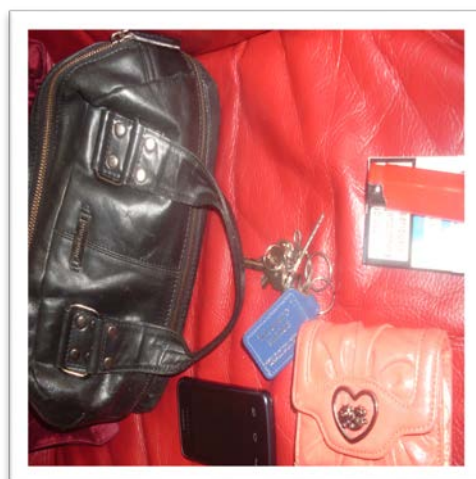
After the birth, *'Things went downhill.'* Nikki unexpectedly finds herself back in a parenting role as her daughter fails to look after her child satisfactorily. Nikki's experiences of young grandmotherhood have been suffused with stress, presenting and discussing an image of a person with their head in their hands. Nikki also experienced further powerful and frightening emotions that she did not expect. This was a direct result of her daughter's neglect of her granddaughter and Nikki's ongoing interactions with social services. Nikki has continually battled to keep her granddaughter safe and out of harms way with little power to do so as a grandmother. At the time of interview, Nikki's granddaughter was living with her and under her full time care; a tenuous position that she desperately wanted to strengthen by finalizing a permanent residency order. In the meantime, she continued to live in fear of her granddaughter being taken away and given back to her daughter; a situation that she had experienced a couple of times previously, resulting in further abuse and neglect for her young granddaughter. For these reasons, Nikki discussed the contempt she held for her daughter, which was both frightening and shocking to her, *'I could actually kill her (daughter) and it's frightening, it's very very frightening.'*

At the beginning of her interview, Nikki confirmed that she had just one granddaughter. As her interview progressed, she revealed that her daughter had another 10-month old daughter. Nikki seemed to be denying herself acknowledgement of this granddaughter's existence, perhaps as an attempt to protect her own emotions and to save her from further stress and heartache.

Nikki refers to her baby granddaughter as 'it', anonymising and depersonalising a nameless and genderless grandchild in order to protect herself from a further onslaught of extreme emotions.

There is a sense of grieving as Nikki gives up her grandmothering to do mothering again; conflicted by her ideals of grandmothering that she held at the transitional stage of her grandmothering journey. To accommodate her granddaughter into her full time care, Nikki also had to give up work and consequently a comfortable monthly income. Nikki presented the contents of her handbag as her prompt objects in interview (Figure 10). She discussed the cigarettes as a way to relieve her stress, the credit cards in her purse that she has had to use since leaving paid employment and the phone as a necessity for contact with her granddaughter's school and other professionals involved in her granddaughter's care.

Figure 9 – Prompt objects (Nikki)



Accommodating her granddaughter has affected not only Nikki's financial situation but also the whole dynamics of her family life. All the family have adapted to the circumstances including her 20-year-old autistic son. Previous to becoming a grandmother, Nikki and her husband had separated but as a consequence of caring for her granddaughter, Nikki's husband was helping with the care of their granddaughter and visiting the family home daily. Nikki and her family have been propelled into new routines, the family dynamics within the family home have drastically changed as they accommodate a small and vulnerable child and as a result, finances are strained.

Nikki's energy levels have significantly reduced, '*Sometimes I'm asleep at 6 o'clock on the settee and I see no soaps, I loved my soaps...no soaps.*' Nikki feels exhausted and aged. Perhaps her ageing is not a direct result of grandmothering but a consequence of her continual efforts to keep her

granddaughter safe. Rather poignantly, Nikki finds herself aged and more congruent to her expectation of older grandmotherhood and yet, she is no longer grandmothering but mothering again.

5.3 Natalie

Natalie became a maternal grandmother at the age of 36 years and at the time of interview was 48 years old with one daughter aged 30 years and two granddaughters aged 11 and 6 years. Natalie lived alone, describing her relationship status as single. She considered herself as White British with a household income of £20,000 to £29,999. Natalie worked full time and was a car owner.

Figure 10 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Natalie's experiences of grandmotherhood

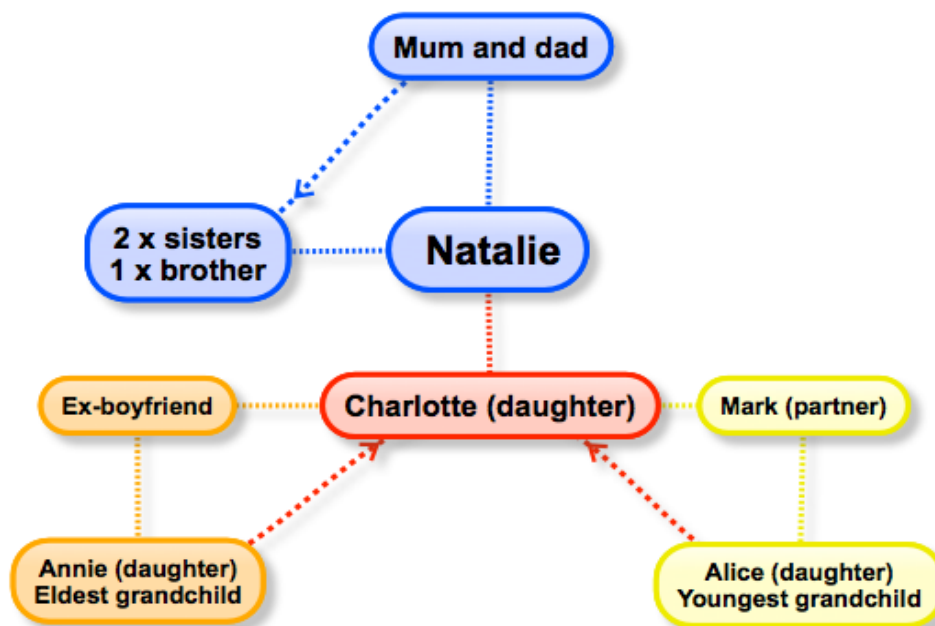


Figure 11 - A mind map illustrating Natalie's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

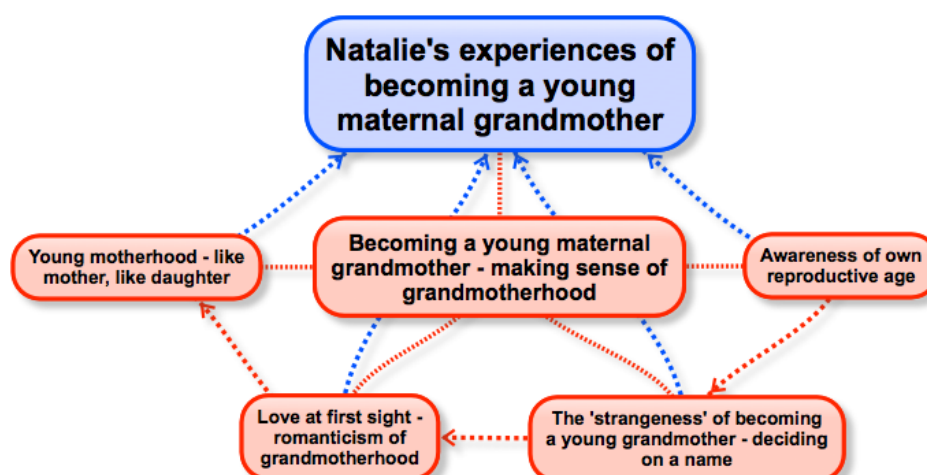
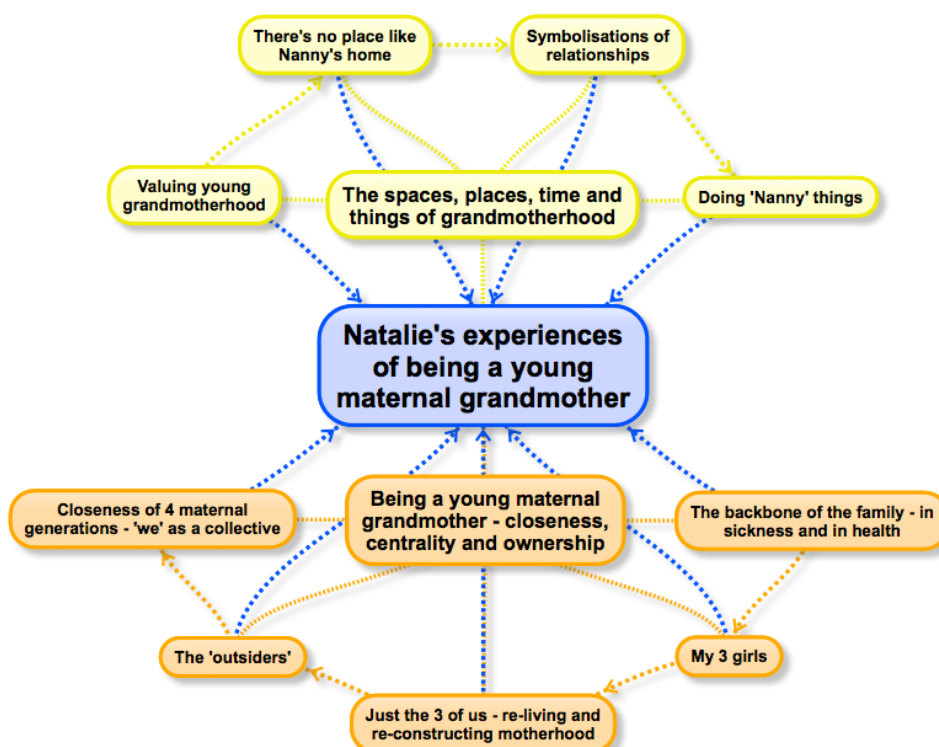


Figure 12 – A mind map illustrating Natalie's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.3.1 Natalie's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Natalie's age at her transition to grandmotherhood evokes feelings of strangeness. Her young age and subsequently, her own abilities to still reproduce means that she has to make sense of this in order to prepare for being a grandmother. She undertakes a process of deciding on a name to aid the construction of her soon-to-be grandmothering identity. This process is influenced by her mother's choice of name that has gone before her but also her obvious refusal to be called Grandma, *'I didn't want to be called Grandma'*, a name that, for her, socially conjures a stereotypical image of an older aged woman. Natalie was still of a reproductive age herself, adding to the sense of strangeness that Natalie experiences, *'I could've still had another child myself really, you know, it was strange.'*

Natalie talks of her initial shock at the news of her daughter's pregnancy because her daughter was young but mainly, *'Because I'd had my daughter young...I sort of knew what it was like having a child young and you do miss out on a lot.'* Natalie attends the birth of her granddaughter, delighting in the experience as a substitute for her own lack of memories from her daughter's birth, *'When I had her (daughter) literally I flaked out...so this was like the first for me.'* Meeting her granddaughter for the first time was love at first sight for Natalie, *'I sat with her (granddaughter) and I said "ooh I'm gonna always love you"...she was the most beautiful little thing'*, portraying a love story that blossoms and evolves in much the same way as becoming and being a mother. This romanticism extends to her second granddaughter who is born 5 years later.

Natalie imparts a phenomenon of 'closeness' throughout her story of grandmothering. Her daughter and granddaughter lived with Natalie for the first 3 years of her granddaughter's life, giving Natalie the opportunity to re-live and re-construct motherhood. She shares parental responsibility with her daughter, *'We'd do things together with her (granddaughter), we were like a family, just the three of us.'* There is certainly an intimacy that Natalie shares with her daughter and granddaughters; she loves them unconditionally and has a devotion to them that surpasses all else. Natalie was single at this time and so perhaps commits more to her mothering and grandmothering in the absence of a partner. This closeness may partly explain Natalie's dissonance in her daughter's partners, particularly her first partner. Natalie's daughter moved out to live with her boyfriend at the age of 17 years and Natalie demonstrates an ownership of her daughter, disgruntled that her daughter has left home to live with this young man. This sense of ownership appears to extend and encompass

her granddaughters, nourished further when her daughter develops Crohn's Disease. Consequently her daughter undergoes three major surgical operations and Natalie presents herself as the backbone of the family by supporting the generations and maintaining family functioning and cohesiveness. This is evidenced in her interview when Natalie presents a photo of her two granddaughters ready for the beginning of a new school year: a photo taken by Natalie (when she was caring for her granddaughters) to send to her daughter in hospital. Natalie experiences a continued anguish of her daughter's illness, evidenced in Natalie's spoken words; that she would live the pain and suffering for her daughter if she could.

Natalie has formed an ideal for grandmothering, of being older and retired and not restricted by full time work commitments that she, as a younger grandmother, experiences. Perhaps Natalie was placing unnecessary impediments upon herself for being a young grandmother, and that in fact; the average age for becoming a grandparent is before retirement age. However, this self-penalization is a result of Natalie's own experiences of life, her fullness of living, her embodiment as a daughter, sister, mother and grandmother, as a woman and an employee. Alternatively, Natalie values young grandmotherhood. She will exist as a grandmother for longer and experience her granddaughters growing up. She has been blessed with a fulfillment that others of her own age have yet to experience, *'People who haven't got grandchildren yet...I feel like I've got something so precious that they've not got.'*

The spaces, places and things that Natalie presents through her photographs expresses the meaningfulness of being a grandmother; illuminating the embodiment of her grandmother/granddaughter relationships and the personifications of her grandmothering experiences. Natalie surrounds herself with symbolisations of her daughter and granddaughters, dedicating a place in her home for photographs and memorabilia (Figure 13).

Figure 13 – Forever present (Natalie)



Conveying a meaning that her daughter and granddaughters are ever present when not physically being there, *'Everyday I see them; I go in and I look at them. They're always sitting there.'*

5.4 Sarah

Sarah became a maternal grandmother at the age of 36 years and at the time of interview was 42 years with two daughters aged 23 and 21 years. She was married to Dan who also had two adult children aged 25 and 23 years. Sharon was grandmother to three grandchildren aged 6, 3 and 2 years and two step-grandchildren aged 7 years and 2 months. Sarah lived with her husband and her youngest daughter and considered herself white British. Sarah worked full-time and recorded a household income of £10,000 to £19,999.

Figure 14 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Sarah's experiences of grandmotherhood

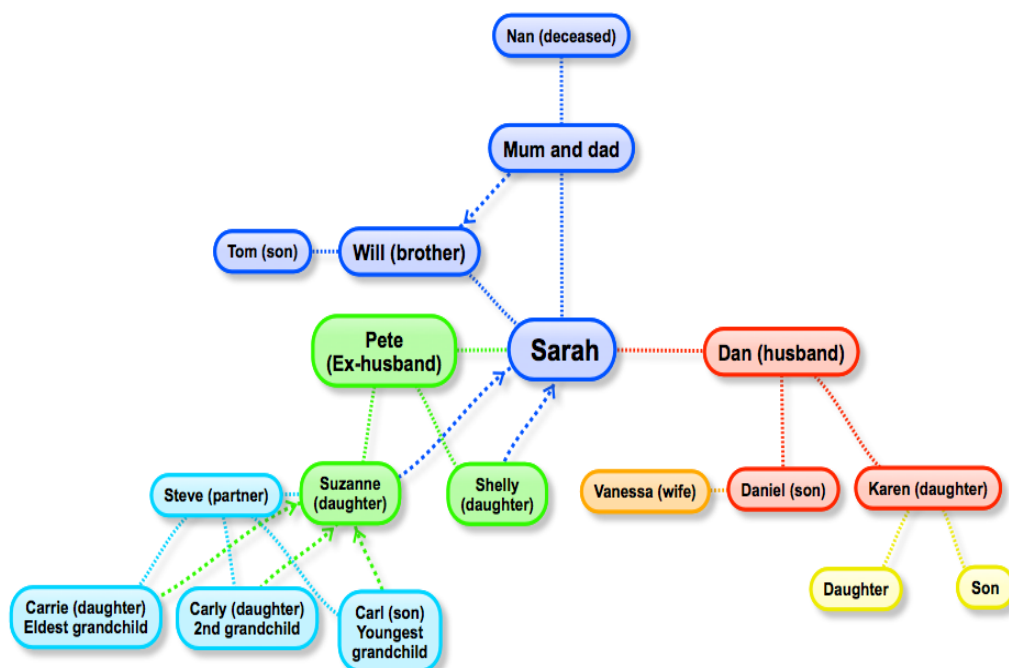


Figure 15 – A mind map illustrating Sarah's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

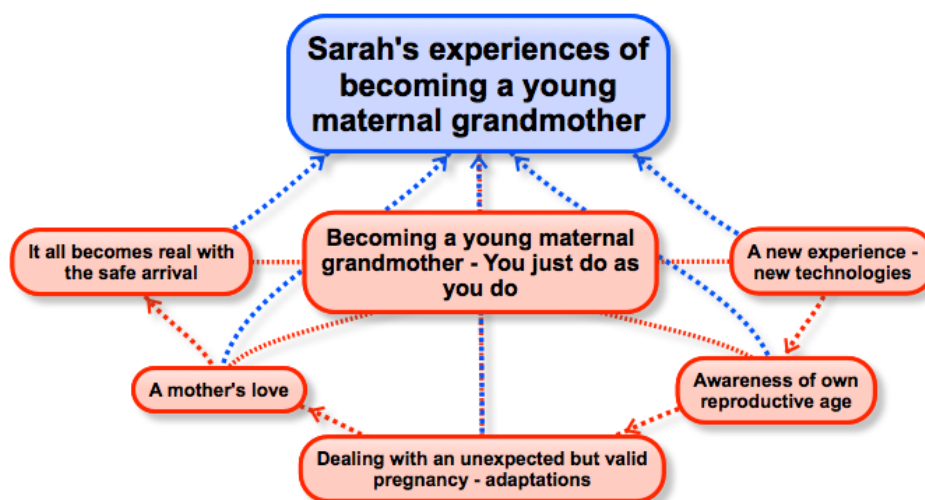
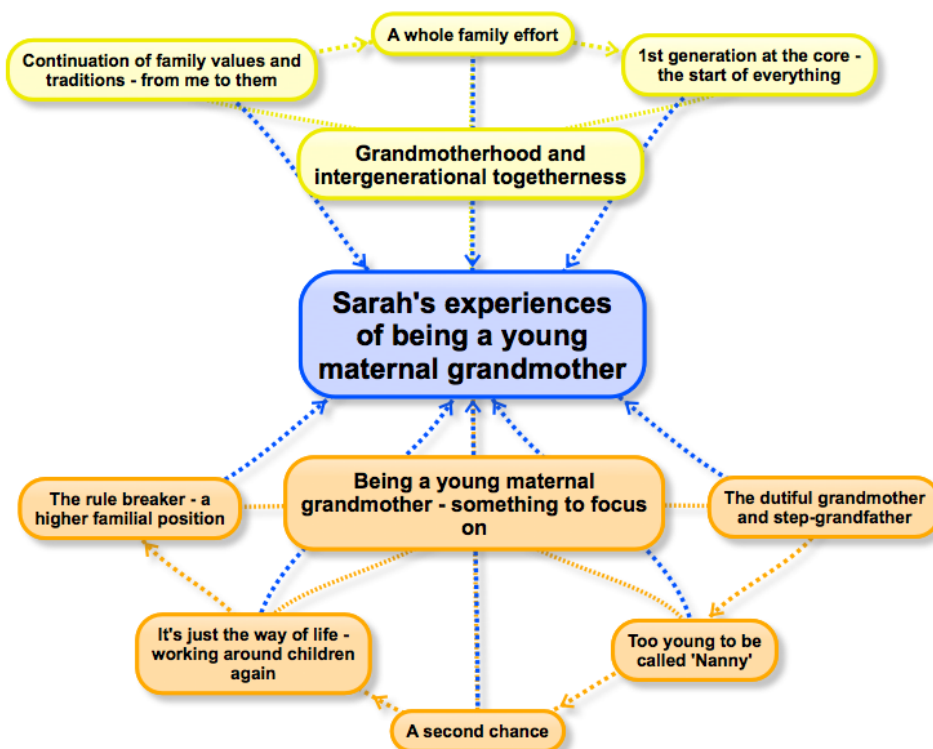


Figure 16 – A mind map illustrating Sarah's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.4.1 Sarah's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

When discussing her experiences of becoming a grandmother for the first time, Sarah describes her daughter's fear of telling her about the pregnancy. Sarah attempts to make sense of why her daughter was scared to tell her, *'I think cause she hadn't been in the relationship for long and she'd got, she were gonna do so much with her life.'* The pregnancy was a mishap after her daughter's contraceptive injection had failed its purpose; this appeared to be a valid explanation for Sarah, *'She (daughter) fell on that pill jab so it weren't as if it were, you know, it were an accident and, and that were it.'* An explanation that perhaps she could use to socially defend the accidental nature of her daughter's pregnancy if need arose and to defend herself as a mother of a pregnant teenager. In her second marriage, Sarah was also still young enough to have a child of her own. Despite her awareness of her own fertile age, Sarah appeared to be enjoying the freedom that comes with two grown up children. The arrival of grandchildren, when Sarah is still at an age to bear children herself, appears inconsequential to her. However, through her narrative, grandchildren may stand as substitutes for any desires to conceive further children herself.

Adapting to the circumstances of her daughter's unexpected pregnancy, Sarah's only difficulty was based on her own past experiences of unsuccessful pregnancies. After losing her first baby at 7 months, Sarah talks of her reluctance to feel excited about her daughter's pregnancy and her grandchild to be. Sarah blocks the reality of grandmotherhood until her granddaughter was born, a defense mechanism to protect her from the pain of loss she experienced years ago, *'She (granddaughter) weren't real until then (birth).'* Sarah's transitional stage to grandmotherhood appeared to be primarily a supportive role to her daughter, attending appointments in which she witnessed a vast change in antenatal care, *'It were just all a new experience.'*

Being a grandmother promotes Sarah to a higher familial position in which she feels she can break the rules. She steps down from the disciplinarian entailed in her past young mothering and becomes the liberal and lenient grandmother. Grandmothering for Sarah also offers her a second chance to care for young children again, to allow more quality time to enjoy and cherish. Regretful of not doing this with her own children in the past, grandmothering provokes Sarah to re-assess and re-prioritise what is important in her life, resulting in an enjoyment of quality time spent with her grandchildren, *'I can sit and play and I do and I didn't and I feel ashamed to say it.'* This is made possible by the flexibility of grandmothering. For Sarah, it is not a 24/7 care role. Her belief is, that as a grandmother, her duty is to babysit. This duty also extends to her

husband, who is not the children's biological grandfather. In Sarah's experiences, her and her husband work in partnership to provide the grandparent childcare. However, there is a sense of impermanence, that Sarah and her husband can do their duties and then walk away. For Sarah, grandmotherhood is just the way of life; life changes and revolves around children again, *'I've gone back to working around the kids again.'*

It appeared that Sarah's transition to grandmother was easily taken on, that she accepted the circumstance with a sense of commonplaceness. Her young age seems unimportant to her other than her choice of what to be called. Sarah felt that she was too young to be called nanny or grandma, *'I didn't want to be a grandma...I just felt too young'*, indicating that she has an ideal age for grandmotherhood. Sarah's experiences of living within her social world have led to her belief that the names of Grandma and Nanny are embodiments of older age. Sarah defies this, she wants to be and do grandmother but she refuses to take on a name that will socially age her. A new name emerges, a name that contravenes the social norms of grandmothing titles but identifies her as a grandmother within her family, a young grandmother who will not be associated with older age.

Sarah belongs to a well functioning and supportive four-generation family. Four generations tied together in everyday support, functioning and a continuation of values and traditions. Becoming and being a grandmother for Sarah is one part that she plays within the family as a whole and the whole family is based upon these parts. How she does grandmothing is greatly influenced by her own parents and grandparents examples. Discussing the photo of her parents in her interview (Figure 17), Sarah perceives her parents to be the start of everything. Life has originated from them and that daily life revolves around them.

Figure 17 – The start of everything (Sarah)



5.5 Sam

Sam became a maternal grandmother at the age of 41 years. At the time of interview Sam was 47 years of age with three adult children (two daughters and one son) and two grandchildren aged 6 and 2 years (from her middle daughter). Sam lived with her partner and considered herself white British. Sam worked part-time and reported a household income of £30,000 to £39,999.

Figure 18 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Sam's experiences of grandmotherhood

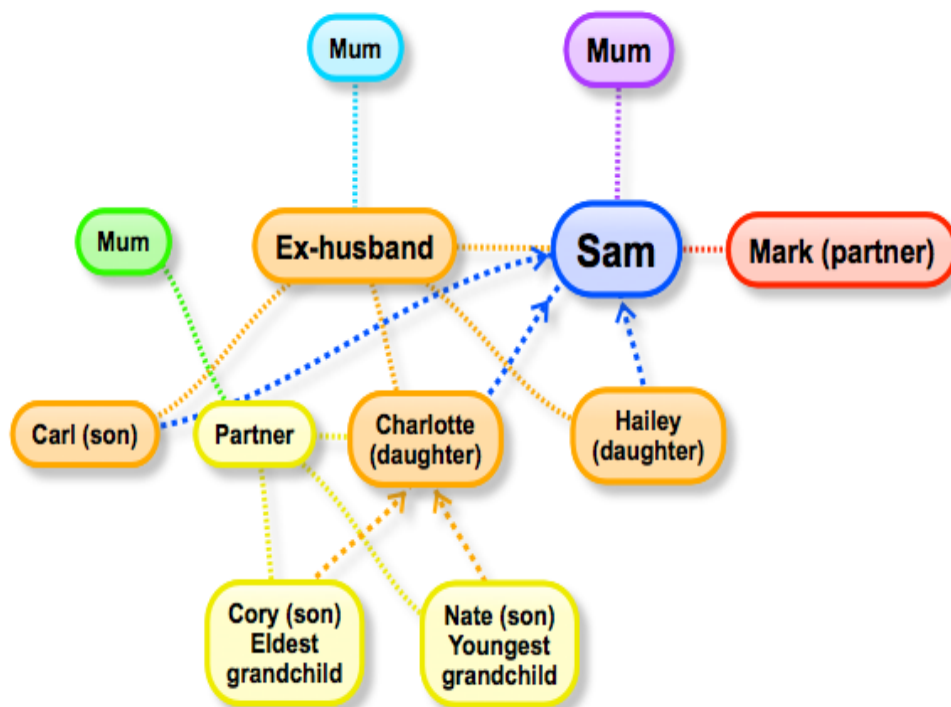


Figure 19 – A mind map illustrating Sam's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

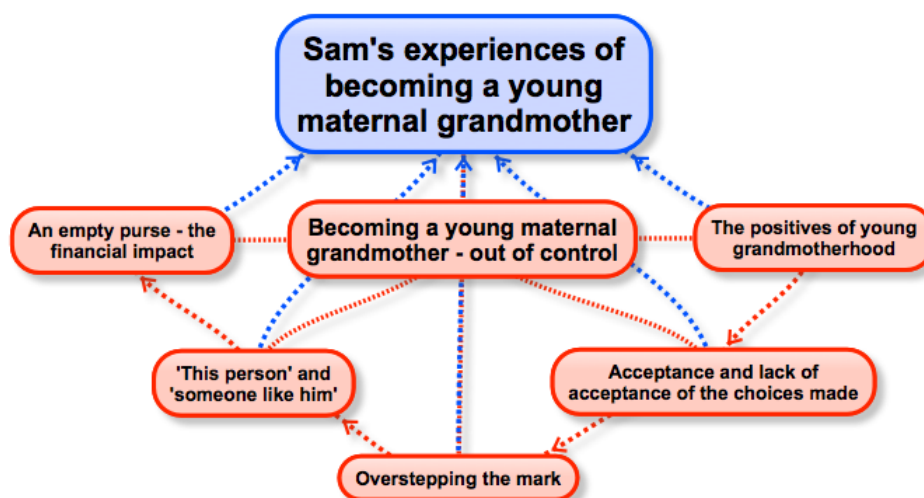
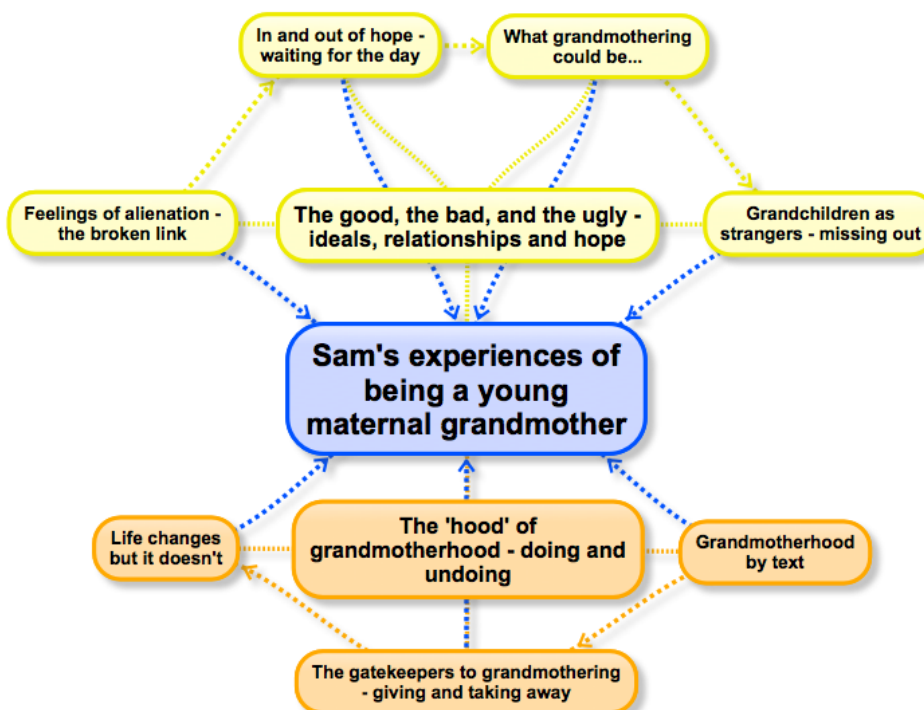


Figure 20 – A mind map illustrating Sam's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.5.1 Sam's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Sam's experiences of grandmotherhood have been greatly determined by her disappointment and frustrations with her daughter's choices and behaviours. Throughout Sam's dialogue, there is a continuous fluctuation between acceptance and lack of acceptance of her daughter's pregnancy and what this meant for her future prospects as well as her daughter's choice of partner, *'I was shocked and quite upset um cause Chantelle (daughter) was in a new relationship with this person who we didn't really know a lot about...she was young and she was at college um and wanted to join the police force.'* Her daughter's choice of partner is Sam's biggest contention. She talks of him with open disdain using phrases such as *'this person'* and *'somebody like him.'* Concerning herself mainly with his social and moral positioning within the world; he neither works nor is likely to work and therefore not in a position to support her daughter and her unborn grandchild. As a result of her concerns for her daughter's future welfare, Sam and her ex-husband financially support her daughter in securing accommodation and equipping her for the arrival of the baby. Sam presents a photo of an empty purse (Figure 21) to further elicit the financial impact of her daughter's pregnancy. Discussing that later into her grandmothering experiences, her daughter and partner fail to keep up with their rental payments, leaving Sam and her ex-husband to pay for their debt.

Figure 21 – An empty purse (Sam)



Sam's contempt of her daughter's partner leads to her *'Overstepping the mark'*, that *'It all got a bit messy and I always speak my mind...I told him that, you know, he should work.'* Sam wants the best for her daughter and in her opinion; her daughter's partner is not worthy. The consequences she pays for her interference (an attempt to take some control over a displeasing situation) are devastating to her ensuing grandmothering experiences. As her first grandson

is born, her daughter and partner allow and disallow her access to her grandson, giving her little tasters of what grandmothering could be before taking it away, *'I'd go round after work on a regular basis and then I'd be shut off for no reason.'* It appeared that Sam was living in torment; there was a world she wanted to exist in as an active grandmother, a world she knew could exist but was out of her reach and control. Sam is a grandmother without doing grandmothering.

Sam's daughter and partner then have another son, a grandson that Sam has never met. This leads to feelings of alienation, of missing out on grandchildren that are not accessible. Presenting a photo (Figure 22) of her two grandchildren, which her daughter had sent to her via a text message, Sam talks of the heartache of not knowing her grandchildren, *'They're my grandkids and I don't know them.'*

*Figure 22 – 'They're my grandkids and I don't know them' (Sam)
(Faces masked at Sam's request)*



At the time of interview, the only contact that Sam had with her daughter was through text messaging, an indirect and infrequent access to her grandchildren. Sam holds ideals about grandmothering and what it could be, living in hope that one day her daughter, the gatekeeper to her grandchildren, will allow her to fulfill her ideals. Sam talks of how being a grandmother is important to her, that it has changed her life even though she is not actively doing grandmotherhood, *'It (life) does change actually, even though um (.) obviously I'm not part of their (grandchildrens') lives.'* In this sense, being a grandmother with ideals and hopes of how she can be involved in her grandchildren's lives are enough for Sam to feel that her life has changed. She is living in conflict and opposition; she longs to repair her broken relationship with her daughter, to know her grandchildren and be part of their lives and to use her young and

abled body to actively enjoy grandmotherhood to her full potential, *'I'm young so I can (.) enjoy them...I can run around the park with them, play football...go out and do and I'm still young enough to do all that.'*

5.6 Michelle

Michelle became a paternal grandmother at the age of 36 years. After two paternal grandchildren, Michelle then became a maternal grandmother to a further two grandchildren, the eldest of these grandchildren born before she became 40 years. At the time of interview, Michelle was 42 years of age with three adult children, four grandchildren and a 5th grandchild (paternal) due to be born the following month. Michelle was planning for her partner to move in with her imminently and was arranging their wedding for the following year. Her youngest daughter lived with her and she considered herself to be white British. Michelle worked full-time and reported a household income of £40,000 to £49,999.

Figure 23 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Michelle's experiences of grandmotherhood

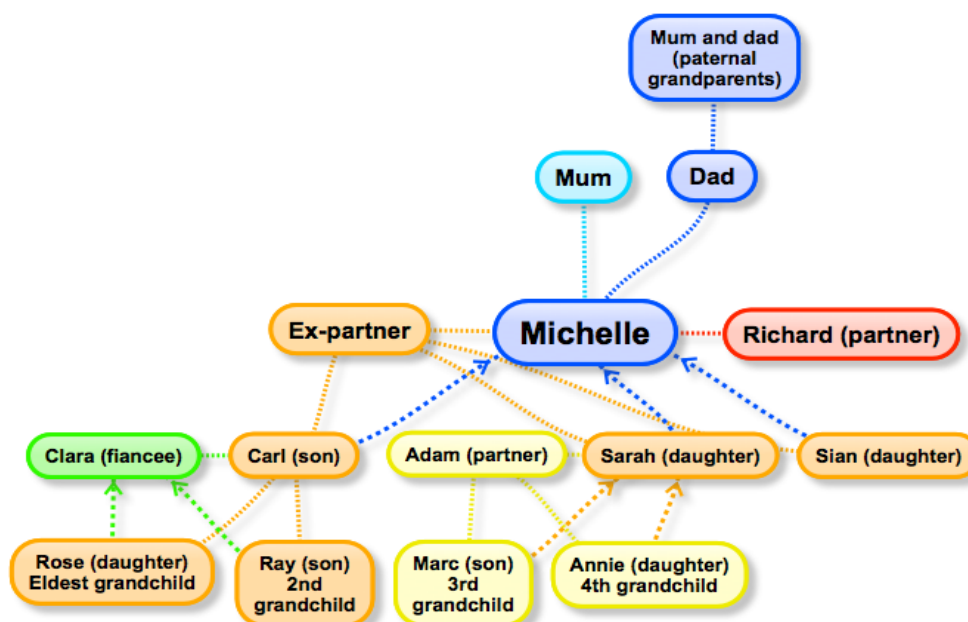


Figure 24– A mind map illustrating Michelle's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

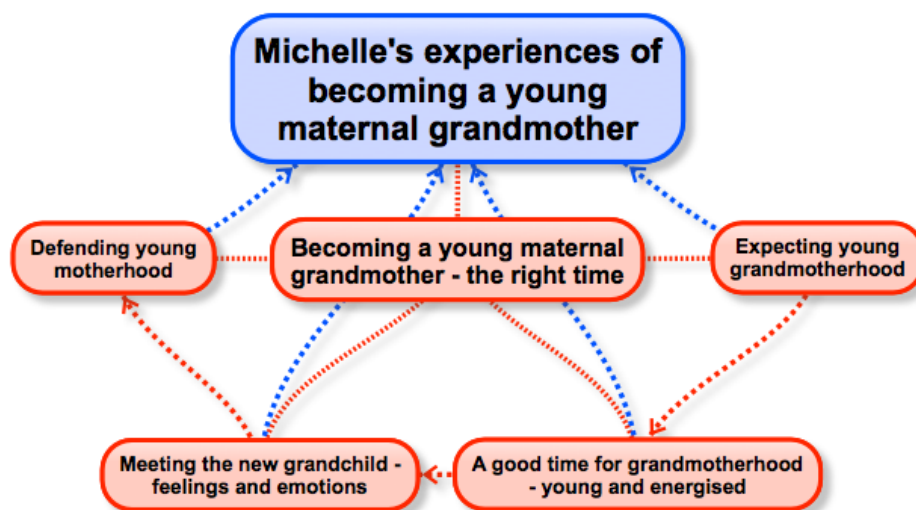
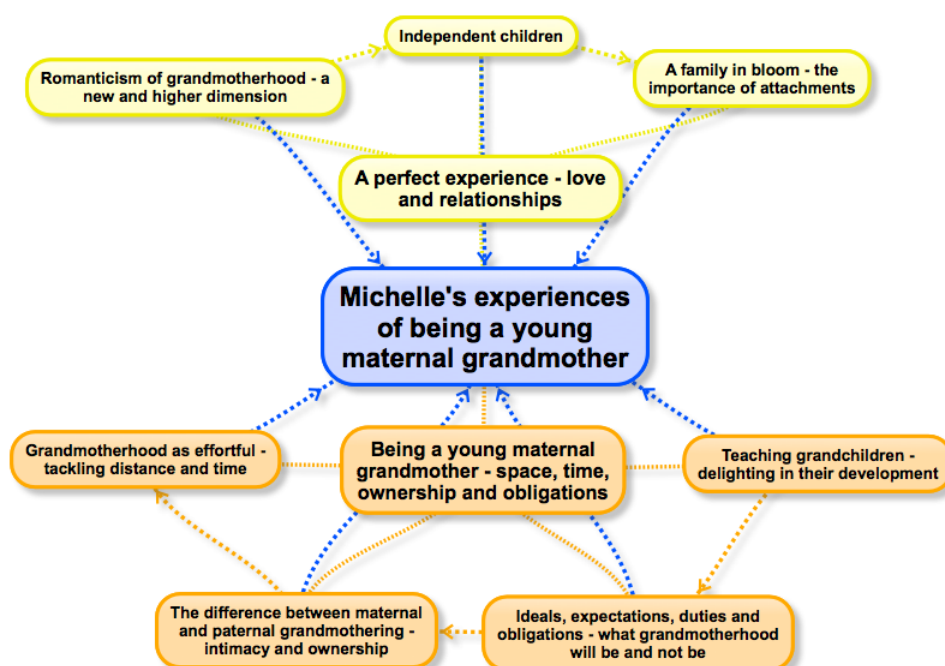


Figure 25 – A mind map illustrating Michelle's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.6.1 Michelle's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Michelle's experiences of grandmotherhood have been idyllic, that they were all that she had expected to be and more. Michelle expected to be a young grandmother based on her own young motherhood, *'I always knew I'd be a grandma before I was 40 because I had my children so young.'* Michelle does voice some concern at what people would think, feel and say about her young age. For her to be a young grandmother would expose her young motherhood. This is perhaps a worry that Michelle has lived with since her transition to motherhood and as such, champions her case without provocation, *'I almost felt like I was being degraded...because I was 36 and yes, because I was quite young when I had Carl (son) but we've always had a good strong family unit.'* Apart from this worry, Michelle relays that 36 years was a good time for her to become a grandmother, that she is young and energized enough to be physically active with her grandchildren, *'I'd got more energy to do things with them (grandchildren) and er but no if I'd had them older I wouldn't have any energy left.'* Despite working full-time and enjoying her relationship with her fiancé, grandmotherhood appeared to fit in well with Michelle's daily life.

Michelle's son and his fiancé are first to have a baby and because they live at a distance from Michelle, she is desperate to meet her granddaughter for the first time. Presenting a photo (Figure 26) of her granddaughter Rose, who was born prematurely, Michelle talks of the importance (to her) of forming an early attachment. She wants to physically and emotionally connect with her granddaughter but is restricted to do so because of the physical barrier of the incubator.

Figure 26 – Meeting Rose for the first time (Michelle)



Her relationship to her paternal grandchildren is further restricted by distance and Michelle speaks of the effort she makes not to be a distant grandmother, both physically and emotionally. This determination of knowing what she wants from grandmotherhood is influenced by her own past experiences. Her father and grandparents had distant relationships with her and her children and this is not how she wants to do grandmothing, *'I think for myself with my dad and my children, there was never that bond because he always lived away...that's what made me think 'I've got to make the effort', you've got to do it because you miss out on so much.'* Becoming a maternal grandmother and living close by seems less effortful for Michelle. She attends the birth of her daughter's first son and discusses the pleasure of witnessing him being born, of being one of the first people to hold him (Figure 27). She is there in body, she perceives the birth of her grandson through her senses and she makes a new physical and emotional connection with him at the very start of his life.

Figure 27 – Holding Marc (Michelle)



Michelle tries to make sense of the differences she experiences between paternal and maternal grandmothing, *'I haven't got that bond with Clara (son's fiancé) because she's not mine.'* Michelle feels comfortable enough to direct her maternal grandmothing because of the shared mother/daughter intimacy, that her daughter and consequently, her daughter's children are hers. Whilst this ownership extends to her son, motherhood is socially constructed as a central care-giving role and for Michelle to do paternal grandmothing, she has to negotiate the less intimate relationship with her son's fiancé and not her son.

Michelle receives pleasure in being an active part of her grandchildren's development, of witnessing them grow and learn. She appears to be the centre of a family in bloom, a family strongly built with healthy relational attachments.

There is ease to her grandmotherhood; her children were in stable relationships, her own personal life was blossoming, her grandchildren were healthy and happy, and perhaps most significantly, she was an active part of their lives. Michelle's experiences of grandmotherhood are romantic, an advancement to a further dimension of existence, a transcendence, *'I've learned to love...sometimes you just go with your day-to-day life and things like that but these children (grandchildren) bring a different feeling to you and you just start to appreciate everything that you've really got.'* Life was good for Michelle.

5.7 Catherine

Catherine became a maternal grandmother at the age of 42 years. At the time of interview, Catherine was 43 years of age with two young adult children (one daughter, one son) and one grandson (from her daughter). Just after her daughter announced her pregnancy, Catherine and her husband of 23 years separated. Catherine had recently entered into a new relationship and moved to a new home. Catherine considered herself white British, not in paid employment but involved in voluntary work with a reported household income of less than £10,000.

Figure 28 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Catherine's experiences of grandmotherhood

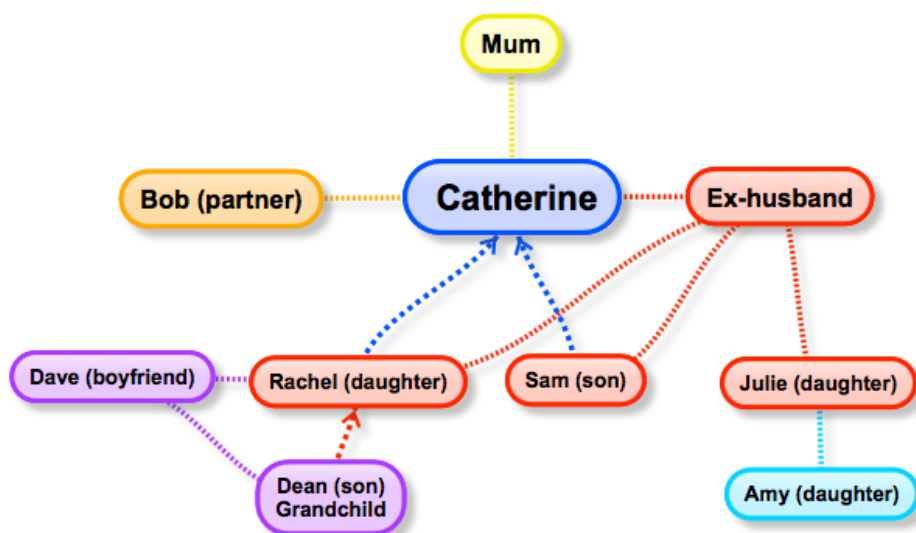


Figure 29 – A mind map illustrating Catherine's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

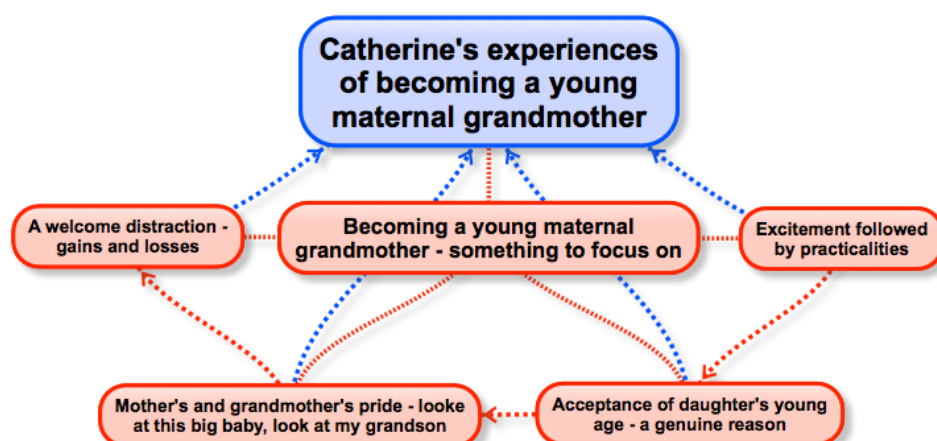


Figure 30 - A mind map illustrating Catherine's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.7.4 Catherine's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

At the time of interview, Catherine was just starting to get her life back on track after a couple of years of emotional upheaval resulting from the separation from her husband. A month after she found out she was to be a grandmother, her and her husband separated and Catherine seemed to immerse herself in grandmotherhood and motherhood as a way to deal with and distract from her marital breakup. Catherine talked about her instant excitement at the news of her daughter's pregnancy but this was then followed by concerns for her young daughter's health and wellbeing and the practicalities of a new baby. She helped her daughter prepare for motherhood by finding accommodation for her daughter and partner, wanting to see them settled in their home before the baby was born. Catherine was there at the birth of her grandson and presents a photo of her and her new-born grandson (Figure 31), recounting this with pride for her daughter who *'Coped with it really well'* and her 10lbs 11oz grandson, *'He was so big and all the nurses were coming to look from the other maternity ward [laughs]. "Look at this big baby."*

Figure 31 – Look at this big baby, look at my grandson (Catherine)



Catherine appeared completely at ease with her age at grandmotherhood but did, however, show concerns about her daughter's young age and long standing health problems (her daughter permanently wears a colostomy bag). There is an evident need for Catherine to defend and have a genuine reason for her young daughter's pregnancy, *'Because the medication, the contraception she was using didn't work because of her illness.'* This genuine reason for her daughter's pregnancy helped Catherine accept the circumstances and consequently equip her with a socially acceptable exoneration. Furthermore, her daughter was in a happy relationship with a partner she felt could, and

would, support her daughter and grandson, *'He was 19 so yeah but he'd got a full time job and you know, quite happy, the pair of them.'*

As a result of her daughter's young age, Catherine expected to be greatly involved in supporting and advising her daughter in her motherhood journey. Catherine holds ideals about grandmotherhood but also has the self-determination to develop her grandmothering to how she wants it to be. Her daughter is open to Catherine's involvement, allowing her autonomy in how she does grandmothering. This perhaps is an indication of her daughter's young motherhood but also possibly a result of her daughter's personality and the mother-daughter relationship that they share. Catherine believes their relationship has strengthened and they have grown closer as a consequence of their respective transitions to mother and grandmother and their mutual support of each other, *'It's all advice even silly, silly little things and she'll (daughter) text me and I actually feel good that, you know, and it's brought me and her a lot closer.'*

For Catherine, her daughter and grandson are hers. In this sense, belonging to and existing in a family contributes to connections and blood ties, that kinship means reciprocal belonging and owning of family members throughout the generations. In Catherine's experiences, this does not extend to the stepfamily. However, this may have been influenced by her recent separation to her husband where she openly discussed her awareness of an emotional and geographical distancing from her stepdaughter, *'I know she's not mine and I think since me and my husband have split up there has been that bit of distance.'* Grandmotherhood, for Catherine, is her achievement, and discusses this in an older photo of her and her young children (Figure 32). Grandmotherhood is a result of her procreation of her own children years before. Her daughter and grandson are hers, they belong to her, are a part of her, resulting from her.

Figure 32 – From where it all started (Catherine)



Catherine commits to her grandson, tattooing his name on her wrist as evidence of the love she holds for him. She enjoys his presence and uses photos and meaningful objects to represent him in his absence. Catherine feels maternalism for her grandson that is unexpected, a noticeable difference from her own mothering experiences. She becomes aware of her similarity to her mother in her own mannerisms and speech and perhaps bases her grandmothering and mothering on her mother's example more than she is consciously aware. Her grandson becomes a symbolisation of new beginnings for Catherine as she moves to a new home and starts a new relationship. Her grandson, in his spoken first word and his contentment in her new boyfriend's company, approves her relationship. Catherine's boyfriend, who shares an enthusiasm for her grandson, reciprocates these approvals. For Catherine, her grandson is her world, her centre of existence, *'He is basically all I think about most of the time, I just can't wait to go over there and see him every day.'*

5.8 Amanda

Amanda became a maternal grandmother at the age of 35 years. At the time of interview, Amanda was 40 years of age with four children aged 22 years, 19 years, 16 years and 1 year and two granddaughters aged 4 and 2 years (from her two eldest daughters). Amanda lived with her recently married wife and her two youngest children, considered herself white British and worked part-time. Amanda reported a household income of £10,000 to £19,999 and was a car owner.

Figure 33 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Amanda's experiences of grandmotherhood

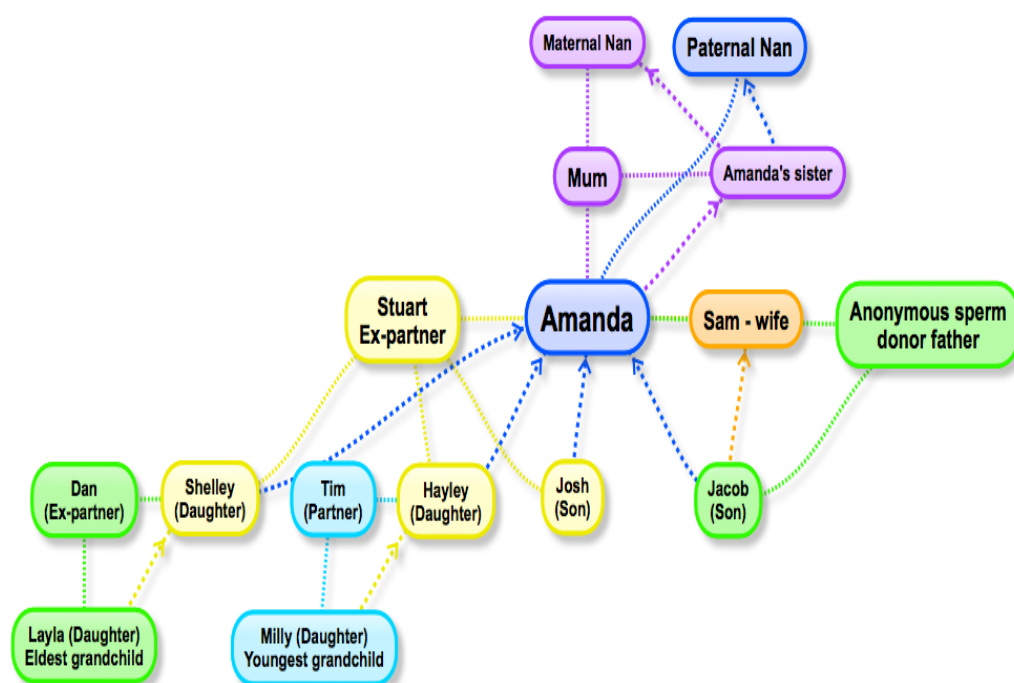


Figure 34 – A mind map illustrating Amanda's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

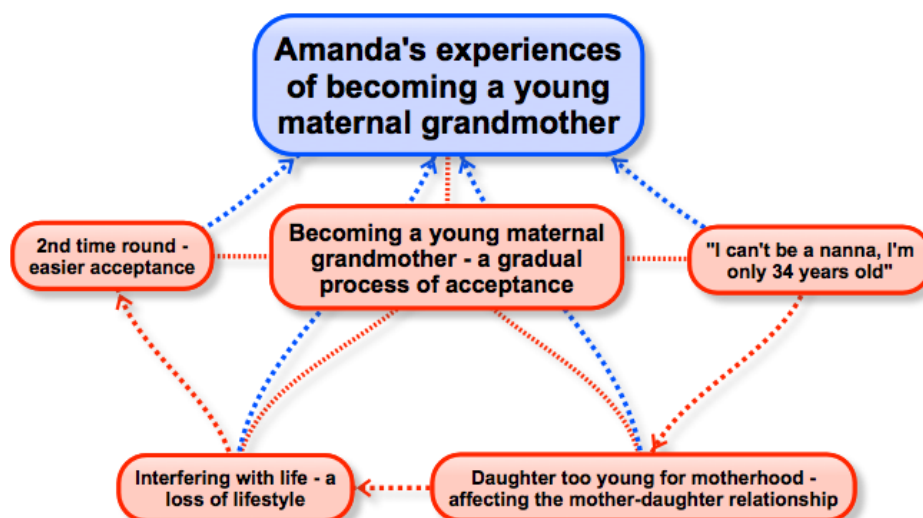
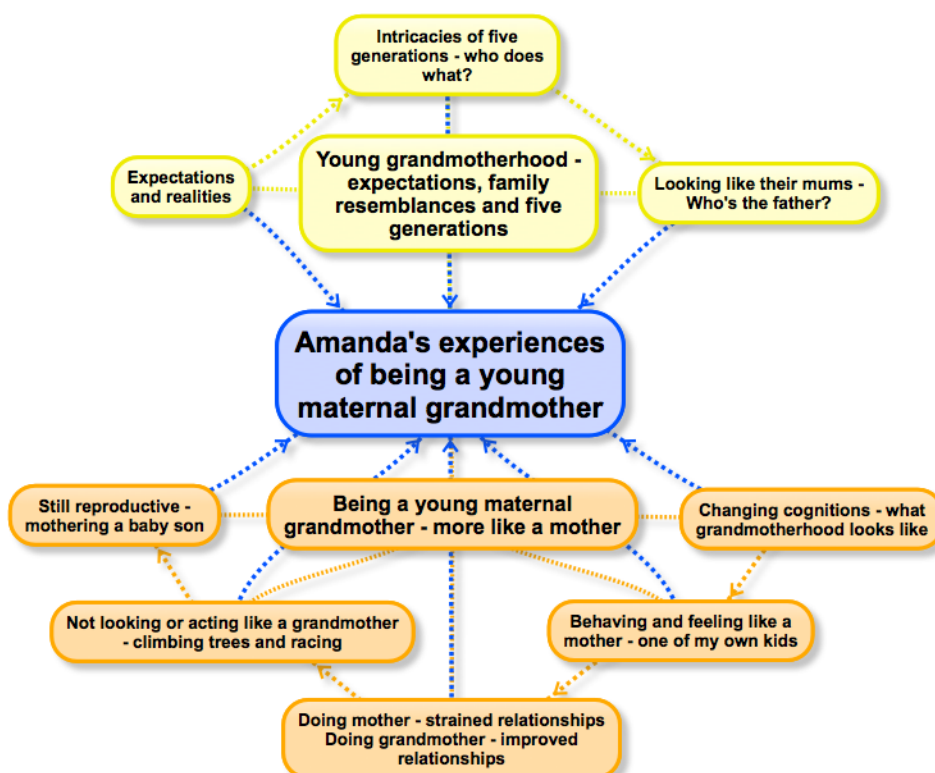


Figure 35 - A mind map illustrating Amanda's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.8.1 Amanda's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

From the start of her interview, Amanda talks of her discountenance with her young grandmotherhood. She was at a stage of her life, *'At that wild time'* when her children were growing up and she had started to enjoy a more active social life after being restrained by her own young motherhood. Amanda was on holiday with a friend when she received a telephone call from her ex-husband (her children's father) and her eldest daughter informing her of the pregnancy. As a consequence of her daughter's decision to continue with the pregnancy, Amanda withdraws herself from her relationship with her daughter and *'Didn't speak for a few months.'*

Amanda struggles to accept her daughter's pregnancy and her resulting grandmotherhood, *'It didn't feel like right to be a Nan'*; she felt she was too young to be a grandmother and her daughter, too young to be a mother, in addition to not knowing who the father was and not in a relationship. It took several months for Amanda to come to terms with the situation, worrying that she would have the responsibility for the grandchild because of her daughter's young age but *'We just gradually started talking again and then I gradually accepted it.'*

After the birth of her grandchild, which she attended and described as *'amazing'*, her daughter and granddaughter lived with her until relationships became too strained resulting in her daughter and granddaughter moving out. These tense relationships improved once they were no longer living together, *'We get on well now'*. Amanda finds her 2nd daughter's pregnancy easier to accept, mainly due to this daughter being in a relationship.

Doing grandmotherhood for Amanda is like doing motherhood again, *'I don't think it makes me feel any different to being a parent really.'* After the birth of her two granddaughters, Amanda becomes a mother again to a baby son, indicating her own fertile age at her timing to grandmotherhood and her desire and ability to reproduce further in a new relationship. Amanda thinks that her granddaughters having a baby uncle *'Is a bit weird in itself but I think that's the norm these days.'* She sees them all as one big family. They are all her children. This is evidenced in the photo (Figure 36) she discusses in interview, of her and her first new-born granddaughter, describing her granddaughter as *'My baby'*.

Figure 36 – 'My' baby (Amanda)



Amanda imparts some confusion and competition in her positioning within a five generation maternal line, *'I go round to mum's house and my nan's there, my mum's there, my daughter's there and my granddaughter's there'*. Her mother, the 2nd generation, frequently imposes herself as organizer/leader, *'My mum thinks she's above everybody in the family.'* Amanda tries to make sense of this, believing it to be her mother's jealousy of her grandmothering status to her granddaughters. With all five generations living close to each other, this matriarchal rivalry continues in their lives.

Amanda's initial expectations of grandmotherhood have not been realised fully. She did expect to (and does) support her daughters in their mothering experiences. However, Amanda's cognitions about grandmotherhood have changed through her transitional process. Amanda's predominant thoughts were that grandmotherhood represented old age and that somehow becoming a grandmother would make her look older. She discusses how these thoughts altered by observing a friend who also became a young grandmother and did not appear to become older, *'That makes me feel better because when I look at her I don't see her as any different.'* Amanda feels that she does not look or act like a grandmother and perhaps demonstrates a defiance of a set of behaviours and actions socially prescribed for grandmotherhood. In Amanda's experiences, her young grandmothering means that she takes part in physically active pursuits with her grandchildren, with frequent trips to the park (Figure 37).

Figure 37 – Trips to the park (Amanda)



'I go down the park with them (grandchildren) and I'm on the climbing frames, how many nanny's do you find on climbing frames with their grandkids?'

5.9 Siobhan

Siobhan became a maternal grandmother at the age of 40 years. At the time of interview, Siobhan was 45 years of age and had three adult children (two daughters and one son) and three maternal grandchildren aged 5 years, 3 years and 8 months with a 4th grandchild due the following month. Siobhan lived with her partner of 27 years and her son, considered herself white British, not in employment with a household income of £20,000 to £29,999.

Figure 38 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Siobhan's experiences of grandmotherhood

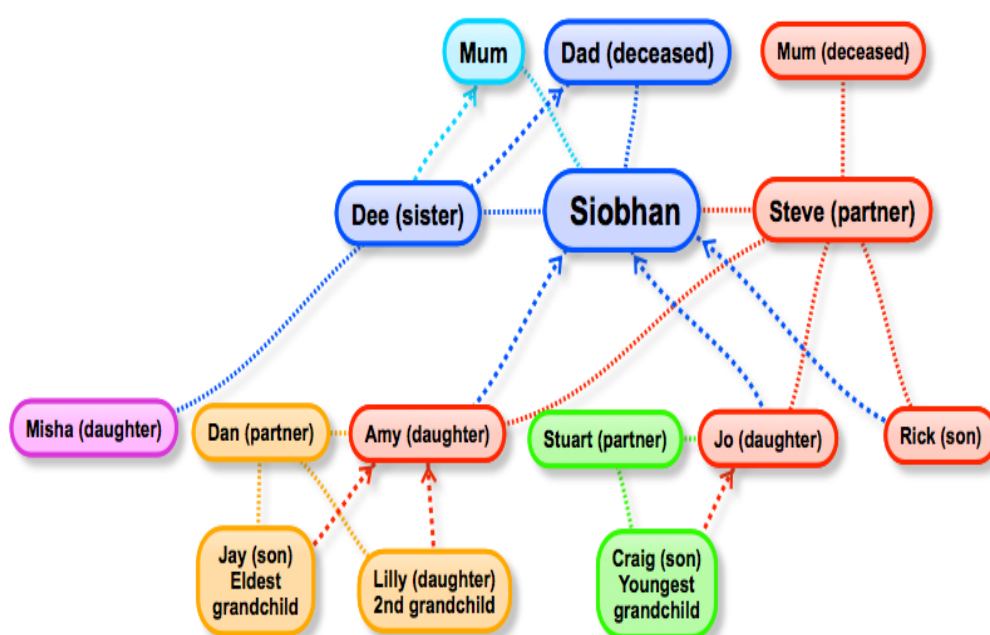


Figure 39 – A mind map illustrating Siobhan's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

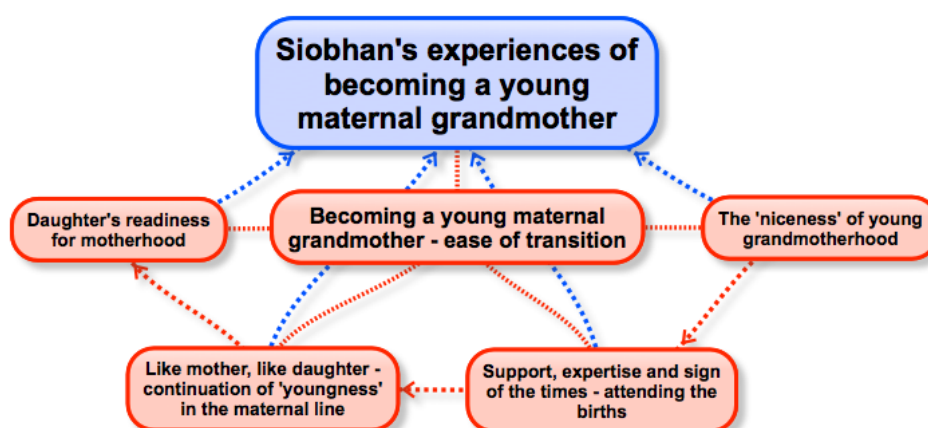
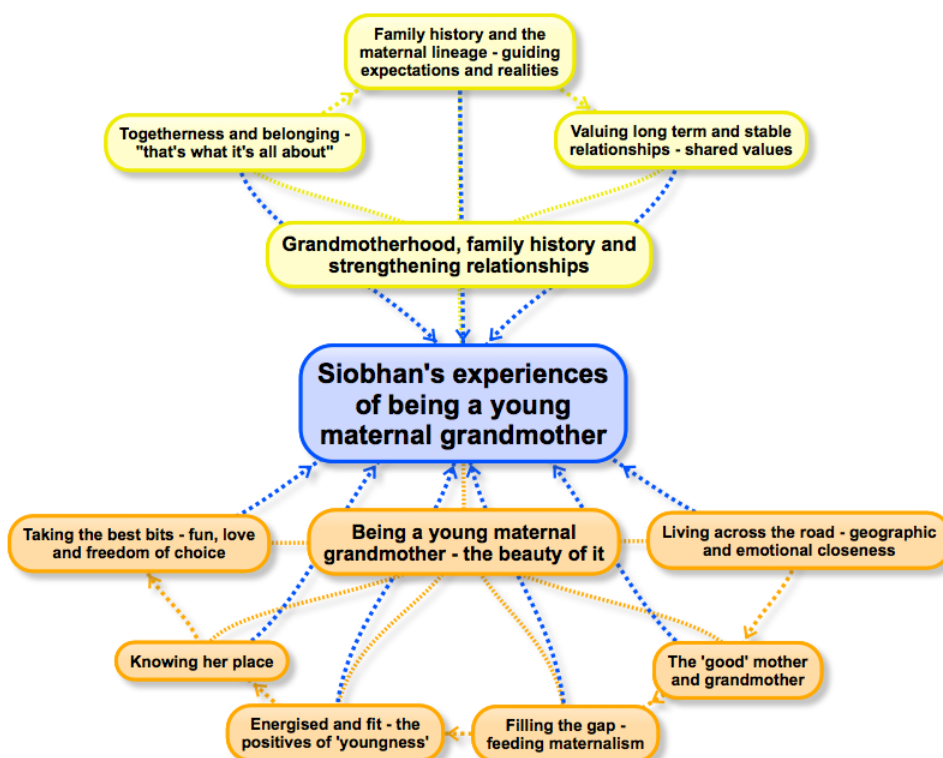


Figure 40 - A mind map illustrating Siobhan's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.9.1 Siobhan's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Siobhan's experiences of grandmotherhood have been positive without conflict or concern. Her eldest daughter was 21 years of age when she became a mother for the first time and *'It wasn't really a shock'* for Siobhan. Both her daughters were in stable relationships and had taken to motherhood with ease. Long term and stable relationships appeared to be a shared family value. Siobhan had been with her partner for 27 years and her 2 daughters had established steady relationships with their partners, *'A bit like me, find somebody; settle down and that's that.'* Siobhan discusses the *'niceness'* of young grandmotherhood, firstly because there is a continuation of young transitions through the maternal line, *'My mum were young when she had us (Siobhan and elder sister) and it's just, it's nice to be a young grandparent actually.'* Further, because she is young enough to be energised and fit, enabling her to be physically active with her grandchildren. It also feeds a maternalism that Siobhan still feels at the age of 40 years, satiating the desire to have young children to care for.

There is a beauty to grandmotherhood that Siobhan delights in. She is close to her daughters and grandchildren both geographically and emotionally. She takes the best bits of having young children to care for without the full responsibility and has the time to be a grandmother because of no work commitments. Siobhan has a freedom to choose when and for how long she spends time with her grandchildren and expects her daughters and their respective partners to hold the responsibility for their children, *'I am the grandparent, they don't live with me, they've got their own home with their parents.'* Siobhan knows her place as a grandmother and rarely feels the need to interfere in her daughters' and partners' parenting, she stays out of it, *'That's their responsibility.'* For her, grandmotherhood is *'Fun and love. That's what I get out of it anyway. Lots of cuddles, lots of laughs.'*

Siobhan implies that 'good' motherhood extends to 'good' grandmotherhood, that there is an obligation to be both by supporting her daughters in their own 'good' mothering ventures, *'You've got to look after your children and you've got to help with your grandchildren.'* Grandmotherhood has brought Siobhan's family closer together, *'I wouldn't spend time with the girls and their partners like I do if they hadn't got the children.'* Siobhan discusses a photo of her, her two daughters and grandchildren taken on mother's day, elucidating to the closeness and belongingness that her grandmotherhood means to her.

Being closer together and the sense of belonging within the generations has given Siobhan a new lease of life and a re-connection with her adult daughters who temporarily drifted away in their young adulthood. Grandchildren have filled the void of a missing young generation, *'Your life feels more fulfilled and I think it gives you something to get up for.'*

5.10 Toni

Toni became a maternal grandmother at the age of 35 years. At the time of interview, Toni was 42 years of age and had two adult children (one son and one daughter) and one granddaughter. She lived with her second husband who also had two adult children from a previous relationship (one son and one daughter). Toni considered herself white British, worked full-time, was a car owner and reported a household income of £70,000 to £79,999.

Figure 41 - A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Toni's experiences of grandmotherhood

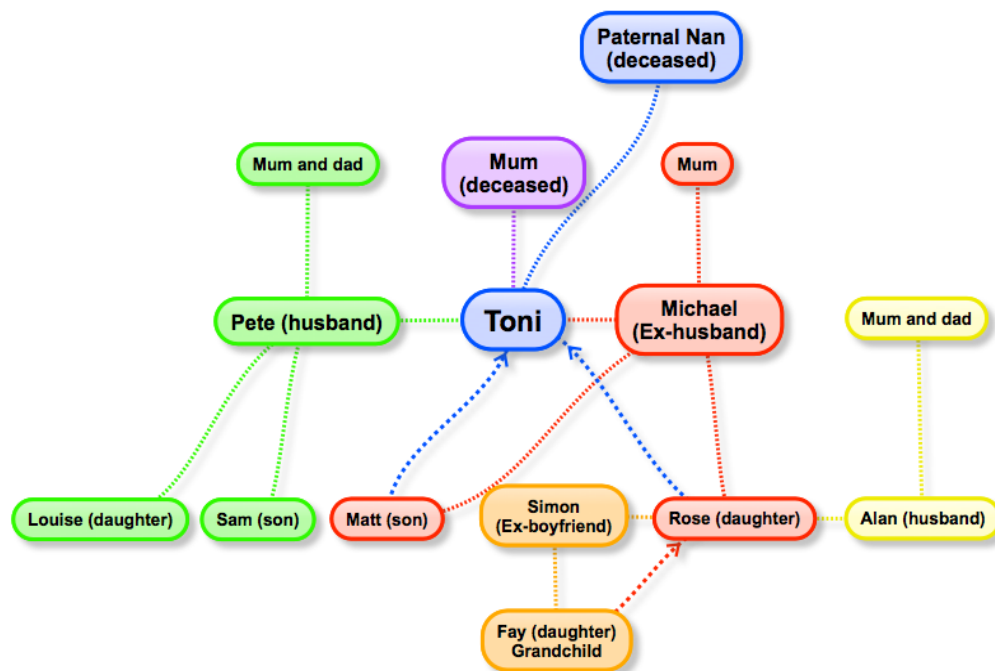


Figure 42 – A mind map illustrating Toni's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

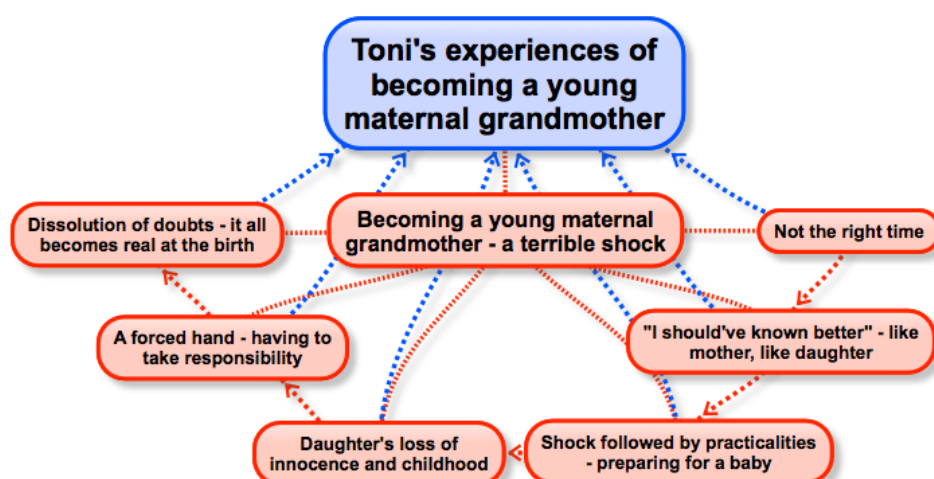
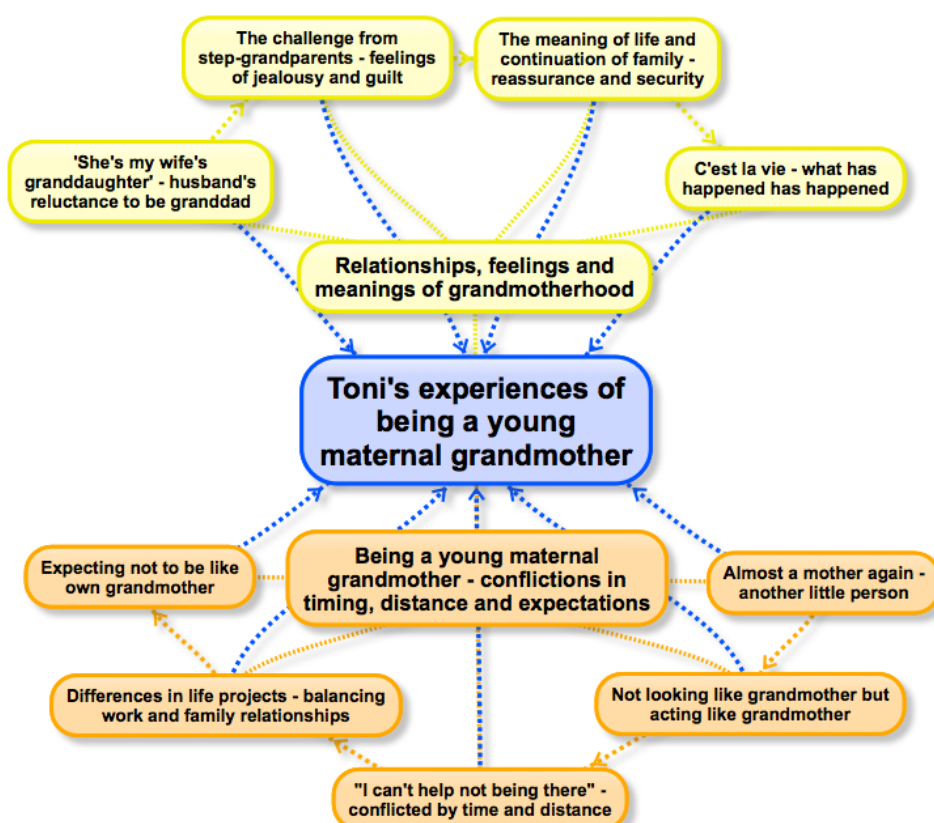


Figure 43 – A mind map illustrating Toni's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



5.10.1 Toni's experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

Toni's daughter was 16 years of age and nearly 8 months pregnant before Toni realised her daughter's situation. It was a '*terrible shock*' for Toni, feeling guilt at not recognising the signs of her daughter's pregnancy earlier, particularly as she too had become a mother at the age of 16 years. With 6 weeks until the birth, Toni appears to doubt and question herself as a mother whilst a '*mad rush*' ensues in preparation for the imminent arrival of a baby, helping her daughter with the practicalities and buying baby equipment in disbelief. It is only at the birth of her granddaughter that Toni appears to accept the situation; it all becomes real with the physical evidence of a newborn baby.

The theme of time runs throughout Toni's narrative and further represented in a photo of a clock (Figure 44).

Figure 44 – Missing out on time (Toni)



Toni felt that it was not the right time for her to become a grandmother and it was not the right time for her daughter to become a mother. Toni concerns herself with her daughter's young age and how this will impact on her daughter's future prospects, missing out on traditional education routes with a sense of her daughter's loss of childhood and innocence that '*She had to grow up quite quick.*'

For the first 2 years of her granddaughter's life, Toni's daughter and granddaughter live with her and her husband. Toni describes this shared parental responsibility as '*Almost being this child's mother*' although she has had no choice in the transition and situation. She had done her child rearing and did not want to do it again and had been looking forward to her and her husband's time together, as their children became adults and left home. After

2 years of living together, Toni's daughter moves away with her granddaughter to further her education and while Toni is happy that her daughter is making her own way in life, the distance between them causes feelings of guilt for Toni who is not being the grandmother that she would like to be. Whilst Toni has her own work and family commitments, there is a certain sense of disappointment and frustration, *'I'm missing out a bit and Fay's (granddaughter) missing out a bit as well.'* Toni makes up for this lost time when she sees her granddaughter 6 to 8 times a year by devoting this time they share to her, spoiling her with her time. This is made more pertinent to Toni by her granddaughter's paternal step-grandparents who live close by and enjoy ample time with her granddaughter. Toni is envious of them and the time they share together, stating *'I'm jealous as hell cause I think that should be me.'*

Often being mistaken for her granddaughter's mother, Toni demonstrates an awareness of her young age, of not looking like a grandmother. However, she feels like she acts like a grandmother, doing activities that socially resemble grandmothing. Toni expected not to be like her own grandmother who was overly critical and wanted her grandchildren to be quiet and out of her way, from a past generation, *'A terribly different generation, a totally different way of integrating with her children and grandchildren.'* Toni also tries to make sense (for the first time) of her realization of her husband's (her daughter's step-father) reluctance to be granddad. He often states to people in passing that *'She's my wife's granddaughter.'* Toni concludes that her husband considers himself too young to be a granddad and that perhaps her granddaughter is not his responsibility.

Grandmotherhood for Toni means a continuation of her family. That her family does not stop and there is a reassurance and security for her in her later years, *'You're not going to be left this lonely old forgotten person that's got no connection to the world.'* Presenting a photo (Figure 45) of a chair, passed down to her from her own grandparents, Toni discusses this heirloom in terms of how her granddaughter connects her to her past, to her present and to her future: that the chair will be passed down to her granddaughter in years to come so that she too will have a connection to her family past.

Figure 45 – Heirlooms (Toni)



Toni's granddaughter will take the family forward as the new generation. Toni believes this to be the meaning of life *'Cause I think well actually people think we're here to make loads of money and to get a fancy car and to get a big house, actually that's not the reason we're here...procreating and continuing the generations is really important.'*

Chapter 6 'Becoming' a young maternal grandmother

This chapter is the first of the two findings chapters in which step 9 (outlined in the methodology chapter 4, p. 78) of the IPA analytical process has been conducted. In this stage of the analysis I focused on across case patterns, exploring both convergences and divergences in the grandmothers' experiences (see appendix O – 'Becoming' essential experiences tables). In this chapter, I discuss interpretations of the grandmothers' experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother up to and including the birth of their first grandchild. In chapter 7, I explore the experiences of being a young maternal grandmother from the birth of their first grandchild.

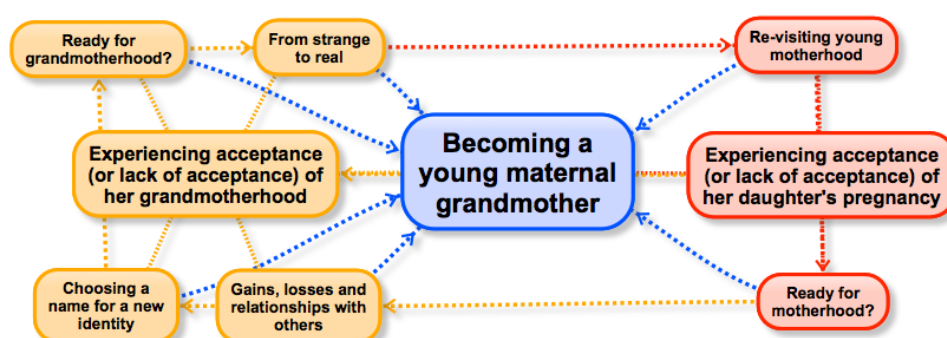
I made the decision to exclude reference to the existing literatures within the findings chapters. This was because after writing initial drafts that included such, I felt that this was distracting from the experiential quality of the participating grandmothers' experiences. Therefore, I decided that the findings of this study, in relation to theory and research, would be better situated within the discussion chapter (chapter 8).

As the researcher, it became apparent to me from the earliest stages of data collection, that the participating grandmothers' experiences were intricately entwined and influenced by their relationships with their daughters and further, their daughters (and indeed their own) actions, interactions and behaviours. This is an overarching element of their grandmothering experiences that runs throughout their discourses. Their daughters instigate their transition to grandmotherhood, and for the majority (8 out of 10) of the participating grandmothers, this was an unexpected and unanticipated life event. This seeming lack of control is further complicated by the timing of their transition to grandmotherhood and their daughter's transition to motherhood; with their daughters' young ages (ranging from 16 to 22 years) and their own lived experiences of young motherhood (ranging from 15 to 19 years).

Two essential experiences were identified in this stage of analysis. Figure 46 illustrates the essential experiences and essences interpreted for across case patterns of becoming a young maternal grandmother. The first is experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of their daughter's pregnancy in which the participating grandmothers process their daughter's pregnancy, evaluating their readiness for motherhood and re-visiting their own experiences of young motherhood. The second essential experience is experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her grandmotherhood, in which the grandmothers assess their own readiness for grandmotherhood: evaluating the perceived and experienced gains, losses and changes in relationships that grandmotherhood

may entail and have entailed and choosing a name for their imminent new identity of grandmother. Realisation of becoming a grandmother, and the determining moment of acceptance appears to be experienced most importantly at the birth of their grandchild, where previous to their grandchild's birth, some of the grandmothers discuss the strangeness of the situation. It is from the birth of their grandchild and onwards that the participating grandmothers presented photographs in their interviews, eliciting further to the pivotal moment when their grandchild is born.

Figure 46 – A mind map illustrating across case essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



The essential experiences of acceptance are interrelated with both the mothers and daughters' young ages, and consequently timing, of motherhood and grandmotherhood. Their progression to a level of acceptance was two-fold: the grandmother's evaluation of their young daughter's readiness for motherhood and the grandmother's evaluation of their own readiness for young grandmotherhood.

6.1 Experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her daughter's pregnancy

The participating grandmothers talked about their various responses to the news of their daughters' pregnancies. For 8 of the grandmothers, the pregnancy was unexpected and as such, their reactions ranged from disbelief and shock to a relatively calm evaluation of their daughter's situation. For the remaining 2 grandmothers (Siobhan and Michelle), the pregnancy was expected and hence, their acceptance of their daughter's pregnancy and their own transition to grandmotherhood seemed almost instant.

6.1.1 Ready for motherhood?

Through their narratives, the grandmothers revealed three main concerns when finding out about their daughter's pregnancy: their daughter's age, relationship status and future plans. The majority of the participating grandmothers' initial thoughts appeared to be directed at their daughters' young age at pregnancy. Nikki appraised her daughter's readiness for the responsibilities of motherhood by knowing her daughter's maturity level, *"...I thought she (daughter) was still quite young, she was 17 but she was very childlike"* (Nikki, P1, L12, daughter 17 years). Likewise, Julie consistently portrayed her daughter's behaviours throughout her pregnancy and into motherhood as childish and immature, resulting in experiences of conflict between her and her daughter.

"Um throughout the pregnancy, it was quite difficult because Siobhan (daughter) deemed that she was the only person in the whole wide world that had been pregnant before. Um so there were a few cross words, er you know every 2 minutes on the phone, 'Should this be happening, should that be happening,' er 'Just get on with it.' Do you know what I mean? 'There's women in third world countries that are giving birth in a field and going back to work 2 minutes later, shut up' [laughs]." (Julie, P1, L42, daughter 18 years).

It becomes known that Julie and Nikki take on full-time care of their grandchildren for varying amounts of time as a result of their daughters' mothering behaviours and abilities. Julie and Nikki's concern that their daughters are too young and immature to take on the responsibility of motherhood are an indication of their own perceived responsibilities as their daughters' mother. It seems that the youth and immaturity of their daughters at pregnancy provokes an evaluation of how much support they expect they will have to give, and are willing and capable to give, to their young daughters through their transitions to motherhood. I sensed that as mothers, they would have to be responsible and answerable for their daughters' mothering and consequently, their grandchildren to be. They have no control over these simultaneous transitions (daughter to mother and mother to grandmother) that they consider off time and judging that their daughters are not ready for motherhood makes it difficult for them to accept their daughter's pregnancy. There is a strong sense of disappointment presented in many of the participating grandmothers' accounts of their daughters' pregnancies, perhaps because of moral issues and/or the timing of their pregnancies. Whilst their daughter's age is a significant contributor to their felt disappointment, further

factors include their daughter's relationship status and their daughter's future plans. This can be seen in the following extract from Sam's interview.

"When I first found out um I was shocked and quite upset um cause Chantelle (daughter) was in a new relationship with this person who we didn't really know a lot about um and she was young and she was at college um and wanted to join the police force. So, you know, she'd sort of worked hard and she'd got all what she needed to do that..." (Sam, P1, L33, daughter 19 years).

Despondent at their daughters' unexpected pregnancies, many of the grandmothers, including Sam (as seen in the extract above), present a view that the pregnancy will put an end to their daughter's future education and career plans. Again, highlighting the issue of unwelcome timing, I felt that the participating grandmothers held hopes and desire to see their daughters achieve and be successful in their young adult lives. As mothers, they want the best for their daughters and they perceive early motherhood is not conducive to this. They are extremely disappointed and upset that the pregnancy happens at a time they consider out of place in their daughter's young adult life. Amanda discusses her difficulty in accepting her daughter's pregnancy, viewing her daughter's future as ruined as a consequence. In this sense, the participating grandmothers' disappointment in their daughters' pregnancies is a further contributor to their lack of acceptance.

"But um I think a lot of it as well was because she (daughter) was gonna go to college and do something with her life but she was actually at college when she fell pregnant so and I thought 'Oh she's gonna screw her life up'..." (Amanda, P3, L116, daughter 17 years).

Many of the grandmothers in this study were overwhelmed with thoughts about the practicalities of their daughters' approaching motherhood, perhaps as a result of drawing on their own experiences of young motherhood in which they had personally experienced difficulties and hardships. Upset that their daughters' would become mothers at what they considered too young an age, both Amanda and Natalie attempted to encourage their daughters to terminate their pregnancies. Natalie talks about her own experiences of young motherhood where she feels that she 'missed out' on life events and activities associated with the late teenager life stage; she did not want her daughter to experience the same. The situation was complicated further by her dislike of her daughter's boyfriend and the instability of their relationship as perceived by Natalie.

"Um it (daughter's pregnancy) was a bit of a shock for a start cause obviously she was quite young and I, I think because I'd had my daughter young, I'd had her young as well um I sort of knew what it was like having a child young and you do miss out on a lot you know and I didn't really want that for her? It was, it was difficult, you know, situation to deal with because I wanted her to be happy and I wanted her to have the baby but on the other hand I wanted her to realise that I know what it's like and I'll support her decision whatever she chooses to do and it wasn't a stable relationship either, well I didn't think it was at the time. She obviously, you know, thought everything were fine and 'We're in love' but they were always falling out and arguing and oh, you could just see it were going nowhere. Um and er obviously I spoke to her about it and explained, you know, how I felt..." (Natalie, P1, L44, daughter 19 years).

Amanda was on holiday with a friend when her daughter told her by telephone conversation that she was pregnant.

"...I kind of went mad at Shelley (daughter) on the phone and I said, I was kind of encouraging her, I know it's a horrible thing to say but I was like, 'Shelley you're too young, you're, you're only 17 years old.' Was she 17, no she was 16...I said 'You're 16 years old,' I said 'You know you can go to the Doctors and they can give you a little pill you know and it'll be just like you have a period' and you know and she was adamant, well at that time she weren't sure what to do, she was like 'Ok I'll have a think about it because I don't think I really want to keep it.' So of course, at that point, you know we spoke for a little bit and then I said 'I'll talk to you when I get home.' Um and then when I got back off my holiday um they came round, when Stuart (ex-husband) bought the kids back, he had a word with me out in the kitchen and he said to me 'Shelley has decided to keep it.' Now I knew that was down to her dad, pressuring her to keep the baby cause Shelley was, even though, cause I knew on the phone that she didn't, she didn't want to keep it really, the way she was talking to me and then she was adamant she did, when I came back. Of course, we had a fall out and I said to her 'Right you go and live with your dad for a while because I can't cope with all this' you know and it really affected me. So we fell out, didn't speak for a few months and she lived with her dad, I hardly ever saw her..." (Amanda, P2, L62, daughter 17 years).

Here, Natalie and Amanda demonstrate their perceived lack of control over their daughter's pregnancy. By encouraging their daughters to terminate their

pregnancies, they are trying to take some control of the situation that they are unhappy with and also advising their daughters of an alternative option. As mothers, they are making sure that their daughters can make an informed decision. However, it is at this point that other significant people in their daughters' lives appear to be working against them. As seen in the previous extract, Amanda's attempts at talking her daughter into a termination appear to be thwarted by her daughter's father, Amanda's ex-husband. In Natalie's experience, her own mother interferes to give her granddaughter her blessing for her pregnancy. In both experiences, they find that their attempts at taking control of their daughter's situation are impeded by others. Being undermined by significant others, adds to their frustrations and apprehension about their daughters' pregnancies.

"...I spoke to her (daughter) about it and explained, you know, how I felt and then me mum, my mum, obviously she, 'No, no, she's having the baby and that's it'...Oh my God my mum's like yeah, 'Oh no no, it's fan, it's lovely. Great grandchild,' me mum's like that, she don't really see things in, in er the way I see things but I, I was happy. I said, 'You know, it's your decision, whatever you want to do but you know, you've got your whole life ahead of you and you're very young, you know, you decide what you want to do'..."
(Natalie, P2, L56).

Natalie, along with other participating grandmothers, displayed concerns about their daughters' partners/grandchildren's fathers. Natalie portrays her daughter's partner as incidental, "a waste of space". Whilst he produced a beautiful granddaughter for Natalie, it seems that this was his only good quality. She talks about him with distaste, painting a picture of unreliability and uselessness.

"...I was trying to ring him (baby's father) all night, God knows where he was...couldn't get hold of him all night, apparently he'd left his phone off, he'd been out cause he was at his parent's house wasn't he. Left his phone off all night and got the message about an hour before she (daughter) was about to deliver. He come straight over and I thought, 'Oh God, yeah I've had it, I've been there'..." (Natalie, P2, L86).

Sam's concerns regarding her daughter's pregnancy included her daughter's choice in partner. Sam worries about his social positioning within the world; he neither worked nor was likely to. Sam demonstrates expectations, morals and values that have been formed from her own social, gendered and historical positioning within the world: from her own experiences of marriage in which

her ex-husband had supported her family as the primary breadwinner, allowing her to be a stay at home mum. The following extract reveals how she values (or devalues in this case) a person by their economic contribution to society, their employment status.

"...He (daughter's boyfriend) said he'd get a job, he got a job with the help from us (Sam and husband)... then he gave his job up and he said to Chantelle (daughter) that, that she could get housing benefit, that she, she should tell them that she lived there on her own. And so it all got a bit messy and I always speak my mind and I think I overstepped the mark... because I told him that, you know, he should work, he should support his partner and his child and he just turned round and said that um 'I don't need to work, I'm owed a living.' So I just walked, at that point, I just left because otherwise there'd have been fireworks." (Sam, P2, L68).

Sam's unfavourable opinion leads to her own admittance of "overstepping the mark" and the consequences she pays for this are devastating to her ensuing grandmothering experiences. Sam appears to have crossed the line between the concepts of interference and non-interference in her efforts to take some control over the situation. Essentially, Sam interferes because of her concerns for her daughter and her future life with a person she disapproves of. Based on her disapproval and disappointment of her daughter's choices, she pushes the boundaries of her relationship with her daughter too far: by openly disapproving of her daughter's partner and interfering, her daughter is perhaps forced into choosing between her partner or her mother. As a consequence, their mother-daughter relationship becomes estranged.

"And so it (relationship with daughter and daughter's partner) all got a bit messy...when Cory (grandson) was first born, all this was, you know, kicking off. So, of course, I've not really had much of a relationship with Chantelle (daughter) or with Cory because there's always been this ill feeling um so it's made everything quite difficult." (Sam, P2, L65).

I became aware of Natalie and Sam's beliefs about what characteristics (reliability, employability and overall stability) constitute a 'good' father and 'good' partner for their daughters and future grandchildren. They may also have been harbouring some concerns over the father's young age, although this was not explicitly discussed. Their concerns, at this stage of the transition, are heightened considerably because of their scepticism for the partners' suitability to care and support their daughters (Sam's concern for financial support, Natalie's concern for reliable and stable support).

Toni views the father of her granddaughter with a more relaxed outlook in that he, like her daughter, was too young. In Toni's opinion, it was inevitable that their relationship would not last due to their young ages. Like the father of Toni's son, Toni suggests his only wrongdoing was to procreate with her underage daughter.

"He (baby's father) was a really nice lad. I mean he was a couple of years older than her (daughter) and this is where, looking back, I can't believe that I didn't, it didn't click with me because when I had Matt (son), I was the same age as Rose (daughter), I was going out with a lad a couple of years older than me, you know... it was inevitable but you know, he (baby's father) never (.) other than illegally impregnating my daughter before she was 16, he didn't do anything wrong. You know, he, it was just one of those things. You know, he didn't intend, you know, he wasn't nasty, he wasn't, he wasn't mean to her or anything. He wanted to do the right thing but it was, they were just too young, yeah so." (Toni, P21, L804, daughter 16 years).

Reaching a point of acceptance for their daughters' pregnancies varied amongst the participating grandmothers. Sarah and Catherine's daughters appeared to have a valid reason for their unexpected pregnancies. Sarah explained that her daughter had conceived after administration of the contraceptive injection. Her daughter's pregnancy was a result of the failing contraception and this appeared to be a valid explanation for Sarah. One that perhaps she could use to socially defend the accidental nature of her daughter's pregnancy if need arose and also defend herself as a mother of a pregnant teenager.

"But she (daughter) fell on that pill jab anyway so it weren't as if it were, you know, it were an accident and, and that were it. I'm glad she got the dud jab and I didn't [laughs] cause we both went together that day for the pill jab [laughs]. We needed to go together so we remembered." (Sarah, P2, L50, daughter 17 years).

Likewise, Catherine's daughter became pregnant on oral contraceptives. Her daughter has ongoing health problems and wears a permanent colostomy bag, which meant that the contraceptives were not completely absorbed and consequently, ineffective.

"...Cause she's (daughter) got a colostomy bag...and that's why the pill didn't work because it doesn't digest the same. They (healthcare practitioners) said it should work but (.) they couldn't guarantee it so that's why they think that she fell." (Catherine, P2, L66, daughter 17 years).

This arms Catherine with a valid and socially acceptable defense of her daughter's accidental pregnancy, which is then strengthened further by Catherine's account that her daughter is in a stable relationship with her boyfriend. There is an apparent need for Catherine and Sarah to defend their daughters' young ages at pregnancy, perhaps an indication of their experiences of living in a social world where young motherhood is associated and categorised into a negatively stereotypical group. Further, their daughters' young age may tend to socially reflect on Catherine and Sarah as 'good' mothers and results in an additional reason to vindicate their daughters' pregnancies.

In contrast, Michelle and Siobhan discussed their unconcern at the news of their daughters' pregnancies. Interestingly, both their daughters' were over the age of 20 years, in stable relationships and living independently; perhaps viewed socially as a more normative transition. Michelle had become a paternal and maternal grandmother before the age of 40 years.

"...Both of them (son and daughter) have been with their partners since they were at school...not had to worry about split parents or anything, it's just, they're very stable, they've got their own houses, their own lives and they, they don't rely on me." (Michelle, P5, L212, daughter 22 years).

Siobhan also talks of her daughters' relationship status, suggesting that starting a family was the next stage in their lives as a couple. Hence, her daughter's pregnancy was stage appropriate if not age appropriate.

"S. She (daughter) was sitting on the settee and I walked in and she just held the pregnancy test up [laughs] yeah..."

M. And what was your first reaction to that?

S. Well not a lot just congratulations really cause I'd done it young and she'd been with her partner for a long time so it was the next stage really in their relationship yeah." (Siobhan, P1, L41, daughter 21 years).

Michelle and Siobhan's account of their favourable reactions to their daughters' pregnancies are a product of their daughters' reasonably 'normative' trajectories but also perhaps their own experiences of young motherhood: that

because they had positive experiences of early motherhood then their daughters, in similar situations, would be likely to have positive experiences too. They perceived that their daughters' were ready for motherhood because they were in stable relationships, living independently and out of their teenage years. These attributes, for Siobhan and Michelle, are socially acceptable for motherhood.

6.1.2 Re-visiting young motherhood

By making sense of their daughters' forthcoming young motherhood, the majority of the participating grandmothers reflected on their own experiences of being a young mother. Unlike Siobhan's accounts of her experiences of positive young motherhood, some of the grandmothers' reflections evoked discomfoting memories, feelings and emotions. Drawing on their lived experiences and the social stigma associated with young motherhood, some of the grandmothers feared the perceived social reactions that their daughter's pregnancy would possibly induce. Julie talks of feeling embarrassed and ashamed when people learned she was due to become a grandmother. Throughout Julie's narrative, there is frequent reference to her embarrassment at being a young mother and a young grandmother.

"...They're (people) like 'How many wrinkles has she got, how old is she' or hopefully they think 'Oh she's looking good for 45, 46' do you know what I mean, you're never quite sure and when people say 'How old are you,' you say '40' and they're like 'Really?' and you're thinking 'Are they being polite now. How old was she when she had hers, is she a slapper?'" (Julie, P28, L1213, mother at 16 years).

The age at which she became a mother herself appears to perturb Julie greatly, that because she was young, she must likely be viewed as a 'slapper'. This derogatory term that Julie refers to is perhaps a further indication of what Julie thinks of herself as a young mother. For her daughter then to become a young mother too, thrusts Julie back into the social spotlight as a young grandmother, bringing back to her awareness the self-consciousness she experienced as a young mother. There is a sense that she has had to continually prove herself since becoming a young mother. Two understandings can be interpreted here. Firstly, that this may be Julie's own perception of young motherhood: that teenage girls who fall pregnant are indeed promiscuous and while she was a young mother herself, it is something that she does not relish disclosing or associating herself with. Julie evidences her own perceptions of teenage girls when she presents an image of three young women, wearing skinny jeans and

Ugg boots (Unable to present due to copyrights). She talks about her own self-consciousness at being a young mother years before and although fashion has changed, the image is very similar to how she perceived herself as a 16 year old mother.

"...The only thing that's missing from that picture is 3 pushchairs. That's just your stereotypical um and do you know what if you'd asked me the same question with regards to me being, when I was 16 and had Siobhan, I would come up with a very similar image, obviously the ugg boots weren't even invented then but very, very similar type of image and I was quite self conscious, who I would stop and talk to in the street..." (Julie, P30, L1276).

Secondly, it positions Julie within the context of the social world and the social views held about teenage pregnancy in general. More importantly perhaps is that Julie appears to feel the stigma associated with her young age rather than experience any enactment of the stigma; Julie seems to impose the stigma upon herself due to her awareness and self-consciousness of the social dominant discourses surrounding young motherhood.

Turning to Ricoeur's *hermeneutics of suspicion*, it seems that Michelle is defensive of her young motherhood without provocation. While she voices some concern at what people may think, feel and say about her young age, she also states that she has *"a good strong family unit."* For her to be a young grandmother exposes her young motherhood. Michelle's lived experiences of young motherhood has resulted in her awareness of the stigma surrounding young parentage and as a consequence, she almost feels 'degraded'; a perception that she belongs to a group of young parents socially devalued and viewed as incompetent. This is perhaps a worry that Michelle has lived with since her transition to motherhood and as such, champions her case for 'good' motherhood.

"I was like 'I'm 36, how do I tell people I'm gonna be a grandma at 36,' you know, they'll look at me and say, and a few people did actually, 'Well you must've been really young then' and I almost felt like I was being degraded at the fact that because I was 36 and yes, because I was quite young when I had Carl (son) but we've always had a good strong family unit." (Michelle, P6, L274, mother at 15 years).

Like Julie, it appears that Michelle is concerned about what other people will think of her rather than experiencing enacted stigma explicitly. Julie and Michelle demonstrate felt stigma: feelings of shame and the fear of

discrimination and rejection. They are aware of the stigmatisation of young motherhood, a situation that their daughters' are now in and a situation that they themselves were once in. In this sense, their young daughters' pregnancies stimulate a reluctant re-visiting of their own past young motherhood that they have been able to conceal for a number of years. Further, their experiences illuminate the sociocultural dominant discourse of teen motherhood as socially undesirable and that teenage mothers fall outside the normative boundaries of 'good' motherhood.

For some of the grandmothers, the thought of telling other people that their daughter was pregnant caused a considerable amount of anxiety. Toni explained that they found out about her daughter's pregnancy a month before the baby was born. In shock and disbelief, Toni worries about how she will inform significant others in hers and her daughter's life.

"Anyway, it was a bit of a roller coaster, at that point, cause you just think, 'Oh shit' [laughs], 'Now what?' You know and um and I, so I was in terrible shock and obviously you sort of think 'Oh shit, how do you tell her nanna? How do you tell, what's her dad going to say?'..." (Toni, P2, L66, daughter 16 years).

Toni concerns herself with the reactions of other people to the news of her young daughter's pregnancy. Drawing on her negative experiences of young motherhood, "...Called names and you know, made to feel bad and all those things..." (P4, L145), Toni fears that her daughter will experience the same as her. As her mother, Toni wants to protect her daughter from the criticism that she believes will ensue for her and her daughter but at the same time, is utterly shocked that her daughter is pregnant at 16 years of age, as she herself had been 16 years previously.

The participating grandmothers' accounts of their transitional experiences evidence a process of evaluation of their daughter's pregnancy. For many, they are inundated with worrying questions and thoughts of the practicalities of their daughter's impending motherhood: Are their daughters mature enough to be responsible for their own baby? Are they in a secure and stable relationship with the baby's father? Who is the father and can, and will he support them? What about their future education and career plans? How will they afford to keep a child? Where will they live? Based on their own experiences of young motherhood, they assess the situation with an experienced insight of the difficulties and hardships of young mothering. Accepting, or lack of accepting, their daughter's pregnancy was a result of this evaluation process but

essentially there appeared to be a similar resulting attitude that what has been done cannot be undone. Toni discusses this in the extract below:

"Whatever, whatever's meant to happen will happen and you'll make the best of it so it was um (2), it (daughter's pregnancy) was quite shocking but at the same time you think 'Well let's just make the best of this now.' You know, 'We're in this situation now; let's just make it work'." (Toni, P2, L86, daughter 16 years).

With little control over the situation, the majority of grandmothers in this study seem to resign themselves to their daughter's pregnancy and concentrate on supporting their daughters' through their pregnancies and forthcoming motherhood. The levels of acceptance varied between each grandmother and the amount of time taken to reach a level of acceptance for their daughter's pregnancy differed. Amanda, for example, took the first 7 months of her daughter's pregnancy to come to terms with the situation, straining her relationship with her daughter as a consequence. Whilst most of the grandmothers would not have chosen motherhood for their daughters at this time, they acknowledge that there is nothing they can do to change it. In this sense, they surrender to an acceptance of the situation because there is little alternative without alienating themselves from their daughters and their future grandchildren as Sam experienced.

6.2 Experiencing acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of her grandmotherhood

An essence of the participating grandmothers acceptance process was their perceptions of their own readiness for grandmotherhood. This evaluation appeared to be secondary to their primary concerns for their daughter's readiness for motherhood, yet an important part of the overall acceptance experience. All the grandmothers seemed to assess their own readiness for grandmotherhood, based on where they were in their own life projects. Hence, the knowledge that they were to become a grandmother, of which there is no choice in the matter, results in the fundamental ways in which they view themselves; a change in their identity. For some of the grandmothers in this study, this change appears distressing and unwelcome and consequently they demonstrate hesitancy in accepting their transition to grandmotherhood.

6.2.1 Ready for grandmotherhood?

Julie appeared to struggle in accepting her transition to grandmotherhood. At the time of her daughter's first unplanned pregnancy, Julie was also actively parenting a 1-year-old son from an unplanned pregnancy.

"...It was quite strange as well obviously with my youngest one (.) he (son) was a, I can't say an overall mistake, that's wrong but he wasn't planned erm so he was only very young at the time as well so it was quite surreal. Being a mum all over again with a 9 year gap and having a little one myself and then being told you're a grand, you're going to be a grandmother as well, it was like 'Wha:::t' [laughs]" (Julie, P2, L50, 36 years).

Julie's pronoun use here (you're instead of I'm) suggests an emotional distancing from her reality. Additionally, the hesitation in saying 'grandmother' implies a difficulty for her in accepting and understanding her transition to grandmotherhood. Julie's body is young and fertile, perceiving herself to look like a mother of a young child rather than a grandmother. It seems that Julie is battling an inner conflict between her subjective young and fertile body image and the socially constructed elderly and infertile body image of grandmotherhood. Further, making room in her life for an additional identity of grandmother, when she is actively parenting a young child and working appears to be problematic for Julie at this point in time.

"I had still got young children myself and I was working, my husband works, you have a routine that you do pretty much. Um you have your own family unit don't you and even though Siobhan (daughter) is part of that still, no matter where she lives, she's not an immediate part of it." (Julie, P18, L777).

Amanda also talks of her difficulties experienced in coming to terms with grandmotherhood. She feels she is too young to become a grandmother and that grandmotherhood will interfere with her present life. For the first 7 months of her daughter's pregnancy, Amanda appears to reject and deny her imminent grandmotherhood.

"I was like 'No I can't be a nanna: I'm only 34 years old.'" (Amanda, P2, L50, 35 years) "It was because of her (daughter) age and the fact that I couldn't handle the fact that I was gonna be a nanna when I was out all the time enjoying my life cause I'd settled down so early on in my life, I was enjoying myself. I was out all the time, I had so many friends around me and I was

always out doing stuff and even though I was a mum it just didn't feel like, right to be a Nan as well." (Amanda, P2, L89, 35 years).

For Julie and Amanda particularly, grandmotherhood was off time, it was not the right time in their lives. Julie was mothering a young son and felt that she looked like a mother rather than a grandmother. Amanda had started to enjoy a busier social life after having her children at a young age. Both felt they were too young to become a grandmother and both suggested that they looked too young to be a grandmother. To take on the identity of grandmother, was to take on an identity that they felt was too early. They were young, reproductive-bodied women opposed by an imposed identity associated with older, unproductive-bodied women. Natalie and Sarah also discussed their awareness of their reproductive bodies.

"...When I first found out (about daughter's pregnancy), it was a bit, 'Oh I am young' because I'm still and I was, you know, within relationships and I could've still had another child myself really, you know, it was strange. Because I was, I was I suppose really young then..." (Natalie, P16, L677, 36 years).

Natalie describes the transitional period to grandmotherhood as 'strange' because she realises she is young and that the possibility of having another child herself adds a sense of surrealism to the situation. Her daughter's pregnancy provokes a conscious reminder of her own diminishing reproductive window as her chronological age increases. The strangeness that Natalie experiences is perhaps a result of her emerging conscious thoughts in which she thinks of her own reproductive capabilities and how this would fit in with her daughter's pregnancy and motherhood. The sense that it may be morally and socially inappropriate to mother another baby after her daughter has become a mother and her, a grandmother, makes the situation somewhat surreal for Natalie. I felt here that Natalie makes sense of this by thinking that her daughter's pregnancy brings an end to her own reproduction and this, she has to accept, in order to ready herself for grandmotherhood.

Similarly, Sarah was 35 years of age when her daughter informed her of the pregnancy. She was still young enough to have a child of her own which could have been a possibility with her second marriage to Dan. Despite her awareness of her own fertility, becoming a grandmother did not appear to concern Sarah with regards to her own reproductive body.

"I think Dan (husband) would've liked another one (child) but (2) it never bothered me, I just got on with me life. I'd just, I could go out, do what have you, I didn't and now the grandkids are here, that's it, don't matter now [laughs], it don't matter." (Sarah, P2, L57, 36 years).

6.2.2 Gains, losses and relationships with others

As Sarah refers to in the above, the transitions to motherhood and grandmotherhood also have implications for their relationships with others. It is not only the mother and daughter who are adjusting to an imminent new identity but also other family members: for example, partner to become father, father or step-father to become grandfather or step-grandfather, sisters and brothers to become aunts and uncles and grandparents to become great-grandparents. Hence, becoming a grandmother and a family in transition further induced an evaluation of self-perceived gains, losses and relationships with others that grandmotherhood would entail. As discussed previously, some of the grandmothers felt that their transition was out of time. Amanda not only felt that she was too young to become a grandmother but also that grandmotherhood would interfere with her social life, expecting that she would have to take responsibility for her grandchild because of her daughter's young age.

"And I thought 'I'm gonna have the responsibility of her (daughter) baby as well' cause being so young I knew that I would have the responsibility so of course I couldn't cope with that and it really affected me, for a while." (Amanda, P3, L95).

Amanda portrays a sense of loss in her narrative and explains how she refused to accept her daughter's pregnancy and consequently, her grandmotherhood until a couple of months before her grandchild is born. It is only towards the latter stages of her daughter's pregnancy that Amanda appears to accept the situation and re-negotiates her relationship with her daughter, possibly letting go of her current life in order to adapt to her imminent new identity. However, Amanda also talks of how she was becoming bored with her social life at this time and 6 weeks after her granddaughter was born, she re-starts her relationship with Sam (who she is married to at the time of her interview).

"I've settled down more now but I think that's because I'm with Sam. You know, I'd possibly still be going out if I weren't with Sam but then before I got back with Sam um because we were together before and then we split up, before I got back with Sam um I was getting bored of it anyway, I was, I was having more girly nights round here on a Friday night even though I was still going out but going out Monday to Sunday, you know and going out Friday, Saturday and Sunday night, out in the town, that was really getting a bit boring." (Amanda, P7, L307).

Amanda's evaluation is based on her own perceptions of how she thinks her daughter will cope with motherhood, and how much time and responsibility she thinks she will have to commit to being a grandmother. In this sense, Amanda feels that she will have to relinquish her present social life because grandmotherhood will need her time, and after seven months of deliberation and emotional strain, Amanda makes her choice and ultimately, reaches a point of acceptance.

Toni was not only dealing with the shock of her daughter's pregnancy but also its impact on her relationship with her husband. Toni and her husband had been looking forward to 'our time together'.

"...It was very strained with my husband. Um (.) he's not Rose's (daughter) dad so you know, it was like 'Oh God', you know, cause he moved in with us and um, cause I've been with him for 11 years now so (4), yeah so you're getting to the point, Rose is getting to mid teens, thinking about going to university, you know, and he's thinking 'Oh you know, we'll soon have our time together', cause he's got kids as well but they're older than, than Rose um so they'd already gone off to university and you know, so it was almost like we, we're getting to the point of our time and then all of a sudden it was like oh [laughs] actually...but I mean he's really easy going, he's, you know, he's, again, he's a very philosophical person, 'Well no this is happening, we've just got to make the best of it'. Um I had a reasonably good relationship with Rose's dad up until that point and then that just went. Um it was my fault she was pregnant, I wasn't looking after her, I wasn't taking care of her da da da..." (Toni, P8, L336).

Toni talks here of how her daughter's pregnancy interferes with her and her husbands' future expectations; that the pregnancy puts an end to, or at the very least delays, their anticipated childfree time together. Not only is her relationship to her husband affected but also her relationship to her ex-husband (her daughter's father) and her daughter's relationship with her dad.

"I got the blame, like mother like daughter, all that shit thrown at you. You know, he (ex-husband) wasn't very nice and he wasn't very nice to Rose (daughter) either and they, they didn't speak for, considering she's his daughter, you know, the names he called her was, were pretty awful... I had an almighty row with my ex husband because he started to refuse to pay any maintenance for her...there was an amount he had to pay from the child support agency but he always topped it up with a bit extra but he just cut it right down to the minimum. He said 'No, if she wants to be an adult, she's an adult', he's an asshole, sorry. The reason why we're divorced..." (Toni, P9, L354).

Blaming Toni for their daughter's pregnancy, her ex-husband accuses her of not being a 'good' mother. Adding to the disbelief and disappointment that Toni feels herself about her daughter's pregnancy, she also has to deal with her husbands and ex-husband's distress at the situation. With the accusations of bad motherhood, Toni finds herself questioning her mothering and subsequently blaming herself.

"...You're thinking, 'Oh this is all my fault, if only I'd said this and not let her (daughter) go out and not done this and talked about pregnancy more', you know, and you think 'And now she's having to go through all this because I haven't done my job properly'..." (Toni, P5, L200).

In shock and disbelief, Toni turns to questioning herself, as a mother and as a previous young mother. Her transition to grandmotherhood appears to arouse a time for self-reflection and self-doubt, describing a temporary loss of future expectations for her and her husband and a transient loss of confidence in her abilities as mother.

Sam presented a photo (Figure 47) of an empty purse in her interview, discussing the resulting financial impact of supporting her daughter through pregnancy and into motherhood.

Figure 47 (D) – An empty purse (Sam)



"...We (Sam and ex-husband) bought everything, um the pram, the cot, everything that a child would need [laughs] cause they (daughter and partner) had no money so, you know, it was everything." (Sam, P10, L417).

Sam talks about how she and her ex-husband (husband at the time) bought everything for her daughter's house and for the baby. Repercussions come later for Sam's financial support when she learns that her daughter and partner are in rental arrears. Being guarantors, Sam, and as a consequence, her new partner and her ex-husband are liable to pay the £3000 worth of debt.

"I had to turn round to my new partner and say 'This has come through the door' (court summons) um so, of course, he wasn't too pleased but he understood that I felt really bad about it cause I only work part time so that would be him really that would be paying for it. Um so got in touch, her dad obviously had one as well and so we paid half each so that was not a good point. Um bearing in mind when I had that I wasn't seeing her (daughter). So, so it was even worse um and it, and it sort of, it infuriated me because um (.) we had to make cut backs to be able to pay this and then in their house they'd got everything but they didn't work. They'd got laptops and ipads and all sorts and we were having to go without to fund, so it, it was, it grated a bit." (Sam, P3, L110).

In this sense, Sam, her new partner and ex-husband experience material losses as a consequence of her transition to grandmotherhood and her ex-husband's transition to grandfatherhood. Whilst she is not at all satisfied with her daughter's pregnancy and relationship to her partner, Sam and her ex-husband's financial support is an indication of their supportive parenting attributes. If Sam and her ex-husband had not financially supported their daughter (irrespective of how they felt about the pregnancy and the baby's

father) then their moral identities as 'good' parents might be socially questioned. Clearly it is not just a case of how other people will view them as parents that Sam and her husband, at the time, offer financial support. Quite simply, it can be suggested that they offer it out of their love for their daughter; they are concerned for their daughter's and their unborn grandchild's welfare.

Catherine's experiences of becoming a grandmother were intertwined with her separation from her husband after 23 years of marriage. Catherine portrays a sense of gain and loss as she describes the transitional stage to grandmotherhood as a welcome distraction. Catherine is gaining a grandchild but losing her husband. Focusing on her daughter's needs and her grandchild to be comforts her (to an extent) through her marital separation and diverts her attention somewhat from a drastic and emotional upheaval in her life at the time.

"I mean I looked forward to the birth since, since she (daughter) very first told me and my husband and I split up a month after she told me um so that actually (.), that was one thing I focused on that kept me going. I don't think I'd have coped half as well, I didn't, I didn't cope [laughs], not at the beginning but that, that give me something to focus on..." (Catherine, P3, L97).

Catherine explains how she focuses her energy into mothering and her forthcoming new identity of grandmother, in an effort to distract her from the turmoil of marital separation. Not only is grandmotherhood a gain for Catherine, but also the closer connection she experiences with her daughter.

"...We (Catherine and daughter) had an Ok relationship but she was closer to her dad but that (daughter's pregnancy) re-enforced our relationship and now she says I'm her best friend and um the same with her, we're really close." (Catherine, P7, L216).

6.2.3 Choosing a name for a new identity

While Sarah appeared unconcerned at her age at grandmotherhood, choosing a grandmothering name seemed more perturbing.

"...I didn't want to be, I don't know, I didn't want to be a nanny and I didn't, I didn't, just, I could've just been Sarah but I knew I couldn't do that. I didn't want to be a grandma, no, I just felt too young to, to, to be called, to be called anything, I don't know, but it were just mamma and, I don't know how mamma come about. I'm mamma and that were it." (Sarah, P15, L486, Mamma).

Likewise, all of the participating grandmothers discussed their choice of name for their forthcoming identity of grandmother. For most, deciding on a name appeared to be a part of the acceptance and preparation process; either during their daughter's pregnancy or after their grandchild was born. This choice appeared to be based on a number of contributing factors: the name as a social indicator of their age, their sociocultural background and their family history and generational positioning. Nine out of the ten grandmothers chose to be called 'Nan', 'Nanny', 'Nanna' or 'Mamma'. Only Siobhan was called 'Granny' based on her own family history in which her paternal grandmother (named Nan) was older than her maternal grandmother (named Gran).

"I'm Granny [laughs]...cause my mum's a Gran and her mum was a Gran and my dad's side was Nan but she was always a lot older, my Nan. She was, she was about, she was retired when I was born, you know, so she was of the older, she was quite an old mum. For her time, she was quite old when she had her children. I see a Nan as somebody older than a Gran...but other people tend to see a Gran as really old and then Nan as the younger..." (Siobhan, DTC, Granny).

Siobhan speaks of her awareness of how other people view the names of Gran and Nan. Siobhan suggests that Gran is most frequently associated with older age, whilst Nan may be associated with a younger age. However, Siobhan chooses her name derived from her own familial experiences of her grandmothers and her mother's choice in name. Amanda and Natalie speak about choosing a name that disassociates them with old age.

"Well um a Nanna or Nanny would've been fine...I didn't want Grandma. When you think of Grandma, you think of an old lady with blue hair hobbling along [laughs]. Grandma sounds so old these days..." (Natalie, DTC, Nanny).

"...I remember being at work one day and me and some of the girls at work were going through all these young sounding names cause obviously I was only 34, I didn't want to be called Grandma or something like that um [laughs]...It's portrayed as an old lady, yeah grandma, yeah." (Amanda, DTC, Nanna).

By choosing a name, all the participating grandmothers appeared to be preparing themselves for their new identities; a part of the acceptance process. Through their own experiences of living within the social world, the majority rejected a name that they felt would socially age them. Perceiving themselves as too young to be 'grandmother' or 'granny', they opt for names that are more likely to represent their younger bodied selves.

6.2.4 From strange to real

Many of the grandmothers implied that becoming a young maternal grandmother felt strange, of a surreal time in their lives. This was primarily due to the unexpected timing of their daughter's pregnancy and their grandmotherhood. The experience of strangeness is a consequence of their shock at their daughter's young age and their own young age: a circumstance that they are unable to fully comprehend and reluctant to believe.

For the majority of the participating grandmothers, the gain of a new generation, a new baby, a new identity and the final point of acceptance came with the reality of the birth of their grandchild. After experiencing a sense of surrealism, of 'strangeness' at their unanticipated transitions, 9 out of the 10 grandmothers attended the birth of their first grandchild. Sam was the only grandmother who did not attend her grandson's birth as a direct consequence of the conflict she was experiencing with her daughter and partner. Possibly the grandmothers' attendance at the births was a result of their daughters' young ages and their relationship statuses, although for some, they attended alongside their daughters' partners. For the grandmothers in this study, the experience of attending their grandchild's birth provoked a number of emotions and reactions. It appeared to be the essential time for the realisation and consequently, completion (or near completion) of their acceptance for the becoming of their new selves: their grandmotherhood. Some of the grandmothers discussed the essentialness of immediately bonding with their new-born grandchild, both physically and emotionally; an experience they felt had been neglected or not possible to engage in with the birth of their own children. In this sense, these grandmothers had the opportunity to reform their experiences of childbirth through their daughters. Their attendance at the births

also highlighted their primary supportive motherly role through their daughters' labour and childbirth.

The adaptation to becoming a grandmother for Sarah posed some difficulty after her own past experiences of unsuccessful pregnancies. Sarah talks of her reluctance to feel excited about her future grandmotherhood based on her loss of her first baby at 7 months. Hence, she does not allow herself to feel any emotions until her granddaughter is born safely.

"...Was waiting for her (granddaughter) to cry and that were it as soon as she'd done that, that was me, I was gone. She weren't real until then." (Sarah, P3, L122).

Sarah appeared to be protecting her own emotions and feelings based on her past experiences of pregnancy. She would not allow herself the pleasure to anticipate her new grandchild until she had been delivered safe and well. After this, Sarah experiences an onslaught of emotions that she had repressed throughout her daughter's pregnancy.

"...I couldn't feel, I think because I'd lost so many babies in between (.), I couldn't feel excited for her (daughter) being pregnant or anything until the baby (grandchild) were in my arms, do you know what I mean? And then that, that were it. I, I don't know, I, I were walking on the moon, it were, it were unbelievable, it really were." (Sarah, P3, L117).

The surrealism of her daughter's pregnancy and the fear that Sarah describes is only extinguished and replaced with a reality when her grandchild is born. The reality that Sarah talks about here is further evidenced in Toni's experiences of the birth of her grandchild. Toni had been in total disbelief, doubt and shock regarding her daughter's pregnancy until the birth of her granddaughter, at which time, she experienced dissolution of these feelings. In response to the physical form of her new baby granddaughter, Toni experienced a realisation; that her worries and concerns no longer mattered.

"Um but sure enough, obviously, she (daughter) had the baby and, and I had my granddaughter and um then after that, you just think, it doesn't, you know, all the while you're thinking at that time, 'Oh God what are they going to think, what are they going to think of her, how's it going to affect her in her life now' um you know, 'What she going to do about school,' you know all these things and um but then when she, when Fay, who's my

granddaughter, this is Fay (shows photo) came along, it, actually, it's, it don't matter." (Toni, P2, L78).

Natalie talks of her experiences of her granddaughter's birth and portrays a sense of making amends for what she missed out on at the birth of her own daughter. Natalie is the first to hold her granddaughter and to talk to her, initiating the immediate process of physical and emotional attachment that she felt she had not had the opportunity to do with her own daughter at birth. Whilst her granddaughter's father is present, Natalie appeared to be taking control and ensuring that she was able to re-construct her experiences of childbirth.

"...It was difficult labour so they had to, to, she (daughter) was quite a mess when she (granddaughter) came out kind of thing. Um but no, as soon as she was born me daughter was literally flaked cause obviously she'd had a long, difficult labour. Um I was the first one to hold her, I made sure of that. [Laughs] He (baby's father) was there as well and um yeah, oh yeah I got her and held her in me arms...Oh and it was, it was fantastic yeah, they had to put her in cause she was a little bit um jaundice when she was born so they put her under the little lamp and yeah and I sat with her and I said 'Ooh I'm gonna always love you, you're gonna have everything you want' and it was like, like my, it was different to mine because I was so young when I had my child and when I had her, I had her and when I had her literally I flaked out I did. But this was like, so this was like the first for me because I hadn't held mine like this..." (Natalie, P3, L113).

After Amanda's initial rejection of her impending grandmotherhood, the birth of her first granddaughter eradicates any remaining negation she may have had. Discussing a photo of her and her new-born granddaughter (Figure 48), Amanda talks of her granddaughter as her own and this sense of ownership is discussed in further detail in the next chapter. Like Natalie, Amanda talks of her attendance at the birth as an opportunity to experience childbirth in a different way. As an observer, she has the opportunity to witness the physicality of her granddaughter's birth. Further, Amanda engages with her granddaughter immediately after the birth, by dressing her.

Figure 48 (D) – 'My' baby (Amanda)



"It was amazing. My first birth I've actually, cause when you give birth you don't see it do you and it was actually amazing seeing my own child, obviously it's not nice seeing her in pain but she handled it really, really well, she wasn't screaming, she handled the birth amazingly. She was brilliant. So it was an amazing experience...I dressed her (granddaughter) as soon as she was born. I was there all hours with Shelley (daughter) cause she was kind of like in slow labour and then we went down there and it was quite, kind of like really slow and then all of a sudden it was quite intense when they broke her waters but yeah, it was a phenomenal experience seeing her give birth." (Amanda, P3, L129).

Michelle became a paternal grandmother first. Her son and daughter-in-law lived a fair distance away from Michelle and so Michelle did not attend the birth of her first grandchild. Discussing a photo (Figure 49) of her first new-born grandchild, Michelle talks of her desperation to meet her granddaughter for the first time. Her granddaughter, Rose, was born 4 weeks premature and so when Michelle does meet her for the first time, Rose is in an incubator and Michelle describes the whole experience as emotional.

Figure 49 - Meeting Rose for the first time (Michelle)



"She (Rose) was my first grandchild who was 4 weeks premature um and this was the first time that I saw Rose and it was an extremely emotional day because you didn't actually know (.), although she was only 4 weeks premature, you don't know what's gonna happen and you've got all these, all these wires and all tubes and all these bleeps going on and stuff and the only, the only thing you could do through the incubator is put your hand in there and, and touch her little hand... But um that's the first time we saw her and it were very emotional." (Michelle, P8, L338).

Michelle meets her baby granddaughter who is in an incubator, connected to wires and tubes and surrounded by an uncertainty of her future existence. Michelle projects distress at the physical barrier of the incubator, she cannot physically connect with her granddaughter completely, and she can only touch her hand. The importance, to Michelle, of this initial physical contact is further evidenced when she discusses the photo of her and her new-born maternal grandson, Marc (Figure 50). Michelle does attend his birth and discusses the pleasure of witnessing him being born, of being one of the first people to hold him and welcome him into the world.

Figure 50 (D) – Holding Marc (Michelle)



"But um those 4 hours that I were there (through labour) were fabulous. I just would not have missed it for the world and to watch him be born, you know to watch his head and his shoulders and his body, just appear, it's absolutely fab. You come out and it's like (.), 'Did that really just happen? Have I just watched a baby being born?' It's just a very surreal time, a really surreal time. So I have got with Marc a very strong bond because I was there and I was like one of the people to hold him so I, yeah very strong bond with Marc." (Michelle, P12, L439).

Michelle depicts the surrealism of Marc's birth, to watch her grandchild born, the miracle of life, in an almost dreamlike state. She is consciously aware that it is happening but questions whether she actually experienced it. Her physicality at the birth holds much significance for her, she is there in body, she perceives the birth of her grandson through her senses and she makes a new physical and emotional connection to her grandson at the very start of his life. Further, witnessing her child give birth to her own baby is surreal in that her child, her own baby, is now experiencing childbirth as she did before. The birth of Michelle's grandchild and his emerging physical form is essentially the birth of her grandmothering reality.

Catherine looked forward to the birth of her grandchild and described her attendance at the birth as a 'wonderful' experience. She discusses the photo (Figure 51) of her holding her new-born grandson with a Mother and Grandmother's pride, describing how well her daughter coped with the birth considering her grandson's birth weight was 10lbs 11oz.

Figure 51 (D) – Look at this big baby, look at my grandson (Catherine)



"That's in the hospital um and that's the first time I held him (grandson), yeah...Oh it was wonderful, yeah it was brilliant. And everybody was so excited because he was so big and all the nurses were coming to look from the other maternity ward [laughs]. 'Look at this big baby' [laughs]." (Catherine, P9, L275).

Whilst the grandmothers' main priority is to support their daughter through labour and childbirth, there is also an opportunity to reform and reconstruct their own experiences of childbirth and to make an immediate physical and emotional connection with their grandchild. The attendance at the births of their grandchildren was indeed a pivotal moment, for the grandmothers, in their becoming grandmothers. The physicality of being there, of physically witnessing their daughters giving birth, and of making physical contact with their new-born grandchild is an essential part of their experience in their transitional journey to grandmotherhood. It is the physical form of a new-born grandchild that instigates and/or confirms their realisation of their new selves as grandmothers and indeed their acceptance of their daughter's motherhood and their grandmotherhood. In this sense, the birth of their grandchild brings forth the birth of their grandmotherhood.

6.3 Researcher's reflections

As a mother, I felt a certain amount of empathy for the grandmothers as they discussed their concerns for their young daughters. I understood the hopes and desires a mother has for her children, of what and who they may become and achieve into adulthood. I cannot claim to understand the mother-daughter relationship from a mother's perspective but I believe that mothers share a desire to witness their children (sons and/or daughters) succeed, to be happy, healthy and to be independent. There exists a normative trajectory for young

people, regardless of gender, in which education is completed, a career established, a secure and loving relationship and the start of a family. This is my understanding from living in the social world, experiences of motherhood and from reading various literatures. Hence, my own positioning has influenced my interpretations of the participating grandmothers' experiences: from my historic, social, cultural and gendered embeddedness within the world.

It was during the writing up of my analysis that my ex sister-in-law's daughter died after a short battle with terminal cancer. The following is an extract from my research journal:

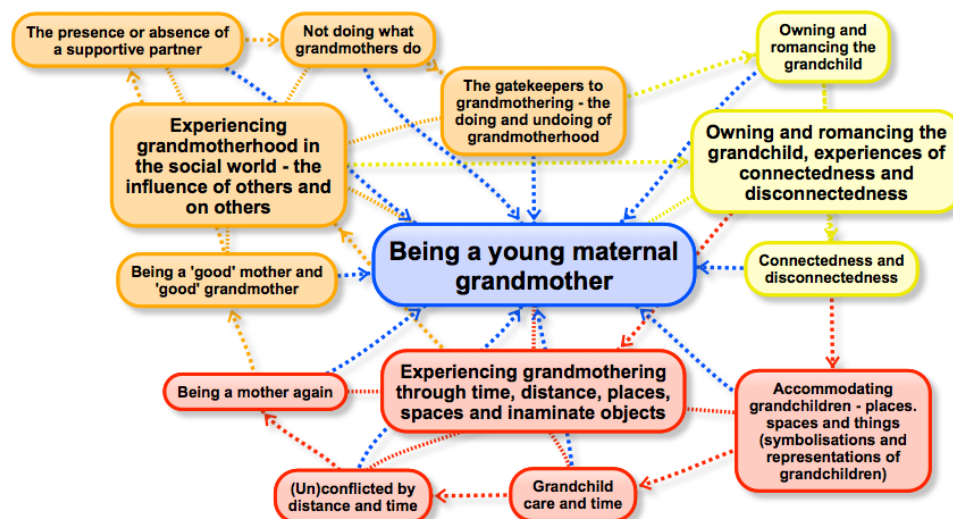
"Emma, at the age of 23 years, sadly passed away over the weekend. I felt heartbroken for her mother – how do you cope with the loss of your child at such a young age? It made me think of the mothers and daughters in my research. Perhaps they were the lucky ones who were able to experience the next generation: for mothers to experience grandmotherhood and to share their daughters' transitions to motherhood. In a heartfelt post on facebook, my ex sister-in-law wrote that it was so unfair to lose Emma, that she should be seeing Emma getting married and having children of her own. Her words were pertinent here; the expectations of marriage and then children, to experience her daughter as a mother in a socially constructed correct order..."

There is an assumption that this is the order of things, the way of life. We, as mothers, conform without rarely questioning, taking pleasure and pride when it all goes to plan according to the dominant social norms. But for the majority of the participating grandmothers, this order becomes disordered. Thrown into disarray when their young adult daughter, who has her whole life ahead of her, becomes confined by impending motherhood, a role that their mothers (and the social world) perceive to be too early. And so, some of these mothers of young mothers find themselves doubting their own mothering, of wondering what they could have done differently to prevent their daughters' pregnancies, of wishing for a conventionality and normalcy that is no longer attainable. There is no undoing what has been done and with reluctance and resignation for some, they begin the process of accepting that this is their daughter's future and indeed, theirs.

Chapter 7 'Being' a young maternal grandmother

This chapter is the second of the 2 findings chapters where I focus my analysis on across case patterns (see appendix P – 'Being' essential experiences tables). Three essential experiences (illustrated in Figure 52) are interpreted and discussed in relation to the participating grandmothers' experiences of being a young maternal grandmother (from after the birth of their first grandchild): experiencing grandmothering through time, distance, places, spaces and inanimate objects; experiencing grandmotherhood in the social world (the influence of others and on others); owning and romancing the grandchild, experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness.

Figure 52 – A mind map illustrating across case essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



7.1 Experiencing grandmothering through time, distance, places, spaces and inanimate objects

Through the process of analysis, I became aware that for many of the participating grandmothers, time spent with their grandchild/grandchildren appeared to be time that they treasured. Generally, there is a sense that grandmothering is transient: that being a grandmother involves relatively brief periods of time spent with their grandchildren in which they can devote their full attention to their grandchildren. The geographical distance between grandmother and grandchild was important to the grandmothers' experiences, with implications that being at a distance from their grandchildren hinders their performance of grandmotherhood. Many of the grandmothers also discussed the places, spaces and objects that associate them with grandmotherhood and

how these represented and symbolised their grandmothering. Because of the young ages of their daughters at motherhood and their daughters' relationship and residential circumstances, four of the participants' daughters and their new-born babies lived with them in the family home for varying amounts of time after the birth.

7.1.1 Being a mother again

Natalie's daughter and granddaughter lived with her for the first 3 years of her granddaughter's life. Natalie seemed to revel in this time together, talking fondly of sharing daily life with her daughter and granddaughter.

"...It was so, so lovely because I'd be like, we'd do things together with her (granddaughter), we were like a family, just the three of us. And um I'd, I'd dash home from work and she'd be on me bed waiting for me, every night when I got home, laughing on me bed. It was so lovely. She'd be first in to see me in the morning and I loved it, I absolutely loved it." (Natalie, P5, L217).

Natalie's reference to *"we were like a family"* suggests that she perceived herself akin to a mother again, part of the parental couple. Whilst she likened her experience to being a family, Natalie also reveals awareness that her situation is perhaps unconventional. Nonetheless, becoming and being a grandmother allowed Natalie the opportunity to reconstruct her experiences of motherhood by stepping in to take on a surrogate-mothering role. She was young (17 years) when she had become a mother to her only daughter and explains that she felt she had missed out on much as she struggled to be a young mother. Being a surrogate mother helped Natalie to recreate a more positive mothering experience, her chance to do it again and better.

Toni also discussed the two years that her daughter and granddaughter lived with her.

"...You're almost used to being, almost being this child's (granddaughter) mother, I know I'm not her mother but you know, you know, you care for her equally as Rose (daughter) did so..." (Toni, P3, L110).

Toni's use of the word *"almost"* suggests that she felt she was not quite a mother again but not far from it. Whilst Toni continued to work full-time, she talks about sharing the care of her granddaughter with her daughter. Toni shows some reluctance in perceiving herself as a mother to her granddaughter,

because "...In my mind, I'd done my child raising and I didn't really want to bring up another one..." (Toni, P3, L120). I felt that Toni shows hesitation in making sense of her experiences of grandchild care over the two years that they lived together, whereas Natalie seemed unconstrained by her chance to do motherhood again. For Toni, it was not a situation she would have chosen, that it is an unconventional circumstance but perhaps she is obliged to care for her grandchild because of her moral duty of care and love for her daughter, who was still dependent on her at this time.

Nikki's experiences of being a mother again were different to Natalie and Toni. Nikki had harboured concerns about her daughter's young age and immaturity at pregnancy and found herself taking on full-time care of her granddaughter as a result of her daughters and partners' abuse and neglect of her granddaughter.

"More like parents than grandparents, you can't, you can't be a nanna anymore because you're doing the mam job. Tania (granddaughter) knows I'm nanna but she'll still call me mummy but you know, she'll say 'Are you not my tummy mummy?' And I'll say, 'No I'm not your tummy mummy'." (Nikki, P2, L49).

While Nikki adores her granddaughter and wants to care for her and keep her safe, she seems conflicted by her identities of mother and grandmother. She finds herself being "mam" again, her granddaughter calls her "mummy" and therefore being "nanna" can no longer be. Nikki demonstrates a sense of loss, of grieving her grandmotherhood because she feels she cannot be the grandmother that she wanted and expected to be. Nikki and Toni, to some extent, perceive that they are not being conventional grandmothers due to their imposed parental responsibilities and roles and also their understandings of grandmotherhood from living in the social world.

7.1.2 (Un)conflicted by distance and time

Their geographic proximity to their daughters and grandchildren was an important factor in how the participating grandmothers viewed themselves as grandmother and their closeness to their grandchildren. For Siobhan, living across the road from her daughter and grandchildren allowed her to feel close to them, both physically and emotionally.

"I mean they (daughters) always ring me up when something's wrong or you know, 'Craig's (grandson) got a temperature, what do I do? Craig's got this, what do I do?' 'I've got to take Lilly (granddaughter) KeyDocs (Out of Hours), can you come and have Jay?' Cause my daughter with the two (grandchildren) only lives over the road from me. Literally over the road...if they lived say like an hour's drive away or something, you just wouldn't have that closeness with your grandkids would you?" (Siobhan, P4, L184).

Siobhan suggests that if she lived at a distance from her grandchildren, she would not experience the close relationship she shares with her grandchildren; close proximity allows Siobhan to spend more time with her grandchildren and as a consequence, feels closer to her daughter and grandchildren. Perhaps closer proximity allows Siobhan to feel that she is being a conventional grandmother in terms of both distance and time.

Michelle experiences paternal grandmotherhood at a distance. After experiencing the lack of closeness that her children shared with her father (because he lived away from them), she discussed the effort she makes to not be a "distant grandma", both physically and emotionally to her paternal grandchildren.

"...There was one thing that I wasn't going to do and I was gonna try, I wasn't going to be a distant grandma and just pop up once a year or anything like that, it had to be a regular thing... I think for myself with my dad and my children, there was never that bond because he always lived away and that's what made me think I've got to make the effort..." (Michelle, P2, L73).

Michelle imparts grandmothing as effortful, tackling distance and time in her aspirations to see and be near her son and grandchildren regularly. For Michelle, her physicality and time spent with her grandchildren are important parts of her grandmothing. Because of the geographical distance between her and her son and grandchildren, Michelle discusses her determination to make the effort to keep the distance in her grandmother/grandchildren relationships to a minimum and maximize the time she can spend with her paternal grandchildren due to the restrictions of distance.

After two years of her daughter and granddaughter living with her, Toni's daughter moved away to continue with her studies, taking her daughter, Toni's granddaughter, with her. A few years later, her daughter marries. Her daughter's parent-in-laws live close to her daughter and granddaughter and Toni finds this difficult to deal with.

"...Rose's (daughter) husband Alan, his mum and dad are brilliant with Fay (granddaughter) and all the time they're putting on facebook, 'Oh we bought this for Fay', 'Fay came round and played in the hot tub', I'm jealous as hell. Jealous as hell cause I think that should be me. You know but because they're there, they only live round the corner, so she sees them, they take her out, they take her to the cinema, they take her to um to, to theme parks, you know, and so yeah, I feel, when I see, almost see them as the enemy in that respect...And obviously if they were closer, I mean Rose has always said 'Oh find a job up here mum', you know, it's not that easy, you know." (Toni, P14, L590).

Because of the geographical distance between Toni and her granddaughter and her work commitments, time spent with her granddaughter is less than Toni would like. Exacerbating her discontentedness at the distance between them is the involvement of the paternal step-grandparents in her granddaughter's life; Toni perceives them to be doing what she should be doing as grandmother. She is envious of the time that they spend with her granddaughter and the time that she does not spend with her granddaughter. For Toni, distance and indeed, her work commitments, appear to be a barrier to how she would like to be as a grandmother and hence, the step-grandparents become Toni's adversaries, for they are being the grandparents she wants to be.

Julie's experience of distance is in contrast to that of Toni and Michelle's experiences. Julie discusses how she grew more concerned about her daughter and boyfriend's abilities to care for their children and subsequently her grandchildren's wellbeing. Approximately 4 months after her second grandchild's birth, Julie's daughter attempted to commit suicide. Julie recounts this without emotion, that her experiences of grandmotherhood up to this point had overwhelmed and exhausted her and hence, she expresses very little care about her daughter's mental state. Further, on the same day, her husband was made redundant and Julie recalls this day and visiting her daughter in hospital with a sense of disbelief, surrealism and repressed emotions. It is after this that Julie and her husband take on the care of their grandchildren for approximately 3 months before the children are returned to their father's full-time care.

As a result of her experiences of grandmotherhood, Julie appears to emotionally distance herself from the realities that she narrates. Julie, her husband and two sons move 120 miles away from her daughter and grandchildren to primarily find work for her husband.

"...They say out of sight out of mind, it's not out of mind 100 per cent but a lot of it and you know, we've had a busy couple of years as well, I've changed job um twice now um and we've moved and all the building work going on in the house, you, it sort of preoccupies you um my, Matt (youngest son) started school, you know and it's, all those different things, they preoccupy you elsewhere, where as if we were living round the corner (to daughter and grandchildren), it's not as, you can't ignore it as easily. Um and I do use, if I'm honest, sometimes use distance as an excuse. Well actually it's not an excuse, it's a reason..." (Julie, P32, L1371).

This geographic distance between mother and daughter appears to be an emotional protector for Julie. It relieves some of the everyday stresses that she experienced as a mother and grandmother that she could not escape from living close by. Julie self-imposed the geographic and emotional distance in order to disconnect herself from her grandmotherhood and her mothering to her daughter. Further, by moving away, it perhaps helps Julie to concentrate on what she considers to be her main responsibilities: her immediate family and work.

7.1.3 Grandchild care and time

The majority of the participating grandmothers appeared to offer invaluable support to their daughters with childcare, to either enable their daughters to work or to have time off from caring for their children. The grandmothers discussed the time that they spent with their grandchildren; made quality because of its temporariness. Implying that they could hand their grandchildren back to their mothers after caring for them.

Toni's frustrations at the geographical distance between her and her granddaughter mean that when she does spend time with her granddaughter, she devotes that time to her granddaughter. Toni presents a photo of board games (Figure 53) and discusses the guilt she feels at not being able to spend more time with her granddaughter. There is an underlying sense that Toni is limited in her grandmothering time, her temporality and facticity of being grandmother because of geographic distance, work and other family commitments.

"I'm not yet quite at the stage of my life where I can take a massive pay cut just to go to a different job somewhere else and then Pete (husband) would have to find a new job and then you've got the added complication of his mum and dad are getting quite elderly now and need support and then if we move away there's no, no one of his family here to do that so you're torn all the time aren't you?" (Toni, P14, L607).

When Toni does spend time with her granddaughter, she spoils her with her time to compensate for the lost time she feels she misses with her.

Figure 53 – Grandmother-granddaughter activities (Toni)



"...I think part of me is determined that when, you know, we do fun things with Fay (granddaughter), we don't sit and do jobs, you know, we do fun things, we'll, we'll get the bbq out and cook tea on the bbq. Fay will help me peel all the veggies and whatever um you know, we'll play games, we'll go to the park, we'll go for a day out somewhere, it's, I suppose it's spoiling her really cause part of me probably feels guilty that, only that little bit of time that I've got needs to be hers and special, memorable, yeah so we do go a bit all out really." (Toni, P17, L684).

With the exception of Nikki and Julie, who took on full caring roles for their grandchildren and Sam, who experienced alienation from her daughter and grandchildren, the remaining participating grandmothers discussed the time they spent with their grandchildren and then handing back the care of their grandchildren to their daughters. This is evidenced in photos presented and discussed by Amanda and Michelle (Figures 54 and 55).

*Figure 54 (D) - Trips to the park
(Amanda)*



"That was a trip to the park. Many a time we take Layla (granddaughter) to the park which she loves...with her not being mine, even though we've got that bond like she's mine, when she plays up I can't wait to get her home." (Amanda, P14, L464).

Figure 55 - Blowing kisses (Michelle)



"Well he'd (grandson) kiss on the lips and then we'd start blowing kisses cause he got a bit bored with the game after a while and then he just found it so joyful that he could do this kiss like this. He was just, he thought it was so funny um but yeah that's how I taught him to do that that day...that was nice so he could go home and I'd say to him 'Give mummy a kiss' and he'd do like this with his hand [laughs]." (Michelle, P13, L469).

Referring to the photos in Figures 54 and 55, Amanda and Michelle explained that they frequently care for their grandchildren and enjoy taking them out. For Amanda however, it is not quite the same as caring for her own child. The relationship is similar, the attachment to the child is similar to that of a mother/child relationship but I sensed that there is an underlying assurance that she can hand back the care to her daughter at the end, or during her allocated grandmothering time. Michelle revels in her time spent with her grandchildren and being part of their lives; of seeing them grow and develop but more importantly, being able to play a part in their learning of new experiences and skills. Michelle also indicates here that whilst her grandmothering is delightful, it is also transient; that she takes her grandson home to his mother at the end of their time together. Hence, their experiences of grandmothering time are temporary with the assurance that the main responsibility for their grandchildren lies with their daughters.

During her interview, Natalie also tries to make sense of her grandmothering time.

"When I had my daughter I was young, it was so diff, it was so different, me having my daughter to when I had the grandchildren. Completely different, I can't believe how different it is...I don't know, maybe it's because I know they're (grandchildren) going home [laughs]. I know it's not going to be permanent. I can say 'bye' when they're getting on my nerves, I don't know. Um I suppose it is because the time I have with them is quality time... cause I haven't had her (granddaughter) all day, I've been here on my own, the time I've got with her is so (.), so precious and it's like, I've got so much patience and I've got the time to spend with them because I'm not doing anything else cause I make that time with them." (Natalie, P14, L588).

Natalie makes the most of her grandmothering time by focusing on her granddaughters entirely. This is very different to parenting where the permanency of the position makes it difficult not to be doing other things and chores. Making sense of experiencing grandmotherhood at a young age with the constraints of working life and other family commitments, I felt that many of the participating grandmothers made the time for grandmothering without a drastic impact on other relationships and life domains. Further, Sarah talks of the time she makes for her grandchildren and how this time is spent in comparison to her previous time spent mothering young children.

"I've had more time for my grandkids than I did my own...Cause when I had them (daughters), I used to, well my ex, Pete, I'd used to get the house tidy for when he come in and get, his dinner were ready and tidied and now I don't, I don't care if Dan's (husband) got a dinner [laughs] or what the house looks like. I can sit and play and I do and I didn't and I feel ashamed to say it but I didn't, I very rarely sat and played with mine. Yeah but we (Sarah and grandchildren) just play everything now and we're, they get what they want, I don't know. I couldn't give mine much but the grandkids get everything, whatever. It's just the way of life ent it, money was short but no, I just love it..." (Sarah, P4, L148).

There is some regret and shame portrayed in Sarah's narrative with regards to her past mothering experiences. Grandmotherhood offers Sarah a second chance to care for children again and better. There is a shift in Sarah's priorities with a resulting "don't care" attitude. Being a grandmother provokes Sarah to reassess what is important, resulting in enjoyment of quality time spent with

her grandchildren. For Sarah, grandmothering is a chance to do the things with her grandchildren that she felt she neglected to do with her own children and that perhaps the permanency of actions and duties associated with motherhood is restrictive, whereas grandmotherhood allows a freedom to enjoy their time-shared. Sarah tries to make sense of this, suggesting that grandmotherhood is “just the way of life”. Sarah’s passivity here suggests an acceptance of grandmotherhood and the time she spends with her grandchildren. It is not a life experience that she has any control over in terms of when it happens but she has learned from her lifeworld that this is what grandmotherhood is and how it should be done. Grandmotherhood is a result of being a mother and that time spent caring for grandchildren is what grandmothers are expected to do.

7.1.4 Accommodating grandchildren – places, spaces, and things (symbolisations and representations of grandchildren)

Many of the grandmothers talked about the spaces and places they frequently utilized and visited in their grandmothering experiences. Toni and Natalie both presented and discussed photos (Figures 56 and 57) in their interviews of spaces and places within, and outside of, their homes that they had used to accommodate their grandchildren and symbolise their grandmotherhood. Natalie discusses her photo of a recreational park, near to home, that she frequently spends time in with her granddaughters. Toni conveys a sense of sadness as she talks about her granddaughter’s bedroom, a room that remains empty within her home for most of the time.

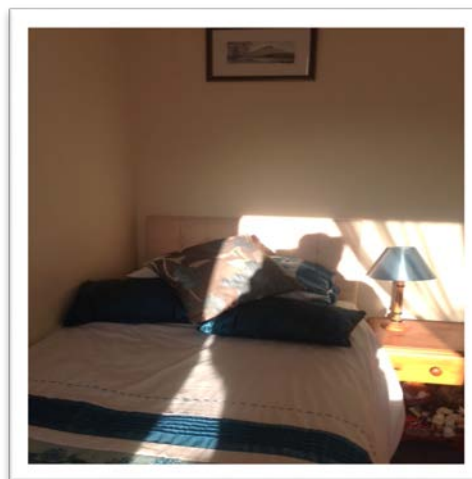
The spaces, places, and objects that Natalie and Toni present and discuss through their photos and interviews express the meaningfulness of their grandmotherhood: illuminating the embodiment of their grandmother/granddaughter relationships and the personifications of their grandmothering experiences. Both Natalie and Toni accommodate their grandchildren within their physical home and outside environment as a meaningful representation of their grandmotherhood.

Figure 56 – Nanny's park (Natalie)



"They (granddaughters) call it my park, they think it's my park and it belongs to me. Especially little un, she says, nanny, someone's on your park...Um but since I've lived here, whenever they've come um they love it and I go round with them...Little un (youngest granddaughter) always wants to go to the park so whenever they come, we always go round to the park..." (Natalie, P22, L897).

Figure 57 - The empty room (Toni)



"...I love this room because she (granddaughter) chose these colours because this is her room when she comes to stay. And um but she never, like I said, it's only a few times a year so um the rest of the time this room's just empty. Which is really sad...you go into this room and um most of the time it's empty, which is a bit sad really...I suppose it makes you just think, it re-enforces the fact that you've got this distance in space and time between seeing each other." (Toni, P19, L734).

Toni discusses the *"proliferation of tat"* that she associates with grandmotherhood, with meaningful objects scattered around the house that symbolise her granddaughter in her absence. Natalie also talks of these symbolisations in a photo she presented at interview (Figure 58), showing a designated space in her home where she has photos and memorabilia of her daughter and granddaughters on display. In this sense, when their grandchildren are not physically present, Toni and Natalie connect with their grandchildren through meaningful objects and photos that represent a virtual presence.

Figure 58 (D) - Forever present (Natalie)



"And everyday I see them, I go in and I look at them. They're always sitting there. Um but each one, yeah, they're just so special to me. But I love them, I love them there." (Natalie, P23, L936).

For when their granddaughters are not staying with them, Natalie and Toni have surrounded themselves with these grandmothering things as a reminder of their existence and times shared. Natalie has dedicated a place for photos and memorabilia in her spare bedroom; a shrine like quality, dedicated to her daughter and granddaughters. There is a conveyed meaning here that Natalie's daughter and granddaughters are ever present when not physically being there. Natalie embodies her grandmothering through inanimate forms, spaces and places in order to preserve their relationships in their absence.

Catherine visited her grandson 4 or 5 times a week and babysat once a week at the time of her interview. Her grandson appeared to be her focal point in life, with a continuing sense that she was still coming to terms with her marital breakup that happened just after her daughter found out she was pregnant. It was perhaps a time where she required this focus on her grandson the most. Catherine's words *"I think about him and everything just goes away"* supports this apparent need to distract herself with her grandson. Whilst she thoroughly enjoys his presence, Catherine also discusses how she copes in his absence by surrounding herself with representations and symbolisations of her grandson, a further indication of her need to have him physically or symbolically close. Catherine presents her PC screensaver as one of her prompt objects (Figure 59) to discuss in interview, explaining how her collection of photographs of her grandson has grown and how she loves to look at them when her grandson is not with her.

Figure 59 - In absence (Catherine)



"...I've got him (grandson) on, what do you call it, a background and then I realized I could have a screen saver with it, with it on and I started by putting the first couple of photos on and it's just escalated and every time someone comes in they're all fascinated by it. You can just sit staring at it; well I do, for hours and people say 'Well look how he's changed.' And I just love it and now I put every single photo, I even pinch photos that other people have put on Facebook and put them on there [laughs]. So they're all on there, every single one." (Catherine, P6, L177).

7.2 Experiencing grandmotherhood in the social world – the influence of others and on others

Grandmothering is not just a role; an identity with associated activities that the grandmothers could do according to how they wanted. The participating grandmothers' accounts of their experiences of being a young maternal grandmother were interlaced with their interactions with others, their most significant other being their relationship with their daughter and so, being a grandmother was not just about how the grandmother wanted to be grandmother, but how their daughter did motherhood and how they wanted their mothers to do grandmotherhood. Further, the grandmothers in this study appeared to be influenced by their experiences of how other people in their lives performed grandparenthood and how other significant people in their lives helped and supported them in their grandmotherhood.

7.2.1 Being a 'good' mother and 'good' grandmother

The participating grandmothers discussed their daughters' motherhood: some talked about their pride in their daughters' good motherhood and some discussed their hopes that their daughters would become the good mothers

they wanted them to be. For example, Julie closes her interview by saying, *"Siobhan (daughter) could become mother of the year next year, you never know"*, implying that after all the stress Julie had experienced since becoming a grandmother, Julie still maintained hope that her daughter would change. Alternatively, Natalie talks of how proud she is of her daughter, despite her illness.

"I'm so proud of her (daughter), I really am. Everything she's been through and that. Oh gosh, the children, the way she, she does everything with them. They're like, you know, like homework, school activities, you know, they do everything, they do dancing, tap, modern, everything." (Natalie, P11, L476).

The participating grandmothers' accounts of their experiences also suggest that a good mother seems not to stop as children enter adulthood. For some of the participating grandmothers, the support that they offer their daughters in childcare (and financial support, in some cases) is indicative of the continuation of good motherhood. Siobhan alludes to this in the following:

"You've got to look after your children and you've got to help with your grandchildren. Well you don't have to, you don't have to but you know, I, I had my three (children) young and I know from memory what a struggle it is and I think it's nice, if you can, just to take a bit of that burden away. Because my mum worked all day." (Siobhan, P5, L208).

Siobhan's words of "you've got to" indicate a duty of care. That being a good mother means that she has to look after her daughters in their own endeavours of good motherhood and as a result, look after her grandchildren too. That good motherhood results in good grandmotherhood. Siobhan also reflects on her own experiences of motherhood, where she found it a "struggle" to care for three children without the support of her mother, who worked full-time. Siobhan wants to be there and support her daughters in their motherhood because she had missed out on this support from her own mother when she was mothering three young children. Unlike her mother who worked full-time, Siobhan is not conflicted by work commitments. She can enjoy grandmotherhood because she has available time to do so.

"I don't work. If I worked then obviously I would have had to give things up to spend time with them (grandchildren) like I do but I guess I'm lucky because I don't work I, I spend a lot of time with them." (Siobhan, P4, L154).

Natalie's experience of caring for her granddaughters was different to that of Siobhan. Her daughter became unwell with the onset of Crohn's disease not

long after the birth of her eldest daughter, and at the time of interview, her daughter had undergone three major surgical operations over the past few years. Natalie took on the primary care of her eldest granddaughter and subsequently, both granddaughters when her daughter was in hospital and through the periods of post-operative recovery.

"...It was quite hard for me because I was (.), I was like um (1), going work, dropping Annie (granddaughter) off at the nursery in the morning, then I was having to go in to work and then, she (daughter) was in a hospital in (place name) and then my mum and dad would pick her (granddaughter) up from nursery every night and then I'd go hospital every night after work and then I'd come back, pick her up [laughing] from me mum and dads, I'd get her about 8, half 8 at night but this went on, cause obviously this went on for a long time." (Natalie, P6, L241).

Not only did Natalie care for her daughter and granddaughter during her daughter's times of illness but Natalie's parents also participated in the care of her granddaughter. There is a sense of a whole family effort and that Natalie is the central figure in the four-generation family. Natalie's centrality, her care and support, portrays her as a good mother and grandmother and that her parents are also being good parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Unlike Siobhan, Natalie juggles work commitments to fit in the care of her granddaughter. Whilst it seems that the grandmothers are doing grandchild care out of a moral sense of duty and obligation as a good mother and grandmother, it is perhaps more the result of a mother's and grandmother's love for her children and grandchildren: that love is the main incentive to support and care for daughter and grandchild and less, the morality of being a good mother and grandmother that their social worlds impose.

7.2.2 The presence or absence of a supportive partner

In the absence of a partner, Natalie discussed how her parents supported her in her grandchild care. Other participating grandmothers talked about the support they received from their partners/husbands/wives in their grandmothering. For example, Sarah talks of her and her husband's duty to care for her grandchildren, to babysit whenever they can. She also explains that she is the first person that her daughter will ask for childcare support.

"...I've gone back to working around the kids again if you know what I mean, trying to, and I'm lucky Dan (husband) (.), he, they (grandchildren) ent his true blood grandchildren but they, he loves them, he loves them to bits and he'll do, he'll babysit, he'll do his babysitting duties and we just, we do, if I can help. I'm always the first one that they (daughter and partner) ask." (Sarah, P6, L43).

Being a grandmother for Sarah, means that her life has changed. She organises her life around children again, fitting in work, her marriage to Dan and her support for her daughter, partner and grandchildren. However, in Sarah's experience, her good motherhood and grandmotherhood is shared with her husband who is not her grandchildren and daughter's biological grandfather and father. She expects him to also take on the duties of babysitting and that this is a shared commitment and duty, regardless of his bloodline because of his commitment to her through their marriage: that her moral concerns of being a good mother and grandmother extend to her husband who Sarah portrays as a good step-father and step-grandfather.

Amanda and Julie also discussed the support they receive from their partners. When Amanda's eldest granddaughter was born, her wife Sam cared for the baby whilst Amanda worked and her daughter continued to attend college.

"When she (granddaughter) was a baby um Sam (wife) used to look after her while I used to go work and her (granddaughter's) mum used to go college still cause she carried on going to college when she had her...So um a couple of days a week she'd (daughter) go off to college, cause she lived with me for a while when she had Layla (granddaughter)...Sam loves it..." (Amanda, P5, L187).

Amanda states that Sam "loves it", that she enjoys caring for her step-grandchildren. Julie also discusses the importance of her husband's support and care of her grandchildren. He is not their biological grandfather but through Julie's accounts, he willingly takes on temporary custodial care of her grandchildren.

"My husband, previously, before our relationship, he used to be a foster parent for the local council. So, you know, he'd had all the skills and the training and all the rest of it so he was more than happy to do it (custodial care of Julie's grandchildren) as well. Um and we were [inaudible], it was a bit squashed. And I used to come home from work and he used to go, 'You women', he goes 'Moaning when you've got a child in the house', he goes

'I've got 3 under 5's, he goes by 9 o'clock all bathed, all dressed, breakfast done', he goes 'I'm about to start the hoovering, what do you women go on about' [laughs]." (Julie, P9, L405).

Living within these supportive partnerships and supportive family networks means that the participating grandmothers share their good grandparenting practices with others. In this sense, the grandmothers are not only presenting themselves as morally good mothers and grandmothers but also their partners and other family members as good (step) parents, (step) grandparents and great-grandparents. It is this sharing of responsibilities that help the grandmothers to be the grandmothers they want to be, by sharing the childcare time and the perceived duties associated with grandparenthood. These partnerships and in Natalie's experiences, her parents' support, help to balance their work and family commitments so that the grandmothers can remain productive within society and within their family.

7.2.3 Not doing what grandmothers do

With their young ages at grandmotherhood, some of the participating grandmothers discussed how they felt they did not fit the socially represented grandmother. That they perceived themselves not to be doing what the typically represented grandmother does. Amanda, for example, talks of her younger body in terms of activities she engages in with her grandchildren.

"I go down the park with them and I'm on the climbing frames, how many nanny's do you find on climbing frames with their grandkids [laughs]. Layla (granddaughter) gets me racing with them in the back garden and everything. I wouldn't have been able to do that if I was older." (Amanda, P17, L526).

Amanda's young body allows her to take part in physical activity that perhaps grandmothers are not normally socially associated with. She can climb frames because she is still young enough to do so and feels she would not be able to do if she was older. Amanda is not conforming to normative grandmotherhood in this sense, she is different in that she can be more physical in her grandmothering activities and more importantly, enjoys her young and physical grandmotherhood. I felt that Amanda, as a young grandmother, was crafting a new way of being. Not fitting with the socially represented older grandmother, Amanda is mastering the unknown, of developing a new way of being grandmother to suit her young body.

Like Amanda, Michelle felt that 36 years of age was a good time for her to become and be a grandmother. She is young and energized enough to be physically active with her grandchildren, to enjoy time with her grandchildren without feeling fatigued. Michelle implies that being an older grandparent corresponds to a diminishment of energy that she can enjoy as a young grandmother.

"So I wouldn't want, I wouldn't want to have had my grandchildren when I was older um I were quite content at having them at 36 and moving forward with them so I was quite happy with that because, yeah quite rightly I'd got more energy to do things with them and er but no if I'd had them older I wouldn't have any energy left." (Michelle, P7, L311).

Being younger than the average age for grandmotherhood means that the participating grandmothers can be more active in their grandmothering activities. Older and more socially represented grandmotherhood conveys a sense of less active participation with grandchildren; that activities consist of more sedentary involvement in the grandmother/grandchild time. Whilst the majority of the participating grandmothers perceived their young ages as a distinct advantage in their grandmothering activities, Natalie discusses her disappointment at not being able to spend more time with her grandchildren.

"...My grandchildren now, obviously are growing up um I mean, they're 6 and 10 now and I'm 48 and because I'm on me own, I'm having to work full-time still and I've always worked full-time, always have (.) where I, I want to be able to, I'd love to be able to, not, not work and be able to um you know, pick them up from school and maybe have them for, for a, have them more nights in the week and do more with them than I do. Um and maybe if I, I'd had my daughter later and she'd had her children later, I would've been retired and so many grandparents (.), majority are retired people and, and they, you know, have the grandchildren to stay for the week quite often..." (Natalie, P16, L698).

Natalie perceives that grandmotherhood is perhaps more suited to an older age, where work commitments are no longer a priority and retirement involves a freeing up of time to be a grandmother. Natalie's association of retirement and grandmotherhood is an indication of her experiences of living in the world, that grandmotherhood is socially constructed as an older age role. Natalie considers retirement as the ideal for doing grandmotherhood and that at present, she cannot do what she wants to do and feels she should do. Natalie cannot do

what she perceives to be 'normal' grandmothering because of her young age and her need to work.

"So in that way, I feel as if I'm missing out on so much. Cause like retired grandparents (.), you know, they can, they can do that and I would love to, to do that but unfortunately I can't do it being a young parent, I'm still working." (Natalie, P17, L716).

Similar to her experiences of becoming and being a young mother in which she feels she missed out on much, so the pattern repeats with young grandmotherhood, where it seems that she penalises herself for her young age. This is a result of the world as Natalie experiences it in everyday life, her lived experience, her lifeworld. She feels that her grandmothering is restrained by her young age and subsequently, her work commitments.

In entirely different circumstances, Nikki also talks of her expectations of being a grandmother and how they cannot be.

"To spoil a child (grandchild), love it, to pass her back. To hand back. Been there, done it, now it's time to do what my mam did, to hand them back and er I was still like, maybe, give them (daughter and partner) a break and had her (granddaughter) on the weekends or a night I wasn't working, I would've still had her or took her on her holidays and but then I would've had the rest of the time to meself...My biggest fear now is being a nanna um my, cause I've got 2 other girls...So them having children, it's where am I going to find the time to be a nanna when I'm being a mam again like, do you know what I mean?" (Nikki, P9, L379).

Nikki is a grandmother and expected her grandmothering to be like her mother had been grandmother to her own children. However, Nikki feels she can no longer be grandmother to her granddaughter who is now under her full-time care. She is a grandmother but she is not being a grandmother, she is being a "mam". Grandmothering is more than just a role; for Nikki, it is a set of experiences and an identity that she feels she does not conform to. This conflict of identities means that Nikki feels she is not doing what grandmothers normally do. The influences of her lifeworld and the resulting ideals of grandmotherhood that Nikki discusses do not reflect her reality.

7.2.4 The gatekeepers to grandmothering – the doing and undoing of grandmotherhood

The majority of the participating grandmothers shared a relationship with their daughters that allowed for certain autonomy over their grandmothering. They could be the grandmothers that they wanted to be. For a minority, however, grandmotherhood had not produced what they had expected. Their daughters were the primary instigators of accessing or not accessing their grandmothering.

Nikki not only battled with her daughter to access her grandchild but also social services, the police and the English legal system. As a grandmother, the safety of her granddaughter was Nikki's primary concern but all too frequently found herself without the power or rights to act on her concerns. In this sense, the gatekeepers to being grandmother in Nikki's experiences, extended beyond her daughter and partner.

"They (daughter and partner) wouldn't let me see her (granddaughter), they wouldn't let no professionals see her but obviously now know because she was starved, she was. Hurt and now we know, we didn't know at the time, we knew there was issues but as a grandparent you've only got the power to report. You can't take them (grandchildren), you've only got the power to report it and then it's up to social services to act which they don't all the time and um that's how children slip through the system." (Nikki, P2, L89).

For Nikki, there seemed to be a divide between 'them' and 'us', developed as a result of her dealings with her daughter and the authorities. 'Them' holding the power, the control and the access to her grandmothering, whilst 'us' as the powerless and helpless grandmother. Knowing that her grandchild was in danger and not allowed access to her, Nikki dwells on her sense of powerlessness as a grandmother and how she could have prevented her granddaughter's abuse if grandmothers had more rights, more ease of access to their grandchildren.

"Tania (granddaughter) had to go through that and I could've prevented that if I had had more powers as a grandparent, I could've stopped that and she wouldn't have went through what she went through...it's wrong" (Nikki, P5, L208).

Sam's experiences of grandmothering are a further example of how significant others can craft grandmotherhood. Sam appears to be paying the price for her

earlier interference, of trying to take control of a situation she was unhappy with, of wanting better for her daughter.

"Um so yes, um very much on off relationship throughout the years, um sometimes I'd see them (daughter and grandson) at, at birthdays, sometimes I wouldn't. You would never know and you wouldn't necessarily have had to have done anything wrong or said anything that they (daughter and partner) didn't like, it could just be 'Ooh that's it for now' and push you away until 'I need something again'." (Sam, P3, L123).

Sam is a grandmother without being a grandmother in the traditional sense. Sam's grandmothering appears to be slumbering albeit against her wishes. Sam talks of how being a grandmother is important to her and that life changes even though she feels she is not being the grandmother she wants to be. She appears to have little control over her grandmothering, with her daughter and partner as the gatekeepers to her grandmothering experiences. They give Sam "tasters" of grandmothering and then they take it away.

"...You have that little taster (of grandmotherhood) every now and again and it's taken away from you and it's, it's just, it's devastating, it, it really is..." (Sam, P5, L199).

This devastation that Sam talks about is a result of her being in the world as a grandmother but not actively enjoying a relationship with her grandchildren. Sam grieves for her missing grandchildren. At the time of interview, Sam's only communication with her daughter was via text messages. This was her only line of communication with her daughter and a highly significant one for Sam. Whilst she had this ongoing communication, there was hope that this would develop into more active grandmothering and mothering overtime.

"...There's no hard and fast rule with it. You know, I might sort of think 'Oh I'll send Chantelle (daughter) a text', see how are they all are um and we might have a, a conversation via text, about 10 texts going back and forth and then that might be it for a week or a couple of days later, same again. But, you know, there's no (.) but it's not, the texts are getting better now, it's not just 'Yes we're fine, hope you are too', end of. It, you know, she'll say 'What you've been doing?' and, you know, you've got a conversation, not just closed questions and answers." (Sam, P13, L514).

This was what her daughter was offering and Sam clasped at this in a sense of desperation. Sam longed to be grandmother to her grandchildren, although be

it on her own terms, and if texting was the promise of something more, then Sam was patiently prepared to follow her daughter's lead. It seemed that Sam was now surrendering all control to her daughter in her yearning and hopes to be grandmother for real.

Michelle explains that her experiences of paternal grandmotherhood are different to her experiences of maternal grandmotherhood. In her accounts, Michelle implies that it is her daughter-in-law who acts as a gatekeeper to being grandmother to her paternal grandchildren.

"...I can say to Sarah (daughter) 'I want to take them (grandchildren) here, I want to take them there,' you've got, you know, and that's fine and she'll let me do that but if it was just Clara (daughter-in-law), you know, I don't, I wouldn't feel that I would have the um I'm trying to put it, I haven't got that bond with Clara because she's not mine, to be able to say 'Well I want to go and do this' or 'I want to go and do that'..." (Michelle, P3, L139).

Michelle feels comfortable enough to direct her maternal grandmothing because she shares an historic relationship with her daughter. They share an intimacy: she knows her daughter thoroughly as her daughter knows her. She gave life to her daughter and raised her with beliefs and practices that her daughter shares. The use of the word "mine" suggests that Michelle owns her daughter, that her daughter and consequently, her daughter's children are hers. This sense of ownership may extend to her son but not to her daughter-in-law who has her own relationship with her mother, who shares familiarities with her own mother as Michelle does with her own daughter. This is not to say that Michelle does not enjoy a good relationship with her daughter-in-law but that she feels there are tighter boundaries to comply with; for motherhood is socially constructed as a central care-giving role and for Michelle to do paternal grandmothing, she has to negotiate the less intimate relationship with her daughter-in-law and not her son.

7.3 Owning and romancing the grandchild, experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness

Michelle, along with other participating grandmothers, discussed their grandchildren with a sense of ownership. Their daughters are theirs and so are their daughter's children. For the majority, they talk of their grandchildren with an all-consuming love: that they belong to them and that they love them unconditionally. There is a romance in their words and accounts of their experiences of grandmotherhood, an evolving love story starting at the birth of

their first grandchild. With this new generation to their family, most of the participating grandmothers also discussed their feelings of connectedness, of their sense of belonging and continuation. However, for Nikki, Julie and Sam, their experiences had left them feeling disconnected, of a family experiencing broken links between the generations.

7.3.1 Owning and romancing the grandchild

Sam's experiences of grandmotherhood resulted in her feeling that her grandchildren are strangers to her as she is to them. Sam presents and discusses a photo (Figure 60) of her two grandsons (faces are masked at Sam's request), sent via text from her daughter that both pains and pleasures her simultaneously. She has never met her youngest grandson and this fills her with feelings of hurt, anguish and torment.

Figure 60 (D) – 'They're my grandkids and I don't know them' (Sam)



"...And obviously Cory (eldest grandchild), I, I've seen odd times and um sometimes Hailey (other daughter) will have been round and have got pictures of them so she'll show me um but, as I say, Nate (second grandchild), I, I don't know him and that's, although it's lovely to have that picture, it's quite difficult because, you know, they're my grandkids and I don't know them." (Sam, P11, L437).

Whilst Sam is grandmother but not being grandmother, there is still a sense that her grandsons belong to her. They are hers, even though she does not know them. It seems that, for Sam, her grandchildren are a part of her that exists in a world without her; that they are worlds apart but they are still hers. Her grandsons are her bloodline, they share some genetic properties, they are her continuation and for that, she loves them whether she knows them or not. Becoming and being a grandmother for Sam is a life changing experience not

because of the actual grandmothering but because of the potential grandmothering. The fact that her grandchildren exist, that Sam is a grandmother without actively being a grandmother but desperately wanting to be, appears to contribute to a change in psychological life if not her physical life.

It seemed that Sam's desires for grandmotherhood were Natalie's reality as she described a closeness that she shares with her daughter and granddaughters. According to Natalie, this closeness that she talks of is mutually reciprocated between mother and daughter and grandmother and granddaughters. She presents her prompt objects in the interview (Figure 61), explaining that the plaque was a gift to her from her daughter.

Figure 61 – 'The only thing better than having you as my mum is my children having you as their nanny' (Natalie)



"...It's not the plaque, it's the words. It says 'The only thing better than having you as my mum is my children having you as their nanny'. Um yeah, so it just says it all really. How my daughter um (.) we're really, really close and er, I think of them as my own children really. I call them, I call them my 3 girls and er and yeah that says it, everything really." (Natalie, P13, L55).

The closeness that Natalie shares with her daughter and granddaughters is evidenced through her words. She takes ownership of her daughter and granddaughters, describing them as "My 3 girls". On several occasions throughout the interview, Natalie refers to her granddaughters as her children before correcting herself. This reflects the close and special relationships that she shares with them and the importance of those relationships to Natalie as their grandmother. Natalie has been a significant person in her daughter and granddaughters' lives as she shared the parenting responsibilities for her eldest granddaughter and became a central support figure for her daughter when she

became ill with Crohn's disease. Natalie romantically describes her experiences of becoming and being a grandmother: that she falls in love with her granddaughters at first sight. A love story that blossoms and evolves in much the same way as becoming and being a mother. Her experiences of grandmothering seemed to be an expansion of mothering, an opportunity to relive mothering again but also a familial promotion that provides an experience greater and "better" than mothering.

"...Completely different having grandchildren to having your own children, completely. And it is, I know it's awful to say it but it's better." (Natalie P14, L612).

Catherine had committed to her grandson unlike any other commitment that she has experienced before. A devotion that extends beyond anything else, that being a grandmother for Catherine is, and will continue to be, a bond unbroken. This is evidenced in a photo she discusses of a tattoo of her grandson's name on her wrist. For Catherine, the birth of her first grandson was a special occasion, an event in her life that she rejoices and wants to mark permanently in the form of a tattoo.

"...I was so excited and it was so, I don't know (.), I just, I mean I've never had my kids names tattooed. I have got tattoos but I've never had any names. But I just, that (becoming a grandmother) was so special, an occasion to celebrate [laughs]." (Catherine, P11, L293).

Catherine and indeed, most of the participating grandmothers presented a romanticism of grandmotherhood and a refreshed enthusiasm for life. Michelle's love for her grandchildren is undeniable: she talked about her grandchildren throughout her interview with a twinkle in her eyes and a smile on her face. Michelle frequently implies that since becoming a grandmother, her life is more fulfilled, more complete. Her grandchildren give her inner warmth that surpasses any feeling she has experienced before.

"I've learned to love. Honestly, it's um, cause sometimes you just go with your day-to-day life and things like that but these children (grandchildren) just bring a different feeling to you and you just start to appreciate everything that you've really got. Um and as a person, for me, I always worry about what's gonna happen the next day, well I used to but now I live for the next day. I live for thinking I've got my grandchildren, I can nip over the road and I can see them and it, in, in that sense it's, it, it gives me a warmth. I've got more of a, as I'm getting older as well, I've got more of a

warmth that goes on within me and it's, it's those kids that have brought it to me." (Michelle, P6, L258).

Siobhan also speaks of a fulfilment she experiences in her grandmothering.

"Oh it's (grandmotherhood) lovely...it gives you, you know when your kids are little, you have that reason to get up in the day and do what you do and, you have that back again I think, when you've got babies in the family." (Siobhan, P3, L126).

Siobhan and Catherine imply that their grandchildren have re-awakened their zest for life, an improved emotional wellbeing and that they have more meaning to their lives as a result of their grandchildren's existence. In this sense, all of the grandmothers, with perhaps the exception of Julie, seem to paint a romantic picture with their words of love for their grandchildren; a romance between grandmother and grandchild.

7.3.2 Connectedness and disconnectedness

The majority of participating grandmothers discussed an improved connectedness with their generational families as a result of their grandmotherhood. The meaning of ownership discussed in the previous section extends to the feelings of belonging and existing in a family that contributes to connections and blood ties, that kinship means reciprocal belonging and owning of family members throughout the generations. With the new generation of grandchildren, the grandmothers seemed to experience a re-evaluation and strengthening of these connections. For Julie, Nikki and Sam however, they found themselves disconnected, with the broken links between mother and daughter, grandmother and grandchild.

Nikki's endeavours to keep her granddaughter safe and out of harm's way from her daughter's neglectful mothering had consequently resulted in her living through an onslaught of distress. This disconnectedness between mother and daughter was evidenced in Nikki's words.

"I think I should have a right to take my daughter's life. I think I should be allowed to kill my daughter, I could kill my daughter. I could actually, I could actually kill my daughter...I could actually kill her and it's frightening, it's very very frightening that you could do something, especially the way I've been brought up. I've worked in care since I was a kid, I've always helped people or saved people or sat with them when they're dying naturally but I

could actually kill my own child...It's just, it's, it's frightening, it's just a horrible feeling that you could actually do that. I know I could do it and I've, if anybody does it, I've got a right to do it cause I brought her into this world, I should be able to take her out of it. I do, it's so strong, it's wrong and I would never do it but it's frightening to think, just thinking about it that I could." (Nikki, P5, L225).

Nikki talks about the extreme emotions and thoughts that she experiences as a consequence of her daughter's actions. For Nikki, her daughter was an ongoing threat to her granddaughter's safety. Towards the end of Nikki's interview, she states that she would "kill" for her granddaughter: that she would kill her daughter (the threat) to protect her granddaughter. Nikki dislikes her daughter and the person she has become but is frightened by the strength of her thoughts and feelings towards her daughter. As a way to forget her daughter and to overcome thoughts of killing her daughter, she closes off to her daughter, disconnects from her and disowns her.

Julie also talks of the emotional distress caused by her daughter's neglect of her children. With Julie finding herself and her husband taking on temporary full time care of her grandchildren, she despairs at her daughter's lack of responsibility and maturity.

"...Yeah so we (Julie and husband) had the children (grandchildren) again, we probably had them for about 3 months I reckon. Yeah, it was for a long while um and we had every couple of weeks we would have a team consisting of the social worker, the health visitor and some family support something come round and speak to us all um which on occasion did get quite heated. Um and to be completely honest, I could've smacked Siobhan (daughter) in the mouth throughout most of those meetings because she either contributed no: thing or it was everyone else's fault apart from hers and that was really annoying." (Julie, P8, L349).

Julie frequently wavers between living in hope that her daughter will become a 'good' mother and living in despair. When Julie was asked what it means to her to be a grandmother, her response was *"...Hassle...nothing really and that's horrible..."* (P25, L1113). Arguably, grandmotherhood means more to her than she is willing to state. 'Nothingness' for Julie is a result of the stressful events that she associates with her grandmothering experiences, instigated by her daughter's neglect of her children. Like Nikki, Julie experiences a disconnected relationship with her daughter, which significantly influences the meanings she has for her grandmotherhood.

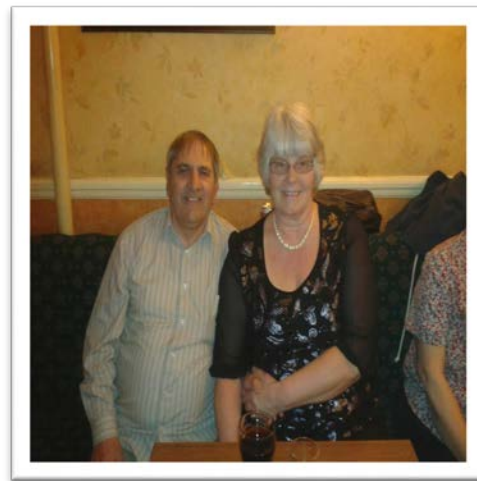
The remaining seven grandmothers discussed the meanings of grandmotherhood in terms of family origins, togetherness and continuation. Collections of photos were presented that demonstrated the connectedness they felt since becoming and being a grandmother. Catherine and Sarah's discussions of their photos (Figures 62 and 63) evidence the meanings of family origins and the connections and re-connections made and being maintained.

Figure 62 (D) - From where it all started (Catherine)



"...I've got that (photo) by my bed and I just love that photo, for some reason I've always loved that, that photo and Rachel, my daughter, looks just like Dice (grandson) in it, as he is now um and it just reminds me of where, where it all started. That's, that's my family, that's the, the 3 people that mean the most to me and that's, that's where it started and that's what I've done. That's a personal achievement for me, I've got, I've got 2 lovely children and a gorgeous grandson as well and that's where it started." (Catherine, P4, L137).

Figure 63 (D) - The start of everything (Sarah)



"...That's our mum and dad. No our life's all about, we all revolve around each other. They're (.) the start of everything, do you know what I mean. They are the centre, they are, they are." (Sarah, P15, L495).

Catherine reflects on her experiences of grandmotherhood by expressing her feelings of personal achievement. She presents an old family photo of her and

her two children from when they were young and suggests that this represents *"from where it all started"*. This photo holds significant meanings to Catherine, and as such, is placed on her bedside table. It reminds her of years gone by, when her children were young and she was a young mother, at the beginning of her motherhood journey to where her family is now with a new generation. Catherine views this as her achievement, from conception of her own children to the birth and young life of her own grandson.

Throughout Sarah's interview, she paints an image of her four-generation family working together: four generations tied together in everyday support and functioning. At the unexpected pregnancy of her daughter, the transitional phase to grandmother and being a grandmother, there is a sense of a whole family effort, a connectedness. From birthing arrangements through to living with the fourth generation, the dynamics of her family develop and change in response to circumstances. Sarah's photo of her parents reflects the importance she holds to family togetherness and the generations that make her family whole. At the core of family life are the first generation, Sarah's parents, her children's grandparents and her grandchildren's great grandparents. When discussing the photo of her parents, Sarah identifies them as the *"start of everything"*, that life has originated from them and daily life revolves around them. Sarah's experiences of grandmotherhood and the meanings they hold to her are influenced by her interactions with her parents and the sense of belonging that she has from being a part of four generations.

This sense of belonging and connectedness is further represented in a photo presented and discussed by Siobhan: a photo of Siobhan, her daughters and her grandchildren taken on mother's day. .

...I do feel more full, you know like your life feels more fulfilled and (1) I think it gives you something to get up for. I mean I wouldn't spend time with the girls and their partners like I do if they hadn't got the children." (Siobhan, P4, L177) "I don't know that I keep it all together because they (family) do get on. My kids all get on with each other and Rick (son) gets on really well with Jo's (daughter) partner so (.) I think we just all keep it together, all of us together." (Siobhan, P11, L436).

Siobhan discusses the togetherness of her family, their sense of belonging and their close relationships with each other, made more significant by the new generation, her grandchildren. Siobhan believes that as her daughters grew older and moved away from home, their relationships drifted apart as they entered young adulthood. Being a grandmother means that Siobhan now feels

a re-connection to her daughters. They belong together as a family and they each play a part in maintaining family togetherness.

Toni discusses how grandmotherhood has evoked more self-awareness of the continuation of her family. She presents a photo (Figure 64) of a chair that holds significant meanings to her. The chair is a reminder to Toni of her grandparents and a connection to her past. It is an object that symbolises her family past, her origins and gives her a sense of where she fits into the world, of where she is from and where she belongs. Being a grandmother means she can pass this on to her granddaughter and that she too will have this connection.

Figure 64 (D) – Heirlooms (Toni)



"So this was left to me by my grandmother and um my grandfather actually did the upholstery on it and, and did the tapestry on it. And um (.) so yes, it's relevant to me in terms of it being from my grandparents but then I will pass it to her (granddaughter)...it's that feeling of (.) sort of generations of family and continuity and that (.), that you're all connected, we're all connected...when you sort of think back well, you know, 'Where am I from', 'Where, where's my heritage', 'Where, how am I tied into this whole line of the world' and, and it's not through that chair but that sort of represents it. It's this thing, this possession that connects to the past and will do for the future." (Toni, P17, L697).

For Toni and many of the other participating grandmothers, being a grandmother and experiencing the birth of the next family generation, brings forth a sense of continuation and connects them more firmly to their past, their present and the future. A future made more secure with the knowledge that their grandchildren are taking the family forward.

7.4 Researcher's reflections

As the analysis progressed, I started to realise just how much influence the social world has on us. I thought of my own experiences of mothering a son with Asperger's. I reflected back on those numerous appointments with professionals, the looks of disdain I received when my son decided to have a melt down in public places, and the difficult decision my son and I made to home school him after attendance at mainstream school was becoming detrimental to his mental health. I became increasingly aware of how I had felt as a mother; wanting the people (strangers, professionals, family and friends) we interacted with and encountered to see me as a 'good' mother even though my son's behaviours often opposed this image, one that I was trying so hard to portray. I cared about what other people would think, that I wanted my son and I to conform. I had very rarely considered how motherhood is shaped and constrained by societal expectations and norms. In this sense, I perceived that grandmotherhood is also an identity that is shaped by interactions with others; grandmotherhood exists in relation to significant others and is performed as a consequence of living in the world with others.

I started my research as a 41-year-old daughter and single mother, my age similar to that of the grandmothers I was interviewing. As my research journey progressed, I became aware of a change in attitude towards the "off-timing" of life transitions. In particular, I was most upset with myself as I started to realise that I had held judgements and preconceptions of young motherhood resembling the negative stereotypical views. This I felt also extended to young grandmotherhood, in which I expected to uncover deviances associated with the young mothers and grandmothers. I have thought and reflected on this considerably, blaming my passivity and openness to the messages I have received through my lifeworld; from media sources, literatures I have read and from others sharing life in the social world. As a consequence, I was aware that I needed to bracket off these assumptions in order to better understand what it means to be in the world as a young maternal grandmother, to turn to grandmotherhood itself and to question the ways in which young maternal grandmothers experience the world as a young maternal grandmother.

Throughout the analysis process, I referred frequently to van Manen's (1984) phenomenological writing to ensure I was questioning temporality, spatiality, corporeality and communality; of how the participating young grandmothers experience lived time, lived space, lived body and lived relationships to others in their grandmothering experiences. Time, space and distance were important essences of the participating grandmothers' experiences; their young ages

meant that they often felt constrained by their working lives but made sure they enjoyed quality time with their grandchildren whenever they could. The geographic distance between grandmother and grandchild further enhanced or diminished their grandmothering experiences, with spaces used within their homes to accommodate their grandchildren and symbolise their grandchildren in their physical absence. Being young and energized was a further essence in their experiences of grandmotherhood where their lived young bodies allowed them to be actively engaged in their grandchildren's lives, to enjoy physical activities that perhaps an older grandmother is unable to do.

Grandmotherhood is a role intertwined with the relationships to others; of negotiations and interactions as embedded beings with other embedded beings as our ongoing life projects conflict and harmonise in our everyday lives. Some of the grandmothers' lives (such as Sam, Julie and Nikki) had become complicated by their own actions and the actions of others, leading to experiences of disconnectedness between the generations. Despite the participating grandmothers' perceived unconventionality of their young grandmotherhood, and indeed my own conjectures at the start of this research, the majority of the grandmothers portrayed a sense of fulfilment: of second chances in their care for the next generation; of supportive partners and family members who helped them to engage in the cultural norms of good grandparenting practices; of stronger connections to the past, present and future generations; and an ownership and romanticism of their grandchildren that often seemed difficult to articulate, a sublimity that goes beyond the spoken word.

Chapter 8 Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother. Literature portraying “off-time” grandparents as deviant and pathological (Kornhaber, 1986) originated from an era when social scientists tended to focus on the normalisation of human behaviours and experiences and where age normative frameworks within societies were implicitly constraining (Neugarten *et al.* 1965; Fallo-Mitchell & Ryff, 1982; Gee, 1990, 1991; Byrd & Breuss, 1992; Peterson, 1996). The findings from the current study contribute towards new and updated insights into the experiences of young maternal grandmothers living in contemporary society, making initial steps in addressing the existing negative representations of early transitioning grandparents. By exploring the lived experiences of a small sample of young English maternal grandmothers, the findings reveal the diversity of grandmothering being experienced in contemporary society and how grandmotherhood is both socially and relationally constructed and performed.

Essential experiences and their essences were interpreted from ten young maternal grandmothers’ accounts, gathered through semi-structured interviews, prompt objects and photo elicitation with data analysed using IPA. The grandmothers’ experiences were diverse, with convergences and divergences identified and discussed throughout the analytical process. This final chapter presents a critical discussion of the current findings in relation to existing literatures, where the emergence of new understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood contribute to a frequently neglected and often outdated body of research. Reflections are applied to the research design, with considerations made to both the strengths and limitations of this research. The chapter concludes with the wider implications of this study’s findings in relation to contributions to society and recommendations for possible future directions based on this research.

8.1 New understandings in relation to existing literatures

This section presents a critical discussion of the current findings in connection to the existing literatures that relate to the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood. The content will follow the order of the findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 (Becoming a young maternal grandmother and Being a young maternal grandmother).

8.1.1 Becoming a young maternal grandmother

The transition to grandparenthood has been conveyed within the literature as a positive life experience (Kulik, 2007) and a taken-for-granted phenomenon (Cunningham-Burley, 1986). Contrary to these existing understandings, the findings from this current study reveal a rather different experience for grandmothers who transition to grandmotherhood at an earlier than socially and personally expected age. The overall experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother are greatly influenced by the mother-daughter relationship and the lack of control that the grandmothers perceive that they have over the timings of their daughter's transition to motherhood and their own transition to grandmotherhood.

With the imposition of grandmotherhood by their young adult daughters, this study highlights the uncontrollable nature of the transition proposed by Hagestad and Lang (1986). Due to the young ages of daughter and mother, the "off-timing" (Hagestad & Lang, 1986; Kornhaber, 1986; Hirshorn, 1998) of the simultaneous transitions to motherhood and grandmotherhood are particularly pertinent within the majority of the participating grandmothers' accounts of their experiences. For 8 out of the 10 grandmothers, their primary concerns are for their daughters' ages, relationship status and future plans at the time of pregnancy. The grandmothers' apprehensions reflect, to a large extent, contemporary societal maternal discourses that project a 'normative' trajectory for women of completing education, establishing a career, housing and relationship stability and then starting a family (Geronimus, 2003; McDermott & Graham, 2005; Wilson & Huntington, 2006; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2014). Hence, their reactions to their daughters' pregnancies are embedded in a culture that problematises and stigmatises young motherhood and a 'conventional wisdom' (Geronimus, 2003) that highlights the socially perceived negative outcomes of young motherhood with a moral condemnation (Whitley & Kirmayer, 2008).

The essential experiences of acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of their daughters' pregnancy and of their grandmotherhood reflect their evaluations of their daughters' readiness and their own readiness. According to Dalton and Gottlieb (2003), the concept of readiness has been defined as a state in which the individual assesses their readiness for change and/or a process in which the individual becomes ready for change over time. Rogan, Shmied, Barclay, Everitt and Wyllie (1997, p. 877) explored the process of adjusting to early motherhood and found that readiness for motherhood was one stage within a larger process: realising, readiness, drained, aloneness, loss and working it out.

In this sense, it is proposed that the participating grandmothers' readiness for change (for their daughters and for themselves) was both a state in which they assessed their readiness and a process of acceptance over time. Their daughter's dependency upon them, or their daughter's independency from them, is a significant factor contributing to their transitional experiences. Acceptance of motherhood and grandmotherhood came with ease for the two grandmothers (Siobhan and Michelle) whose daughters were out of their teens (early 20's), in stable relationships and living independently. For the remaining grandmothers, their daughter's levels of dependency upon them posed varying degrees of difficulties in acceptance. Some perceived that the pregnancy was too early, that their daughter's social positioning (i.e. incomplete education and insecure relationship with the baby's father) was not conducive to motherhood at this point in their lives and that their future may be ruined as a consequence of young motherhood. Influenced by their own past experiences of young motherhood, some of the participating grandmothers knew of "*...the impact a baby has on one's life, the enormous and unrelenting responsibility and the considerable learning required...*" (Rogan *et al.* 1997, p. 883).

Indeed, it was found that a reluctance, or willingness, in accepting their daughter's pregnancy came from drawing on their own historical experiences of young motherhood. For many, there was a fear expressed that young grandmotherhood would expose their own young motherhood based on their experiential knowledge of how the social world stigmatises and stereotypes young mothers as deviant (Kelly, 1995; Wiemann *et al.* 2005, Wilson & Huntington, 2006; Smithbattle, 2013). In this sense, the participating grandmothers were assessing whether their daughter's young motherhood would entail further stigmatisation for themselves. Whilst some of the grandmothers' experiences of young motherhood were perceived as positive, others reflected back on the felt or enacted stigma/criticism (Scambler, 2009; Neill *et al.* 2013) they had experienced themselves. These anxieties were not just for themselves but extended and transposed onto their daughters as young mothers, resulting in worry and concern that their daughters would experience similar. Some of the grandmothers discussed the anxiety they experienced in telling others of the pregnancy: apprehensive of what others would think of them as a mother and their daughters as young mothers. Here, these grandmothers imply a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963) where the young ages of motherhood and grandmotherhood are not associated with 'good' mothering (as like lone mothers, May, 2008) and consequently, 'good' grandmothers. Becoming a young maternal grandmother was therefore a double concern: for their daughter's young motherhood and for their own past young motherhood and future young grandmotherhood. Here, research by Mitchell (2010)

reporting that mothers hold social timetables for their children is supported: where happiness of midlife parents is centred around their children's sociocultural normative developmental achievements.

In researching teenage mothers and stigma, Ellis-Sloan (2014) discussed how teenage mothers presented themselves as good mothers by the use of defensive orientations to deflect the blame of their pregnancy. Ellis-Sloan (2014) found that by doing the right thing (in the use of contraceptives), young mothers presented their pregnancy as unintended. Young mothers then reacted to their pregnancies with shock, rather than happy responses that potentially would implicate an intended pregnancy. This "*impression management*" (Goffman, 1959) that young mothers adopted to avert the blame (Ellis-Sloan, 2014) is replicated, to an extent, in the current findings. Two grandmothers felt that their daughters had valid reasons for their unexpected pregnancies (failed contraceptives) and were comforted by this, finding themselves armed with a defence for their young daughter's pregnancy and their own mothering of a young mother. In these cases, it is not only young mothers that use defensive orientations to avoid stigmatisation but also the mothers of young mothers who may feel at risk of "*...blemishes of individual character...*" (Goffman, 1963, p. 14); tainted by their own and their daughter's young ages.

The present findings also contribute to new insights into grandmothering identities. Research suggests that the transition to grandmotherhood results in a changed identity (Severino *et al.* 1986): an identity that some of the participating grandmothers were not ready for. The unexpected timing of this life transition conflicts with their young, reproductive bodies and the socially represented older, unproductive bodies of grandmotherhood. Kaufman and Elder Jr. (2003) proposed that "off-time" or early grandparents would experience accelerated ageing. More recent research by Bordone and Arpino (2015) supported these findings, reporting that younger men and women feel subjectively older if they have grandchildren. Hence, many of the grandmothers chose a 'young' sounding name to defy the social portrayal of an older identity. They live in a social world where grandmotherhood continues to be associated with old age (Douaire-Marsaudon & Howard, 2007; Sciplino *et al.* 2010; Tarrant, 2010; Bosak, 2012). The grandmothers indicated that social representations of grandmotherhood are not necessarily true; that they were aware that grandparents are younger in terms of healthier ageing bodies and that very few are as society portrays. Here, Hagestad's (1985) suggestion that society lags behind demographic changes is still apposite. The participating grandmothers chose a grandmothering name that they felt disassociated them with older aged post reproductive bodies regardless of their awareness of social

realities; a name that they perceived was more in line with their true chronological age and younger bodied selves.

Furthermore, by choosing a name for their grandmothering identity, many of the participating grandmothers demonstrated a degree of self-determination in their imminent grandmotherhood. Whilst the timing of grandmotherhood is out of their control, the grandmothers' choice of name perhaps indicates the taking back of control over their transition and their forthcoming grandmothering selves. Again, this demonstrates a process of readiness, where the participating grandmothers choose a grandmothering name in order to prepare for change in their generational status and identity.

The experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother further evoked evaluations of self-perceived gains, losses and changes in relationships with others. Their experiences can be closely likened to the literatures surrounding psychological turning points. For some of the participating grandmothers, there is an exuded sense of loss: that their grandmotherhood would result in a loss of their present lifestyle or an anticipated future lifestyle as a result of their daughters' youth and dependency upon them. These perceived losses are founded in their expectations that they would have to take responsibility for their grandchild as a dependent child of their dependent daughter: a sense that they are being thrust back into childcare rather than forward into decreased parenting responsibilities. Similarly, Shirani and Henwood (2011) explored the temporal experiences of unexpected life course transitions, specifically focusing on unplanned fatherhood. The authors found that unplanned pregnancies caused a temporal disruption to future trajectories. Like the young fathers in Shirani and Henwood's (2011) study, the majority of the participating grandmothers appeared to initially perceive their daughters' pregnancies as a negative event, which would interfere with their future goals. In some cases, the grandmothers perceived that their life was regressing back to a childcare phase with a loss to their future plans. These evaluations made by the participating grandmothers support Shirani and Henwood's (2011, p. 58) statement that *"unplanned pregnancies presented a dramatic temporal interruption to life plans"* and that imagined or anticipated futures were disrupted as a consequence of the timing of motherhood and grandmotherhood.

Expecting changes to their lifestyle and family roles suggests that becoming a young maternal grandmother is indeed a psychological turning point (Ronka *et al.* 2003; Leonard & Burns, 2006). There certainly appeared to be an undergoing psychological shift during the participating grandmothers' transitional experiences, not only as they considered the responsibility that

their grandmotherhood would entail but also in issues of self-concept: of what other people would think of their mothering abilities as a result of their young daughter's pregnancy. For some of the grandmothers, it appeared that they experienced a temporary loss of confidence in their mothering as they proceeded to question and blame themselves for their daughters' pregnancies and in some cases, their own young motherhood.

With these divergences in the participating grandmothers' experiences, there is support that psychological turning points (becoming a young maternal grandmother) could be positive or negative (Sutin *et al.* 2010). This forced change in their developmental trajectory (Ronka *et al.* 2003), in which the majority of the grandmothers felt was not the right time, can be likened to Kornhaber's (1986) proposal that early grandparenthood comes at a time when grandmothers are possibly actively still parenting, in paid employment and enjoying, or looking forward to the 'breather' from childcare as their young adult children become independent. It is also important to acknowledge that the transition to grandmotherhood starts with the news of the daughter's pregnancy and not at the birth of the grandchild (Ben-Shlomo, Taubman-Ben-Ari, Findler, Sivan and Dolizki, 2010). The data analysis in this current study fell naturally into two aspects of experience (becoming and being) but this does not imply that the transition abruptly ends at the birth of the grandchild. Indeed, the transition and the psychological shift continued after the birth: in the negotiations and enacting of a new life stage and new and changing relationships. According to Ronka *et al.* (2003) and Kirst (2014), life's turning points are frequently realised when one reflects back on a life event or transition, where the "*ground-of-being shifts*" (Kirst, 2014, p. 314).

When Mason (2004, p. 177) studied personal narratives about peoples' residential histories, she stated:

"In emphasising the relationality of people's identities, practices and agency, I am not suggesting that everyone in our study was always kind, considerate, fair and fully cognisant of the needs and desires of others. Nor is everyone 'equally relational' and neither do relational practices and identities always take the same shape and form...and also make clear that while relational practices may well be warm and supportive, they may equally be conflictual, oppressive and exclusionary. To say that practices and identities are relational is not, therefore, to say that everyone is equally engaged in supporting others, nor that everyone can get their interests recognised as valid by others."

The relational practices of the majority of the participating young grandmothers centred around the varied amount of help they reported to give their daughters in preparation for the new baby, whether they were happy with the circumstances or not. Some of the grandmothers supported their daughters in becoming independent by helping them to secure a home with their partners in readiness for the birth. These preparations outwardly appear not so much a part of preparing for grandmotherhood but more primarily a part of their motherhood: A new territory in motherhood in which they are supporting their daughters' preparations for motherhood. However, supporting their daughters may have inadvertently helped the grandmothers to accept and ready themselves for grandmotherhood. For example, some of the grandmothers attended antenatal appointments with their daughters and were very much involved with the pregnancy. By being involved, the grandmothers experience the process of their daughters' pregnancy: their grandmothering identity becoming more of a reality as the pregnancy progresses.

The varying support that the participating grandmothers appeared to provide was emotional, practical and financial (in some cases) and further contributes to the socially constructed concept of 'good' motherhood. Indeed, all of the grandmothers reported themselves to be primary supportive figures (some more willingly taken on than others) for their daughters' pregnancies as reported by Borchering, Smithbattle and Schneider (2005), DeVito (2010), Kehily and Thomson (2011a), Turnage and Pharris (2013) and Emmel and Hughes (2014). These findings also concur with synthesis of young motherhood literature undertaken by McDermott and Graham (2005) where the mothers of young mothers were reported to be central figures in support and a crucial resource for resilient young mothering.

The grandmothers' support is evidenced further with 9 out of the 10 grandmothers attending the birth of their first maternal grandchild. It is uncertain, due to an absence of literature, as to whether the attendance at their grandchild's birth is a current social trend amongst daughters and mothers of all ages or if it is an indication of their daughter's young age and dependency. Records into attendees at childbirth primarily focus on the presence of fathers. According to Harvey (2010), fathers became increasingly involved in the birth of their children as childbirth moved away from the home and increasingly became a medicalised procedure within hospitals from the late 1960s and 1970s. The National Childcare Trust (NCT) (2012) reported that approximately 97% of fathers are present at the birth of their baby. There are no further statistics on birth supporters, other than the fathers at childbirth. However, the NCT (2012) reported that more than one birthing partner is allowed and that

often, these are family relatives. Possibly the grandmothers' attendance at the births was a result of their daughters' young ages and the absence of the father, although for some, they attended alongside their daughters' partners.

Despite the participating grandmothers' concerns for the timing of their grandmotherhood and their daughters' motherhood, the attendance at the birth was a pivotal moment in their grandmothering experiences, providing an opportunity to reform their experiences of childbirth and to fully appreciate the gain of a new-born grandchild. In this sense, the participating grandmothers' experiences of their grandchild's birth can be interpreted as a critical moment. Holland and Thomson (2009) reported that hindsight was important in the identification of critical moments. From the retrospective accounts of the grandmothers, the birth of their first grandchild was a universal topic of conversation and the start of their presentation of photos. This moment in time appeared critical to their grandmothering; the physicality of being there and the importance the grandmothers relay in forming an immediate physical and emotional attachment to their new-born grandchild emphasises the reality of their grandmotherhood. As Grace (2012) quoted, *"when a child is born, so is a grandmother"*. Whilst Kornhaber (1986) proposed that the young or "out-of-phase" grandparent is pathological, the author also reported on what he considered to be "normal" grandparenting:

"When the child is born, new grandparents experience strong feelings and unique thoughts. There is an urgent desire to make contact with the new child, a need for intimacy" (Kornhaber, 1986, p. 22).

What is apparent from the findings in this current study is that whilst the majority of participating grandmothers struggled to accept their transition to grandmotherhood for a variety of reasons, the 'normality' of feelings they express at the birth of their grandchild is far from pathological. Hence, whilst the transitional process appeared to involve a continuing psychological shift, the birth of the grandchild was a critical moment in their transitional time. Similar to Holland and Thomson (2009, p. 465) who reported that *"notions of choice and fate infuse our data..."*, the majority of the participating grandmothers' narrations are permeated with a lack of agency through their transitions and yet a strong sense of choice at the birth of their grandchild. They chose to be present, to support their daughters through childbirth and to witness and accept the gain of a new generation.

Kehily and Thomson (2011a) proposed that the birth of a child is an "intergenerational act" in which all family members apply both conscious and

unconscious meanings to changing relationships. Throughout the participating grandmothers' transitional experiences and particularly from the birth of their grandchild, there is a sense of re-configuration. Where,

"the arrival of a new generation within a family generally constitutes a significant moment of change and realignment, which both remakes situations, relationships and perspectives" (Kehily & Thomson, 2011a, p. 7).

8.1.2 Being a young maternal grandmother

The participating grandmothers who sheltered and supported their daughters and grandchild after the birth of their grandchild portrayed unconventionality in their grandmothering experiences at this time. Due to the "off-timing" of motherhood and grandmotherhood and dependency of their daughters, four of the participating grandmothers found themselves acting as a replacement parent and partner (Harper & Ruicheva, 2010), of being a mother again to their grandchild and not doing what they expected grandmotherhood to entail. Natalie embraced this experience, relishing in the opportunity to re-construct motherhood. However, for Toni, Amanda and Nikki, the positions of replacement parent and partner provoked feelings of oddity, in the sense of conflicting identities of mother and grandmother with a loss of the idealisation of grandmotherhood. In Hughes and Emmel's (2011, 2014) case study of Ruth and Bridget, Ruth found her young age of grandmothering both ambiguous and confusing. Ruth felt that her role *"should be one of knitting baby booties and hats, not dealing with the everyday nursing needs of her newborn grandchild"* (Emmel & Hughes, 2014, p. 166). Likewise, from living in the social world, the participating grandmothers' expectations of grandmotherhood had been formulated. Cultural norms associated with good grandparenting practice: of being there yet not interfering (May *et al.* 2012) became jeopardized as three generations lived together and shared in the responsibilities of childcare. These findings, to some extent, support Hughes and Emmel's (2011) observations that young grandparent's roles are more likely to be 'rescue and repair' rather than 'leisure and pleasure'.

The duration and levels of support that these grandmothers engaged in were more "active" and longer in duration than the "latent support" that Cherlin and Furstenberg (1992, p. 206) described. The fact that their daughters were dependent upon their support contradicts their self-determination (May *et al.* 2012); their ideals of grandmotherhood in which their daughters should not rely too heavily on their support, that they can have time to themselves, be autonomous in their grandmothering activities, and enjoy a diminishment in

parenting responsibilities (Mason *et al.* 2007) are at odds with the reality of their daily lives. Alternatively, the grandmothers whose daughters lived independently (Michelle and Siobhan) engaged in more 'typical' grandmothering experiences, with their ideals satiated.

The "bridge period" in the mother-daughter relationship proposed by Bojczyk *et al.* (2011) seems particularly relevant in the experiences of the participating young grandmothers. Only two of the grandmothers perceived that their daughters were fully independent whereas for the remainder, their daughters were at least partially dependent on them. This suggests that the relationship, at this time, was primarily unidirectional in nature, with the mother's nurturance and the daughter's dependency upon that nurturing (Fingerman, 2000). Over time (either before or sometime after the birth of the grandchild) there seemed to be a shift in the mother-daughter relationship, where daughters began to reciprocate emotional support by reaching a maturity level that allowed for independence. However, this varied considerably in the grandmothers' experiences.

Whether the grandmothers experienced their grandchildren living at home with them or independently away from their homes, they all participated in childcare support (with the exception of Sam). The differences in their grandmothering childcare reflects the research by Hagestad (2006), Herlofson and Hagestad (2012) and Arber and Timonen (2012) of which there was a mixture of 'family savers' (in times of need), 'mother savers' (helping daughters) and 'child savers' (taking on primary care of grandchildren). The care they provided for their grandchildren fitted in around their own work commitments and other family relationships, with Natalie experiencing times when she had to take leave from her work to manage childcare due to her daughter's illness. Nikki also resigned from her work to take on custodial care of her granddaughter. This reflects the current trends in grandparental childcare in the UK reported by Gray (2005) and Glaser *et al.* (2013) where potential conflict will arise between the role of grandparenting childcare and commitments and requirements of paid employment.

Higgs *et al.* (2003) found that a factor contributing in the decision to retire is the wish to spend more time with grandchildren. Many of the participating grandmothers felt that their young ages and the necessity to work limited their grandmothering time and experience: they felt that being an older and retired grandmother would allow them more time to be the grandmothers they wanted to be. Hence, some of the grandmothers felt that they were, and are, missing out on grandmothering time and experience because of their work

commitments; a perceived consequence of the early timing of their grandmotherhood.

Despite their fears and concerns about the responsibilities and time that would be taken up in their grandmothing, many of the grandmothers, at the time of interviews, depicted the transient nature of their grandmothing. As life progressed, and their daughters' dependency decreased, the grandmothers were enjoying their time spent with their grandchildren: time that was temporary but quality. They could share and devote their time with their grandchildren but knew there was an end to this time where the care of their grandchild was handed back to their daughter. In this sense, the cultural norms of being there yet not interfering (May *et al.* 2012) became more prominent based on their daughter's level of independence. Here, the current findings suggest that being a grandmother according to these dominant grandparenting cultural norms are not so much restricted by the grandmother's young age but rather the developmental stage of their daughter and consequently, the mother-daughter relationship stage.

For a minority of participating grandmothers (Sam, Nikki and Julie), the independence of the immature (daughters) had a massive impact on their grandmothing experiences and also the lives of their small defenceless grandchildren. Their experiences resulted in a conflict between being a grandmother and not doing grandmotherhood. Sam, Nikki and Julie's experiences are strongly influenced by their strained relationships with their daughters due to both of their actions, reactions and behaviours during the transitional stage and after the birth of their grandchild. Their experiences support the existing research that daughters are the gatekeepers to grandmotherhood (Mason *et al.* 2007; Dunifon & Bajracharya, 2012). However, this is complicated further by these grandmothers trying to take control in their grandmothing. By breaking the cultural norm of not interfering, Sam is alienated almost completely from her grandmotherhood by interfering before the birth of her first grandchild. In Sam's experiences, it is not only her daughter and partner that denied her access to grandmotherhood but also her own reactions and actions. Sam's experiences suggest that good grandparenting practices are tested and trialled before the grandchild is born. This lends support to Kornhaber's (1986) observation that grandparents rehearse their roles before the birth of their grandchild. Therefore, Sam's experiences may indicate a rehearsal that has gone drastically wrong.

Nikki and Julie's experiences demonstrate that gatekeepers to grandmotherhood extend beyond daughters and partners, with social services,

the police and the English legal system perceived as playing additional gatekeepers in their access to grandchildren. Nikki and Julie try to take control in order to protect their grandchildren, finding their identities conflicted as they take on the motherly role to their grandchildren. Nikki and Julie's experiences of custodial grandmothering support the research by Grinstead *et al.* (2003) and Orb and Davey (2005), finding that stress and financial burden is considerable when pushed into an unexpected parenting role. Their ideals of grandmothering are not their realities as they mother their grandchildren. What is evidenced through their experiences however is their generative commitment to their grandchildren regardless of their circumstances and their lack of legal rights as a grandmother (Smith, 2005; The Grandparents' Association, 2014; Lawson & Raine, 2015).

All of the grandmothers presented their ideals of good grandmothering practice through their discussions of their grandparenting childcare. Being a good grandmother meant a continuation of good motherhood by supporting their daughters' in their motherhood and caring for their grandchildren, the next generation. This duty of care that the participating grandmothers impart is a consequence of their lifeworlds, of an implicit knowledge that has been produced as a result of living as an embedded being in the social world: that caring for grandchildren is what grandmothers do.

Further, this moral duty of care appeared to extend and encompass the (step) fathers and (step) grandfathers and, in some cases, great grandparents when a supportive partner was absent from their daily life. The participating grandmothers held opinions on what 'good' fatherhood should entail with particular reference to their grandchildren's father; an ideology of a 'good' father that includes reliability, employability and overall stability. This is evidenced in findings by Summers *et al.* (2006) in an exploration of low-income fathers' constructions of 'good fatherhood' in which a main theme was source of stability (including financial support and maintaining a stable relationship with the child's mother).

Being in a supportive partnership, for the majority of participating grandmothers, seemed to be an important part of their grandmotherhood and how they performed grandmotherhood. Indeed, grandmothers discussed how their partners participated in the care of their grandchildren, whether they were the biological grandparents or step-grandparents. This is reflected in research by Pashos, Schwarz and Bjorklund (2016), reporting that coresidence of couples influences grandparenting childcare and that the investment in step-grandchildren is shaped by the coresiding biological grandparent; their spouse

or partner. Additionally, there is support here for the research into “new grandfatherhood” (Mann & Leeson, 2010) and Tarrant’s (2012) findings that evidence a more nurturing and caring grandfather (or step-grandfather in the majority of the participating grandmothers’ experiences).

This concern for generative commitment that some of the participating grandmothers communicate, not only of themselves but of their partners, parents, daughters and daughters’ partners, can be likened to the concept of generativity. Developed from Erikson’s (1963) psychosocial stage of generativity versus stagnation, McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan’s (1993) theoretical model of generativity proposed a psychosocial space that connects the grandmother and significant others (in this instance) to the social world. The psychosocial feature of cultural demand appears particularly relevant in the narratives of the participating grandmothers: that they have knowledge of the generative nature of grandmotherhood through being in the world and this guides them to care for their grandchildren and to be a good grandmother, regardless of their young ages. Despite the problems that many of the grandmothers expressed in accepting their earlier than expected transition to grandmotherhood, the psychosocial features of generativity and their desire and commitment to nurture, teach and promote their next generation (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams *et al.* 1993; Jones & McAdams, 2013) appears mainly unaffected by their young ages and their current midlife concerns of work, marriage and child rearing (Allemand, Gomez & Jackson, 2010), often as a result of supportive others. With the exception of Julie (who, after temporarily taking on custodial care for her grandchildren, distanced herself from her grandmotherhood and concerned herself with her perceived primary responsibilities of dependent children, work and husband), the remaining grandmothers’ lives involved working around children (grandchildren) again, or the desire to, in Sam’s case. Indeed, many of the participating grandmothers implied that being a grandmother was like being a mother again; that their commitment and investment in their grandchildren was similar to that of motherhood.

Geographic distance to grandchildren was an important factor in the participating grandmothers’ experiences of grandmotherhood. By living in close proximity to their grandchildren, the grandmothers felt that they shared a closer relationship (physically and emotionally) with their grandchild and could be a more active part of their lives. The participants who lived at a distance from their grandchildren felt that distance was a barrier to being an “active” grandmother although this did not affect their feelings of emotional closeness. These findings do not reflect the conclusions made by Fischer (1983), where

grandmothers living at a distance were less likely to consider grandmotherhood as a life changing experience. Contrary to this, the grandmothers in this study suggested that the distance did make grandmotherhood more effortful but none the less meaningful.

The present study offers new insights into the spaces, places and things of young maternal grandmotherhood. The home space, for example, is often denoted as a "*feminine arena*" (Tarrant, 2011, p. 195) and that women have been reported to partake in a wider range of grandparenting activities than men (Mann, 2007). Through their spoken words, photos, prompt objects and my observations of their home environments, the grandmothers evidenced the extent of their commitment to, and importance of their grandmotherhood, by the accommodation of their grandchildren into their lives as physical spaces, places and inanimate objects. By making spaces in their homes for their grandchildren and displaying objects that symbolised their grandmothing, they embody their grandmotherhood as a significantly meaningful part of their lives. Miller and Parrotts's (2009, p. 512) research into the meanings of things and material culture enlightens the significance of these symbolisations:

"...One householder evidently cared about how the living room served as a mirror of the value she could be seen to place on relationships. The living room was stuffed full of mementoes and photographs that related to friends and family. She loved to receive new objects from their holidays or from family events. But even she and her relatively large living room could not cope with the sheer quantity of stuff that accumulates. The room, therefore, had many images that spoke to recent events and current relationships..."

This is evidenced further in Toni's discussion about the "*proliferation of tat*" that comes with being a grandmother, highlighting the need to keep such objects as a representation of grandchildren in their presence and absence. Meaningless objects to the outsider looking in are the very essence of their embodiment as grandmother. Indeed, Smart (2007, p. 156) elaborated on these everyday objects as a construction of "*intimacy and personal relationships*": that they represent the investment placed on these relationships.

The current findings also reveal how younger able-bodied and energized grandmothers enjoy active and physical activities with their grandchildren. Frequently throughout their narratives, they refer to leisure activities that they engage in with their young grandchildren and the spaces they use in which to do so. There is support here for research that suggests that younger

grandparents take on the fun seeking style of grandparenting (Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964). However, it must be acknowledged that this style may change as grandchild and grandmother age and may not necessarily be exclusive to young grandmothering in an actively ageing population. Nonetheless, this “active” grandmothering moves grandmotherhood away from the traditional home environments and sedentary activities socially associated with grandmotherhood and places young grandmotherhood into an active and positive identity that is neglected within the existing literatures. While some of the grandmothers felt that this physically active feature of their grandmothering did not fit with the stereotypical grandmother, they all perceived their young bodies as an advantage in their grandmothering activities. Comparably, Hughes and Emmel (2011) found that grandparents in localities with limited opportunities and choice, viewed 38 years and onwards as an ideal age to become a grandparent because of their physical ability to be an active grandparent.

The outside spaces and places meant that representations of the participating grandmothers’ grandmothering were not confined to their homes, that they embodied their grandmotherhood in spaces, places and things both inside and outside of the home. May (2013, p. 138) reported that,

“Within geography, the concept of place is understood to encompass not only the space in question, but also the social interactions that help give meaning to that space and thereby transform it from a space into a place with meaning.”

The meanings of spaces and places for some of the participating grandmothers are elucidated further in the photos that they presented. For example, Natalie’s photo of ‘Nanny’s park’ (Figure 56, p. 189) transforms this outside space from a communal recreational park to a place of meaning in which memories and a sense of belonging are formed. Natalie, and her granddaughters, are connected to the park because of their embodied experiences and relationships. This park is no longer just a park but an important and meaningful representation of Natalie’s grandmotherhood.

There was a romance to the stories the grandmothers told, regardless of whether they felt and experienced disconnection or connection within the generations. This romanticism has mainly been discounted in grandparenting literatures although it perhaps resembles, to some extent, the spiritual role that Kornhaber (1996) described. However, these feelings of broken hearts, warmth and fulfilment are more a product of what it means for the participating

grandmothers to live in the world as a grandmother rather than an enacted role. They do not necessarily perform the romance of grandmotherhood but rather; it is felt and transfused through their words, through their photos and through their being. The sense of belonging that the participating grandmothers imply, conveys a quality of ownership: that their grandchildren are theirs as are their daughters; their own flesh and blood, a part of their own being that exists in the world. Their experiences of grandmotherhood display a dichotomy of connecting or disconnecting the family generations, of togetherness or estrangement, based primarily on their mother-daughter relationships. Kehily and Thomson (2011a) noted that in their study of new motherhood, situations change and relationships re-configure. There is a reworking of generational positions and roles, where daughters and mothers may become closer, or not. This can be likened to the experiences of the participating grandmothers in the sense of romanticism, belonging and ownership that they impart. Whether experiencing connectedness or disconnectedness, the birth of the new generation, propels the grandmothers into a new generational status with an infusion of romance.

Existing literatures on the meanings of grandmotherhood can be tentatively compared to the current findings. For instance, many of the participating grandmothers discussed their increased reflections on family origins as a result of their grandmotherhood: their emplacement in time and history. This is similar to Kivnick's (1983) dimension of meaning: reinvolvement with personal past where grandparenthood may produce thoughts directed at family history and memories of their own grandparents. Many of the grandmothers also described their sense of continuity: that grandchildren connected them to their past, to their present and to their future, resembling Timberlake's (1980) meaning of expansion of oneself.

Less apparent in the participating grandmothers' experiences are Kivnick's (1983) dimension of valued elder (held in esteem) and Timberlake's (1980) affiliation (grandchildren help to feel part of the community). It is noted that the participating grandmothers did not talk about religion or community when discussing their grandmothering experiences. Hence, it is important to place the existing meanings of grandparenthood into context and it is argued that over 30 years on and the meanings of grandparenthood have changed and evolved in line with social demographic shifts. We are now living in youth obsessed cultures where the valued elder is perhaps a thing of the past and where active or successful ageing is now socially prescribed (WHO, 2002). Communities have diminished over the years as a consequence of individualism and materialism, as life becomes increasingly mobile and community places

such as pubs, clubs and halls have declined (Phillips, 2015). The church, a once moral authority and a past source of community spirit, has been overtaken by a growing secular society (Furedi, 2008).

What is noticeable here is that the meanings of grandmotherhood are diverse within the current study's small sample and therefore strongly reflects the vast heterogeneity of contemporary grandmothing experiences. It is highly contentious to suggest that the young grandmother is pathological as purported by Kornhaber (1986). However, it is acknowledged that three of the participating grandmothers' experiences were complicated by their daughters' life choices and actions and their own reactions and actions, resulting in grandmotherhood that was disconnected from their realities of personal everyday life. The remaining grandmothers, although initially demonstrating various degrees of acceptance and portrayals of unconventionality, were performing grandmotherhood in an arguably typical way. At the time of interviews, they had accepted their grandmotherhood, negotiated and re-negotiated their relationships with their daughters and were fitting in with grandparental childcare norms and good grandparenting practices. Changing perceptions of their young ages (by the majority of grandmothers) shifted from the unconventional to the active: that their young and abled bodies allowed both a physical and emotional engagement with their grandchildren that were meaningful and fulfilling.

8.2 Reflecting on the research design – strengths and limitations

8.2.1 IPA and the focus on lifeworlds

"Phenomenological researchers generally agree that our central concern is to return to embodied, experiential meanings aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived." (Finlay, 2009, p. 6)

Because of the diverse nature of grandmotherhood, IPA was considered the most appropriate methodology to explore the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother. It has allowed for the individual grandmother's voice to be heard (idiographic) whilst also exploring common structures of experience within those voices. In this sense, the hermeneutic circle played a primary role in both the analysis and the presentation of experiences within this study: the individual's voice is one essential part of the essential whole. Given the idiographic nature of IPA, the strength of this research lies in the in depth analysis of the grandmothers' experiences and by

maintaining commitment to IPA's phenomenological and hermeneutic underpinnings throughout the research process. The following presents my reflections on this.

IPA is guided by more than one philosophical thinker and draws on philosophical knowledge from phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Shinebourne, 2011). The descriptive transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl has aided my researching process by returning to the things themselves, to work towards "transcendental subjectivity" by constantly assessing my own pre-conceptions (Lopez & Willis, 2004) of young maternal grandmotherhood. I have continued to consider carefully the three phases of contemplation: *epoche* (bracketing and suspension of assumptions, the *natural attitude*. This I found particularly useful, but often difficult, at the idiographic analytical stage); *phenomenological reduction* (a description of what is experienced by the participating grandmothers, *noema*), and *imaginative variation* (exploring how grandmothers experience grandmotherhood through time and space, *noesis*). By doing this, I feel that I have presented an in-depth description of the participating grandmothers' realities, their lifeworlds.

Whilst Husserl's phenomenology supports a descriptive approach, hermeneutic-existential phenomenologists give prominence to interpretation. As Heidegger (1962, p. 37) wrote, "*the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation.*" Heidegger postulated that we are 'thrown into' a historical, cultural and social world, and that to experience is a result of *Dasein* (being in the world). Therefore we can never truly bracket off our assumptions, our sense of being (*sein*) because we are always engaged in this world by our relationships to others. I reflected on my 'worldliness' and that of the participating grandmothers, of being in the world with others and how this shaped my understandings of grandmotherhood and their understandings and idealisations of grandmotherhood. They had expectations of grandmotherhood as a result of being in the world.

Existential phenomenology incorporates the philosophies of both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. The central focus of Merleau-Ponty's work is of the body as the main receptacle of human experience, (*le corps propre*) one's own body (Allen-Collinson, 2011). Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on embodiment has informed me in my analysis, being mindful of the participating grandmothers' situations and how one grandmother's 'truth' is not necessarily the 'truth' for another. Their individual experiences of grandmotherhood are a result of their own embodied positions within the world as my interpretations are a result of my own embodied position within the world. Hence, whilst I found myself empathizing

with the grandmothers, I had to consider that my attempts to make sense of the grandmothers' experiences would never reveal the whole 'truth' because their experiences were their own lived and embodied reality.

I have also frequently pondered on Sartre's earlier philosophy that people have the ability to choose, to re-invent themselves. It is in his later writings that he concentrates less on the individual as free but more on the road one takes to be free. I likened this to the experiences of the participating grandmothers: they have no choice in their transition to grandmotherhood but they did make the choice to become a mother. The natural order of life is that grandmotherhood is the result of motherhood so by choosing to be a mother, they set their own future grandmotherhood. Sartre's (1946/1989) play, "*No Exit*" proposed that the self is always in conflict with other people's gaze. The early transition to grandmotherhood is an indication of their personal freedom being threatened by other people: by their daughters and the shame they feel under the eyes of other people. The felt and enacted stigma or criticism that they experience as a young mother and grandmother is a judgement made by other people that become part of the opinion they have of themselves, that "*hell is other people*".

The hermeneutic turn has further aided my analysis. Turning to language, the written and spoken word has been truly insightful. I have found Scheiermacher's grammatical and psychological interpretation useful in trying to understand what the grandmother actually said and her intention for saying it. Additionally, Gadamer's *fusion of horizons* has guided my focus to the participating grandmother and myself as two conscious minds coming together, both with existing pre-conceptions, *historical affected consciousness*. Ricoeur also recognised that language is a key source to understanding of human experience. His central approaches to understanding, empathic hermeneutics and hermeneutics of suspicion, has helped me to question the text in interview transcripts, of asking if there is a meaning that is hidden within the grandmother's words.

The essentialness of double hermeneutics in IPA becomes particularly relevant here. I became aware of the grandmothers' making meaning of their experiences frequently. Sometimes it was obvious in the interview (spoken words) and sometimes I became conscious of it in the transcription and analysis stages (written words). For example, Toni discussed her husband's reluctance to call himself grandfather. It appeared to be a revelation to Toni: experiencing awareness of this for the first time as she talked about her grandmothing experiences. Toni attempted to make sense of this, and there was a shared

moment in her interview where I suspect we both became aware of her making meaning of her experience and me making sense of her mean making. We were two conscious minds at that moment in time, both of us interpreting Toni's spoken words through empathy and suspicion.

As a novice entering the world of phenomenology, I have been overwhelmed and frequently confused by the words and ideas of these phenomenologists. I feel that IPA has offered a multiple phenomenological perspective into the exploration of the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood, giving it a sense of phenomenological openness as one takes guidance from a variety of great minds. By engaging in IPA, I expect that I have enrolled onto a life long phenomenological journey as I seek to understand all that phenomenology proffers.

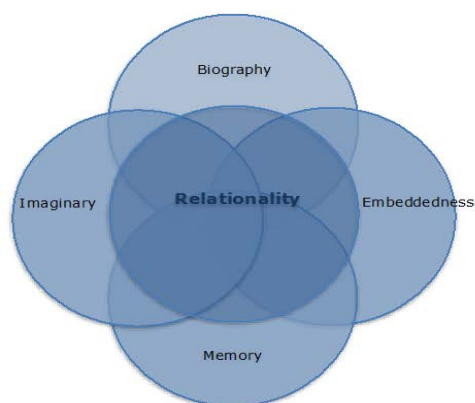
8.2.2 Multi-dimensionality of family life – Smart's (2011) Toolbox of Concepts

The Toolbox of Concepts developed by Smart (2007, 2011) is a conceptualisation of tools for the sociological study of family life and relationships. It is proposed that this toolbox has been extremely useful in guiding the research process, from constructing the interview schedule through to the data analysis. The individual experiences and meanings of family life, and in this case, young maternal grandmotherhood have been considered, not as an isolated experience but rather in terms of Smart's (2011) multi-dimensional conceptualisations of relationality, embeddedness, memory, biography and imaginary. Further, Smart's (2011) concepts appear to be suited to an IPA approach, with the underpinnings of phenomenology and hermeneutics sitting acceptingly together. For example, the concept of embeddedness complements Sartre's idea of life projects and Merleau-Ponty's embodied beings; Biography corresponds with Gadamer's Horizons; relationality with Heidegger's being-in-the-world; memory sits appropriately with Heidegger's notion of facticity of time and Gadamer's horizons and the concept of imaginary relates to Heidegger's three components of care: facticity of being, fallenness and existentiality.

The findings from this study highlight the multi-dimensionality of grandmothering experiences. Whilst the experiences are from the young grandmothers' perspectives, the stories they recount are immersed in their relationships with others. It is therefore suggested that at the heart of the grandmothers' experiences is their relationships with others, particularly the mother-daughter relationship, at the transitional stage. For this reason, I have adapted Smart's Toolbox (see Figure 65) to place relationality at the centre of

experience with the remaining concepts existing as a web of connections that continue to overlap. This adaptation is appropriate in relation to the findings from this study and may indicate a shift in the dimensional concepts of family life through transitional life events, when family members are readying themselves for change. It is suggested that this adapted toolbox has the potential to be a useful conceptualisation in future research that explores families in transition.

Figure 65 - Adapted Toolbox of Concepts from Smart (2011, p. 16) in relation to the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother



8.2.3 Beyond the spoken word – photos and prompt objects

“Photographs, drawings, paintings and other visual media can be regarded as personal displays of self, self and others, and aspects of everyday life. The assumption is that, if the production of visual imagery embodies subjective meanings of self and experience, then we can also use images to elicit these meanings.” (Harrison, 1996, p. 81)

The use of photos has contributed to this research in several ways. By asking the participating grandmothers to take photos of what it means to them to be a grandmother, their lives as grandmothers have been revealed beyond the spoken word. An example of this is in the way some of the participating

grandmothers revealed the symbolisations of their grandmotherhood in spaces, places and things. This may not have been evident through an interview alone. While the intention of photo elicitation is to prompt the participant in articulating their experiences, it also offers more than this. For me, as the researcher, it has opened up an additional lens for exploring their lives in the world as a grandmother. Their words become more meaningful and real with the evidence of visual imagery, that 'seeing is believing'. I also found that photos were an excellent fit with the hermeneutic underpinnings of IPA, where the grandmothers' discussion of their photos is an additional portal to their meaning making and my sense making.

Sitvast and Abma (2012, p. 90) reported that:

"By using photographs made by the respondents themselves the more formal aspects of interviewing can be avoided and the succeeding reflection on one's own photographs approaches a more intimate context that resembles a natural exchange over family snapshots."

While the interviews were based on a semi-structured format, asking the grandmothers to prepare photos and prompt objects (optional) before the interview allowed them to take some control over what would be discussed. It also supported research by Blinn and Harrist (1991) who reported that participants had the opportunity to think about their experiences before the interview took place. I sensed that all the grandmothers were reasonably comfortable during their interviews, speaking with ease about their grandmothering experiences and frequently suggesting that they had thought about grandmotherhood and what they would say prior to the interview.

Overall, the use of photography and prompt objects were perceived as positive and useful tools in collecting lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood. However, it is necessary to discuss where I felt this did not work according to my original plans and hence, considered a potential limitation to this study. The prompt objects were an optional feature of the interview and for the grandmothers who engaged with this, it revealed further understandings particular to meanings of their grandmothering.

Some of the grandmothers took photos specifically for the research, others prepared photos from their existing family collections. This resulted in the discussion of family snapshots. At first, I was disappointed that the grandmothers had not actively taken photos in preparation, but as the analysis progressed, I started to realise that the photos they presented were meaningful

to them as a grandmother and therefore, important to their experiences. Three of the grandmothers (Julie, Nikki and Sam) presented internet images predominantly with a couple of photos of their grandchildren included. Again, initially I felt despondent that they had not taken photos for the interview and further, that I would not be able to present these images due to copyrights. However, I did become aware that firstly, they had thought about their grandmothering experiences by selecting these images, which elicited discussion. Secondly, this was most likely a further indication of their less positive grandmothering experiences. In this sense, their choice to present internet images spoke to me as much as the grandmothers who had actively taken photos.

Capewell (2014) reported similar observations in her study exploring ongoing glue ear in which participants did not always follow the photography instructions. She found that some of her participants used images from the internet as an alternative to taking photos. Capewell (2014) concluded that this was not necessarily a limitation because the participants had remained the experts of their experience. It is perhaps the risk one needs to take in engaging in participatory research methods,

"...That it is very important in participatory research not to be too prescriptive in what you ask participants to do but encourage them to interpret the task in a way which is meaningful to them" (Capewell, 2014, p. 54).

8.2.4 Small sample size

"IPA research tends to be idiographic, with small sample sizes...since the work does not make general claims about larger populations...the sampling is therefore purposive rather than random, the aim being to gather detailed information about the experience of a fairly specific group on a fairly specific topic." (Langdridge, 2007, p. 110).

While the small and purposive sample is necessary in IPA (Smith *et al.* 2009), it is worth reflecting on this in terms of the current findings. It is not the intention of IPA to make claims that the experience is the same for all and this is certainly evidenced in the ten grandmothers' divergent accounts. Ten participants provided rich and in-depth data in this study and at times, I was overwhelmed, finding myself drowning in words, thoughts and meanings. Therefore, I would propose that a larger sample size would distract from the essentialness of experiences and depth of analysis, leading to vagueness in context and transferability (Smith *et al.* 2009; Larkin, 2011).

However, the participating grandmothers were all white British women, residing in various areas of England and their experiences revealed both similarities and differences. Despite this uniformity of the sample, it could be that young British Hindu grandmothers, for example, experience grandmotherhood in further ways not elucidated in this study. Here, I refer back to the discussion on cultural and social grandparenthood in chapter 2, section 2.1.2. It is important to consider that grandmotherhood is experienced differently between and within cultures and that this current study contributes understandings of a tightly defined grandmothership population: that of ten white British young maternal grandmothers residing in England. This, however, can also be considered as a limitation in that the participating grandmothers may not represent the wider English population of young maternal grandmothers.

8.2.5 On being reflexive

"Whilst there have been a number of seminal papers on reflexivity they often focus on the theoretical and methodological complexities...the position of the researcher...as well as connections to sameness and difference...as obstacles to tackle in the research process. This is all important but it is worth further acknowledging how difficult it can be to begin the process of reflexive practice." (Crafter, 2011, p. 15)

Crafter (2011) reported on the particular problems that psychology students encounter when engaging in reflexive practice. This is mainly due to their groundings in quantitative research, where objectivity and third person writing is the norm in undergraduate study. I can relate to this entirely. I was extremely uncomfortable when I first attempted writing reflexively, feeling that I was exposing and revealing my personal and inner self in a manner that I was not accustomed to. I also agree with Howell's (2015) observation that the society in which we live rarely encourages reflexivity.

I feel that I have not yet mastered the art of writing reflexively and realise I have some way to go before I am at ease with being reflexive. Therefore, I perceive that reflexivity is a limitation in this research due to my inexperience and indeed, my inhibitions about being reflexive. I have often referred to Langdridge's (2007) questions to encourage my reflexive practice and Finlay and Gough's (2003) five types of reflexivity: introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique and discursive deconstruction. I have reflected on not being a grandmother and how this has been both advantageous and disadvantageous. I perceived that the advantage of this was that the participating grandmothers were the experts. I did make it clear to

them that I was not a grandmother and they often would comment with *"you've got all this to come"* or *"you just wait and see"*. The benefit of expressing my naivety of grandmotherhood to the participants helped them to fully articulate their experiences. Alternatively, I sometimes felt that I was at a disadvantage in that I could not share grandmothing experiences or truly relate to the experiences they discussed.

What I have found most comforting in my reflexive practice is drawing on my own positioning as a white British woman, mother and daughter. In this sense, although I had no experience of grandmotherhood, I shared positionality with the participating grandmothers in terms of our race, age and womanhood. However, I entered this research as a single mother and continue to be so. The problem here is that 9 out of the 10 grandmothers were in relationships and had experienced grandmotherhood within a relationship as a couple. I have struggled to remember what it is like to live daily life as part of a couple and therefore, I have found it difficult to envisage and incorporate the meaning of this important relationship in the analysis of the participating grandmothers' experiences.

8.2.6 What makes a good qualitative research study?

"Validation comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings. In a craftsmanship approach to validation, the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end of the product line to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production" (Kvale, 1995, p. 27).

Kvale's (1995) metaphorical likeness of researcher and craftsman is particularly fitting for qualitative research. Throughout the research process, I have continued to refer to both Elliott *et al.* (1999) and Yardley's (2000) evaluation criteria for qualitative research to ensure quality, validity and rigour. The following presents an appraisal of this study employing Yardley's (2000) four criteria, outlined by Shinebourne (2011) with specific reference to IPA research (Appendix K).

Sensitivity to context – The rationale for choosing IPA as an appropriate methodology for studying the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother and the choice of semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation has been outlined in chapter 4. The sensitivity to context is evidenced through my commitment to the personal, idiographic experiences of each

grandmother, consistent with the principles of IPA (Shinebourne, 2011). My interpretations have been grounded in verbatim extracts, allowing for the individual grandmothers' voices to be heard and for the reader to check and follow these interpretations.

Commitment and rigour – Entering the research process as a novice to IPA, I have been continually guided by Smith *et al.* (2009), attendance at an IPA master class and several further IPA authors (Larkin *et al.* 2006; Langdridge, 2007; Shinebourne, 2011; Larkin, 2011). My initial inexperience of IPA could be considered a limitation of this research. However, by constant referral to IPA authors, I have endeavoured to ensure that the study has been conducted systematically with commitment to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA. Rigour is demonstrated in my thought and consideration of the research process, from constructing the research question through to analysis and writing up. Strengthening this research is the maintenance of ethical considerations, guided by my sensitivity and regard for the grandmothers participating in this study. The use of photos, prompt objects, of sending a copy of the interview transcript to each grandmother and a dissemination telephone conversation to discuss interpretations has demonstrated my commitment and respect to the grandmothers as experts of experience (although I have discussed the problems encountered in the use of photos and prompt objects in section 8.2.3). I have been committed to the recruitment of participants and that the sample of grandmothers was appropriate for answering the research question. Although it has previously been acknowledged that the small sample size can be viewed as a limitation: the current findings are not generalisable to the population of English young maternal grandmothers. The data was rich and in depth, resulting in a completeness of analysis evidenced in chapters 5, 6, and 7, which I perceive as a further strength to this research.

Transparency and coherence - The stages of the research process have been clearly described in the methodology and methods, chapter 4. I have discussed the selection of participants in terms of inclusion criteria and the problems encountered in recruitment. Further comprehensive description is included on the construction of the interview schedule, the interview settings and the stages of analysis. The strength of this study lies in the presentation of a coherent argument for the choices and decisions made throughout the research process with evidence provided in text and the appendices.

Impact and importance – The new and emerging understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood and the contribution this makes to knowledge and society (discussed in section 8.4) highlights the importance of this study. By

meeting the above three criterion, it is predicted that the importance of this study will be acknowledged and hence, have impact.

In conclusion of this section, I have reflected on the research design and where I perceive that the strengths and limitations lie within this research. In the following sections, I draw on the strengths, limitations and findings of this study in consideration of the wider implications of this research and possible future directions.

8.3 Wider implications of the research

The findings from this study reveal wider implications for UK grandparenthood in general. The support time and contribution that the participating grandmothers discuss in terms of their grandparental childcare and housing, economic and emotional support reflects the growing importance of grandparents in contemporary family life and the working lives of grandparents and adult children. Despite the evidence of grandparental involvement in the UK, grandparenting research and policies are lagging behind other European countries and the US (Glaser *et al.* 2014). It is only recently that the UK government has started to recognise the invaluable contribution that grandparents provide to their families by planning to extend shared parental leave and pay to working grandparents in the first year of a child's life (GOV.UK, 2015). According to Grandparents Plus (2015), this is a welcomed step in the right direction but much more can be done to support UK working grandparents as they attempt to balance the need to work and the care of their grandchildren. From the findings of this current study, grandparenting childcare extends far beyond a grandchild's first birthday and this is an important fact to consider in future policy decisions.

The current findings also highlight the often stressful and traumatic circumstances in which grandparents take on kinship care of their grandchildren. Nikki and Julie's experiences exemplify the need for coherent supportive and professional interventions that help the grandparent to cope with the transition to an unexpected parenting role whilst committing to safeguarding the children involved. Kinship care is frequently compounded with a lack of grandparents' rights, financial, legal and emotional worries and the intervention of several professionals such as social workers and health practitioners. It is important that Grandparents Plus and charities such as Kinfest continue to work towards improving the rights of grandparents in these unfortunate and emotionally upsetting circumstances. Certainly, the grandmothers in this study took over the care of their grandchildren to keep

them safe and to give them a loving and secure home environment. This needs to be recognised and acknowledged by the English legal system and Government policy makers in order to reduce the stress that kinship care grandparents endure in their endeavours to limit the trauma that their young grandchildren are subjected to. It is noted that only two grandmothers in this study had experienced kinship care and for this reason, a suggestion for follow up research is to investigate the experiences of a larger sample of young grandmothers providing kinship care in order to form a comprehensive understanding of the needs of this population. By doing this, there is potential to develop useful interventions and resources to help and inform both the grandparents and professionals involved.

Indeed, the work undertaken by national charities such as Grandparents Plus and Kinfest remains crucial in supporting, advocating and working towards improving rights and policies for grandparents. Grandparents Plus is a national charity for England and Wales that has recently incorporated The Grandparents' Association. Grandparents Plus work involves campaigning for change (recognising the value of grandparent childcare), providing evidence, policy solutions and training (grandparents receive the help and support they need to help children thrive), advising and supporting grandparents and wider family members and advising, informing and supporting professionals to develop good kinship care practice (www.grandparentsplus.org.uk). The current research has begun to fill an identified gap in the grandparenting knowledge and contributes new understandings of specific experiences and needs of young maternal grandmothers living in England. It is proposed that this new information is particularly relevant for these supporting charities, and has the potential to contribute to the development of specific support and intervention packages for younger maternal grandmothers.

It was observed that none of the participating grandmothers and their daughters received professional support or intervention during pregnancy and immediately after the birth, despite many of the difficulties that the grandmothers experienced. The Family Nurse Partnership is an NHS service provision for first time young mothers under the age of 19 years (Family Nurse Partnership, NHS, 2015). Introduced in 2012 as a response to the UK Government's concern to tackle under 18's conception rates (Department of Health – Framework for Public Health 2013-2016), to increase children and young people's opportunities (Every Child Matters, 2004) and to improve maternal health in young mothers, child health and development and economic independency (Every Child Matters, 2004; Department of Health – Framework for Public Health, 2013-2016). After speaking with a Family Nurse Practitioner,

it was confirmed that the understandings of young maternal grandmothers would be a valuable insight that would enhance their professional work with families. Further, it will offer useful knowledge to help practitioners identify grandmothers and indeed, mothers and daughters, who may benefit from specific support and intervention.

It is proposed that follow up research to this study aims to develop a conceptual framework for use in potential interventions and support services for mothers and daughters (grandmothers and young mothers). Interventions could follow the route of training workshops for the mother and daughter, awareness raising activities or a toolkit of activities targeted at the transitional stage of grandmotherhood and young motherhood. There is further possibility that a conceptual framework could aid development of a toolkit that includes free and accessible online resources. For example, the Living Life to the Full course (LLTTF), developed by Professor Chris Williams at the University of Glasgow, is a psycho-education programme that can be facilitated in groups or can be completed online through a series of short powerpoint slides (www.lltff.com). According to Coon *et al.* (2003), psycho-education courses are based primarily on cognitive behavioural therapy and deliver coping skills to deal with a number of different emotional states. The LLTTF has been developed and adapted for use as a self-help programme for life skills training, using everyday terminology (McClay *et al.* 2013). As the UK continues to experience austerity measures with cuts to public services, an online resource is an alternative option with potential to access through charity organisations and service provider websites.

The current research has supported previous literatures which, place mothers as crucially central supportive figures for their teenage pregnant daughters. Hence, these grandmothers play a pivotal role as a support network, which enables existing service providers to work towards their objectives. If Family Nurse Practitioners can identify grandmothers' needs for support and have the resources available to offer effective interventions, then there is further potential to achieve the programme goals and thereby contribute to the overall effectiveness and success of the service provision.

It is also important to consider how these new understandings can inform practice for other professionals working with families of teen mothers. It is appropriate for professionals, such as social workers, educational professionals and healthcare practitioners to frequently assess and reflect on their own preconceptions of young motherhood in order for young mothers and their families to avoid felt or enacted stigma/criticism as reflected in research by Redwood *et al.* (2012) and to also recognise and acknowledge the crucial

support that grandmothers are providing (Emmel & Hughes, 2014) This will contribute towards more positive maternal identities for both daughter and mother (an objective of the FNP and Department of Health) and also has the potential to aid the grandmothers' acceptance of their transitions. In turn, this will work towards healthier well being for mothers and their children.

The implications of this research means that careful consideration needs to be applied to the dissemination of findings. Publications should be focused on targeting professionals who work with young mothers and their families as well as charity organisations who support grandparents generally and more specifically with grandchild access, grandparental childcare and kinship care. More broadly, these research findings should be shared with social scientists with an interest in contemporary family lives in order to disseminate these updated understandings of the lived experiences of young maternal grandmothers.

8.4 Possible future directions

New understandings of young maternal grandmothers have started to emerge from this study's findings. Future research extending on the concepts of readiness, relationality, psychological turning points, critical moments and gains and losses has the potential to advance the grandparenting knowledge into transitional experiences of becoming a grandparent (on or off time) whilst additionally working towards the development of a conceptual framework for young maternal grandmothers and their families (as discussed in section 8.3). An additional recommendation is to further explore the concept of romanticism, a finding from this study, which has not been identified in previous grandparenting research. Developments in this area may very well enlighten social scientists into contemporary constructions and practices of grandparenthood, where the birth of a new generation brings forth a sense of second chances: to unconditionally love and care for grandchildren through active, time-committed and nurturing grandparenting.

As discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.2.2), the perspectives of mothers of young mothers are frequently neglected in teenage pregnancy and motherhood literatures (Sadler & Clemmens, 2004). While this study has addressed this noticeable absence, by contributing to the grandparenting literature through new understandings of young maternal grandmotherhood, there is scope to extend the research in various directions. The focus of this research was on the experiences of young maternal grandmothers, from their own perspectives. There is, however, significant others in their grandmothering experiences

whose voices have not been heard: that of their daughters, grandchildren, great-grandparents and partners (theirs and their daughters).

There is evidence to suggest that mothers and daughters perceive their relationship differently (Bojczyk *et al.* 2011), and that they are likely to experience different emotional qualities in their relationships (Fingerman, 2000). Developments have also been made in a measure to assess the teen mother's perceptions of grandparental support (Borcherding *et al.* 2005). The current findings illuminate the mother-daughter relationship as an integral part of their grandmothering experiences and whilst this relational existence has been presented through the grandmothers' accounts, further research into the experiences of both mother and daughter's simultaneous 'off-time' transitions would potentially enhance these understandings. Furthermore, research that focuses on the mother's and daughter's experiences of motherhood and grandmotherhood before and after the 'bridge period' (Bojczyk *et al.* 2011) may very well contribute to distinguishing any differences between 'on-time' and 'off-time' transitions.

Another significant person that this research has not focused on is that of the grandmother's mother, the maternal great-grandmother. All the grandmothers in this study discussed their mothers at some point throughout their interviews, with inferences made to their young ages at grandmotherhood and great-grandmotherhood. Whilst some of the idiographic analyses within this research touched upon intergenerational meanings and insights, the main focus was on the experiences of the grandmother and hence, limited attention has been applied to this data. The participating grandmothers were part of four or five generation families. Amanda discussed being part of a five maternal generation family, and at times referred to the role confusion often experienced when the generations came together. There is opportunity here to explore family lives in large intergenerational families, looking at the negotiation of roles and how being part of the family shapes, restricts and/or constructs identity. It is most probable that great-grandmotherhood and indeed, larger intergenerational families will become increasingly commonplace in the UK as a result of ageing populations and here lies potential to further understandings into contemporary intergenerational family lives.

Acknowledgement is made to the recently emerging body of literature into 'new grandfatherhood' (Harper, 2005; Mann, 2007; Mann & Leeson, 2010; Tarrant, 2012) and existing grandparenting research that contributes to the feminization of grandparenthood. From dissemination of this research to date, one audience member suggested that this research presents a feminine narrative. This was

not intentional but rather the result of the subject under study. The development of the research question and aim of this study was based on the literatures purporting greater involvement of the maternal grandmother (as reported in chapter 3, section 3.2) and not a consciously deliberate exclusion of grandfatherhood. The sample of participants was selected based on the requisites of IPA for small and similar groups of people that share experiences of the phenomenon under study, that of young maternal grandmotherhood. Nonetheless, future research exploring the lived experiences of young maternal grandfatherhood would arguably work towards balancing the concerns of feminized accounts and augment the understandings of young maternal grandparenthood.

Tarrant (2011, p. 232) proposed that both grandmotherhood and grandfatherhood are "*gendered and relational identities*" and that researching grandparenting couples together may be a viable solution to the existing gendered biases. However, consideration must be applied here to Cunningham-Burley's (1984) findings where grandfathers tended to leave the talking to grandmothers when being interviewed together. Future research that does incorporate interviews with grandparenting couples must be mindful of the interview schedule and how both voices will be heard. It is also noted that only two of the participating grandmothers were still in a relationship with their daughter's biological father/grandchild's biological grandfather. This infers that young maternal grandparenting couples and indeed, young maternal grandfathers may be particularly difficult populations to access and recruit. In this instance, it is worth considering the experiences of young step-grandmothers/step-grandfathers in acknowledgement of vast changing family structures experienced and continuing to be experienced in contemporary societies.

Two of the participants in this study were both maternal and paternal grandmothers (Michelle and Catherine, at the time of the telephone conversation). They both discussed the differences they experience in their maternal and paternal grandmothering, perceiving that the maternal allowed for more autonomy in their grandmothering performance. Dillner (2010) has written on the complexities of the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship, proposing that, "*It's hard for mothers-in-law who have already brought up a family and feel they have so much knowledge to impart, to keep quiet.*" As the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship has historically been the source of jokes and television shows (Adhikari, 2015), it is important to consider how good grandparenting practices (being there, not interfering and grandparental childcare) may, or may not, differ between maternal and paternal

grandparenting. Hence, a further recommendation for future research is to explore the experiences of young paternal grandparents (both grandmothers and grandfathers) to develop a fuller picture of young grandparenthood overall.

An interesting finding from this study reveals how choosing a grandmothering name helps grandmothers to form, shape and prepare for their grandmothering identity. Several factors contributed to the participating grandmothers' choice of name including age, sociocultural background, family history and generational positioning. In many of the young grandmothers experiences, choosing a name was influenced by their chronological and subjective age, with many deciding on a name that they perceived reflected their younger ages. From their perspectives, to reveal to a person that they are a 'nanna' rather than a 'granma' portrays them as a younger grandmother. According to Emmelhainz (2012), names work as identifiers and confirm identity markers of the self (i.e. gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, language and nationality). Kinship names are identifiers within the family but in the broader social sense, reveal the individual as more than just a first name and surname.

Whilst there is an abundance of literatures exploring names and identity (first names, surnames and trademark names), there is an observed scarcity of research exploring kinship names. Interestingly, Goody (1962) reported that grandmothering names such as Nanna, Nanny, and Nan were seldom defined within dictionaries (at that time) as grandmothering nouns but most of these were linked with women and caring for children tasks i.e. nursemaid. Similar to this current study, Goody (1962, p. 182) recorded discourses regarding grandmothering names, that "*granma and granny made her sound old.*" There is scope here to conduct further research into grandmothering names and how they are chosen with regards to shaping the grandmothering identity within the family unit and more broadly within the social context.

A final observation emerging from the current findings is the absence of statistical records in England into attendees at childbirth. After discussion with several midwifery colleagues, it was established that birthing supporters are likely to be recorded by midwives on written records but this information is not transferred to existing electronic records. It can be argued that developing a measure or incorporating details of birthing supporters into present electronic recording systems will assist in verifying the societal norms at this time whilst contributing to historical records.

8.5 Concluding comments

"No attribute of a person, no matter how atypical, precludes accepting relations" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1987, p. 35).

At the core of the participating grandmothers' experiences is the mother-daughter relationship: a close or conflicted relationship, which, forms the strong, or faltering foundations of their grandmotherhood. Complicated by their young ages and fears of stigmatisation and the gaze of others, many of the grandmothers floundered in their acceptance of the simultaneous transitions to mother and grandmother. During the transitional stage, there is potential for tailored support and intervention measures, which target the acceptance process and the relationship between mother and daughter. Despite the participating grandmothers' concerns and anxieties, the findings from this study revealed the support and continued nurturing of their daughters before and after their grandchild's birth. Not only do they present as the morally good mother as they are forced into the unexpected timing of a life transition but the majority also appear to reach a level of acceptance for their daughter's positioning as a young mother, regardless of living in a social world that discounts the teenage mother as a *"whole or usual person"* (Goffman, 1963, p. 14).

The use of words such as deviant and pathological to describe young grandparents in past literatures insinuate negative experiences and attributes. Negligible academic attention has focused on the assertions of deviance applied to "off-time" or early grandmotherhood since the 1980's. This means that young grandmothers have remained silent and categorised as atypical.

Hence, the unique contributions of this current study lie in its attention to the experiences of young maternal grandmothers living in contemporary English society. By updating the grandparenting literature with the diverse experiences of ten participating grandmothers, new understandings have emerged that highlight the needs, yet also the positive experiences, of this small purposively selected sample of grandmothers. Noticeably, not all the experiences were perceived as positive, and further research should focus on working towards developing a conceptual framework: to identify and design appropriate interventions tailored for the specific needs of young mothers and their mothers in order to contribute to the UK government's objectives of healthy and economically productive mothers and their healthy children.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Pilot interview schedule

Appendix B – Interview schedule (final version)

Appendix C – Ethical considerations

Appendix D – Potential gatekeepers

Appendix E – Recruitment flyer

Appendix F – Information pack

Appendix G – Photography instruction sheet

Appendix H – Informed consent

Appendix I – Photo reproduction rights form

Appendix J - 7 criteria for evaluation of qualitative research
(Elliott *et al.* 1999, p. 228)

Appendix K - The 4 principles of Yardley's criteria (Shinebourne, 2011)

Appendix L – Julie (idiographic analysis process)

Appendix M – Michelle (idiographic analysis process)

Appendix N – Demographics form

Appendix O – 'Becoming' across cases essential experiences tables

Appendix P – 'Being' across cases essential experiences tables

Appendix A – Pilot interview schedule

Research Question:

What are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood?

Primary aim:

3. To explore and interpret the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother

We are about to begin the interview. It should last between 30 to 90 minutes. Like it stated in the information sheet, if you wish to stop the interview at any time please let me know and it will be fine. Please also be assured that there are no right or wrong answers, this research is interested in your own experiences.

Question: **Can you tell me about yourself?**

Question: **Can you tell me about your experiences of becoming a grandmother from when you first found out to now?**

Prompt: What happened?

Prompt: How did you feel?

Prompt: Can you tell me more about that?

Question: **What are the objects/possessions you have prepared?**

Prompt: Why did you choose this?

Prompt: What does it mean to you?

Prompt: Why is it meaningful in relation to you becoming a grandmother?

Prompt: Can you tell me more about that?

Prompt: How did you feel?

Question: **How do you think your life has changed since finding out you were going to become a grandmother?**

Prompt: How has it affected work, relationships (family, work, social, personal), finances, leisure activities, self-esteem, thoughts and feelings?

Prompt: How did becoming a grandmother fit in with your own life at the time?

Prompt: How did it affect your goals and ambitions?

Prompt: What was happening in your own life at the time?

Question: **What were your expectations of becoming a grandmother?**

Prompt: What age did you think you would become a grandmother?

Prompt: How do you see grandmotherhood?

Prompt: Can you tell me more about that?

Prompt: How do you feel about that?

Prompt: How have your expectations changed?

Question: **Is there anything else you feel is important to say in relation to your own experiences of becoming a grandmother?**

That's the end of the interview. How are you feeling? Do you have any questions?

Thank you for taking part in this research and sharing your experiences.

Appendix B – Interview schedule (final version)

Research Question:

What are the lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood?

Primary aim:

To explore and interpret the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother

Discuss consent and confidentiality, are you happy to continue?

Discuss audio recording, are you happy to continue?

We are about to begin the interview. It should last between 30 and 90 minutes. Like it stated in the information sheet, if you wish to stop the interview at any time please let me know and it will be fine. Please also be assured that there are no right or wrong answers, this research is interested in your own experiences.

- **Can you tell me about yourself?**
 - *How old are you?*
 - *What is your occupation?*
 - *Can you tell me about your family? Marital status, number of children, number of grandchildren, ages, where do they live?*
 - *At what age did you become a grandmother?*
- **Can you tell me about your experiences of becoming a grandmother from when you first found out to now?**
 - *What happened?*
 - *How did you feel about that?*
 - *Can you tell me more about that?*
- **What are the objects/possessions you have prepared?**
 - *Why did you choose this?*
 - *What does it mean to you?*
 - *Why is it meaningful to you in relation to you becoming and being a grandmother?*
 - *Can you tell me more about that?*
 - *How did you feel?*
- **How do you think your life has changed since finding out you were going to become a grandmother?**
 - *How has it affected work, relationships (family, work, social, personal), finances, leisure activities, thoughts and feelings?*
 - *How did becoming a grandmother fit in with your own life at the time?*
 - *How did it affect your goals and ambitions?*
 - *What was happening in your own life at the time?*
- **What were your expectations of becoming a grandmother?**
 - *What age did you think you would become a grandmother?*
 - *What were/are your experiences of your own grandparents?*
 - *What does grandmotherhood mean to you?*
 - *How have your expectations changed?*
 - *How do you feel about that?*
 - *Can you tell me more about that?*
- **Can we now discuss your photos that you have taken/prepared?**
 - *Can you tell me more about that?*
 - *How did you feel about that?*
 - *Why is it meaningful to you in relation to your grandmotherhood?*

- **Is there anything else you feel is important to say in relation to your own experiences of becoming and being a grandmother?**

That's the end of the interview. How are you feeling about what we have discussed? Do you have any questions? Give participant information about grandparenting support websites.

Thank you for taking part in this research and sharing your experiences.

Appendix C – Ethical considerations

The following considerations are based on the Ethics Code and Procedures of the University of Northampton and the British Psychological Society Guidelines.

Ethical Considerations	Implementation
Recruitment of Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Initial recruitment will be undertaken through a selection of gatekeepers and referral by participants (snowballing). ✓ Further recruitment strategies include a flyer, attendance at local community groups and various Internet sources. ✓ Information packs (invitation to participate and information sheets) will be distributed to gatekeepers and any interested parties inviting voluntary participation in the study with the researcher's contact details supplied. ✓ The sample will be selected purposively to represent the phenomenon under study. ✓ It is anticipated that participants will be located in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. However, the researcher will not intentionally exclude potential participation from other locations.
Active participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Validation of accuracy of the transcripts and analysis will be obtained through participant checking and active roles undertaken by the participants in the research process. ✓ On-going considerations will be applied to any language barriers, cultural and religious beliefs and causes of harm (to both participant and researcher) in order to establish an equal and effective collaboration.
Aim of Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There is a clear aim to the research that will be unequivocally communicated to all research participants. It is anticipated that the research will identify experiences, meanings, needs and beliefs of the phenomenon under study.
Informed Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consent will be obtained and recorded for all participants by way of a written consent form. ✓ To inform the participants about what is being asked of them, an information sheet and cover/invitation letter will be given to the participant before gaining consent. This allows the participants time to comprehend the information and make an informed choice. ✓ Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study anytime up to six months after initial involvement and

	<p>this will be re-iterated throughout the research process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The researcher throughout the study will welcome questions in order to clarify the nature of participation in the research. ✓ The information sheet will include contact details of the first supervisor for any concerns or questions that the participant may have about the research that they feel uncomfortable discussing with the researcher. ✓ In order to consider language barriers, special needs and cultural differences, an appropriate translation of the information will be made upon request. ✓ As all participants will be over the age of 18, it is anticipated that they will be able to provide their own consent to participate.
Recording of interviews and research evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The consent form will request permission to audiotape interviews and meetings. Once the research is completed, audio recordings will be destroyed/deleted. Photographs will be taken of prompt objects for illustrative purposes only; any identifying features will be erased/masked at the participant's request. Photos taken by the participants will be edited according to their requests.
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The researcher will be protected through supervisory support and guidance. ✓ The audio recording of all meetings will protect the participant and researcher. ✓ The right to withdraw participation at any stage up to six months after initial involvement.
Risks and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If any questions appear to offend, intrude or distress the participant throughout the interview process, the researcher will cease with questioning of the participant. However, this is not anticipated due to the participant's contributions to the interview by use of prompt objects and photos. ✓ It is anticipated that interviews will take place in the safety and comfort of the participant's own homes unless alternative locations are favoured. For this reason, a university identity card will be worn at all times to reassure participants of the researcher's identity. ✓ If an alternative location is required, a full risk assessment will be carried out prior to the meeting. A formal record of assessment will be recorded on a University of Northampton risk assessment template and held by the

	<p>researcher and reviewed by members of the supervisory team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ After the initial interview and future conversations, participants will be given the time to give feedback to the researcher and ask questions. Details of a grandparent support website www.grandparentsplus.org.uk will be given to grandparents for their reference. ✓ To protect the researcher in home visits, a colleague will be informed of times of visits and a call will be made by the researcher once the interview and subsequent meetings have ended. The destination of the interviews with the participant's contact details will be left with the identified colleague in a sealed envelope for use only if the confirmation call is not received from the researcher. These envelopes will be destroyed at the conclusion of each interview. A mobile phone will be carried at all times. ✓ The contact mobile phone number given in all correspondence has been set up for this project work only and will be deactivated at the completion stage of the study.
Deception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The study does not involve deception.
Use of respondent created data - photos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participants will be asked to take photos using a digital camera. Images produced will be used in the analysis of data and throughout the final thesis with direct quotes from the participants themselves to avoid any misinterpretation. ✓ Participants will be fully instructed on the use of the camera and photographers rights within the UK through an initial meeting and a photography information sheet. ✓ The researcher will go through a photo reproduction rights form with the participant at the interview. The form will be signed by the participant indicating their permission and their preferences for the researcher to use the photos in resulting publications, presentations, reports and exhibitions resulting from the research. This is in accordance with the UK Copyright service (2005). ✓ Participants will be given the option to mask any identifying features (of people or places) within the photos to protect identity. ✓ A copy of the photos (electronically or hard copy) will be given to the participant for their records.

Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Data collected from the interviews will not be anonymous (the interviewer will see the interviewee). However, the researcher will anonymise participants within any resulting written reports, presentations and thesis by the use of pseudonyms to avoid potential identification of the participants. ✓ The researcher may also change/fictionalise names of places if these are felt to be jeopardising anonymity. ✓ Photos of prompt objects presented by the participants at interviews will be screened for any identifying features and appropriate action taken to avoid potential identification of the participants at their request. ✓ Participants will be given the choice for the researcher to mask or not mask any identifying features in the photos they have taken for this research.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All data collected will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Personal identifiable information will be stored in a separate location to transcripts and other data. ✓ All written information will be kept in locked locations. All typed work (including transcripts) will be stored to external hard drives with password protection.
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No incentives will be offered.
Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participants will be fully debriefed, stating that their experiences, attitudes, thoughts and feelings will in no way be used to judge them. This will be reiterated throughout the study. ✓ The intended follow-up telephone conversation will ensure the dissemination of individual findings.
Destruction of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All transcripts will be held and stored anonymously to external harddrives with password protection after the completion of research. ✓ At the completion of the research, all participant contact details will be methodically destroyed using confidential waste.

Appendix D – Potential gatekeepers

Name of Contact and Organisation	Contact Details	Contact made
Gerrie Chivers Teenage pregnancy support advisor. Connexions, Market Harborough	gchivers@connexions-leics.org 07925 262915	Initial contact by phone and meeting
Alison Reynolds YWCA Northampton	Alison.reynolds@ywca.org.uk 01604 601515	Initial contact by email and meeting
Shirley Bowron Teenage pregnancy team. County Council, Wellingborough	SBowron@northamptonshire.gov.uk 01933 231050	Initial contact by phone and meeting



**EXPERIENCES OF BECOMING A YOUNG MATERNAL
GRANDMOTHER**

Would you or someone you know like to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of becoming a young grandmother? (45 years or under). Taking part will involve a short face-to-face interview.

For more information visit
www.northampton.ac.uk/chwr

Or contact Melinda Spencer

PhD Student

Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research

University of Northampton

07977 120681

Melinda.spencer@northampton.ac.uk

This study has been approved by the University of Northampton
Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix F – Information Pack

The University of Northampton
Park Campus
Boughton Green Road
NORTHAMPTON
NN2 7AL

An invitation to participate in a research study

Dear Sir/Madam,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a research study. My name is Melinda Spencer and I am a PhD student with the Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research at the University of Northampton.

The aim of my study is to explore the experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood and to identify both positive and negative aspects of the transition to grandmotherhood.

If you became a grandmother at the age of 45 years or under, I would like to invite you to be part of this exciting research. The enclosed information sheet explains your potential role in this study in more detail.

The study has been approved by the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee.

If you decide to take part in this research, you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time up to six months from initial involvement without the need to give a reason. This will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University. Your safety and well being will be prioritised at all times throughout the study.

I would be grateful if you could help me by participating in this research, which will help develop understandings of the experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother. It may also identify potential interventions for support networks in and around Northamptonshire.

Please do contact me on the details given below if you are interested in taking part in this research or if you require any further details.

Yours sincerely

Melinda Spencer
PhD student in the Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research
University of Northampton
Email Melinda.spencer@northampton.ac.uk
Tel: 07977 120681

INFORMATION SHEET

This information has been designed to explain the study and what taking part in it will involve. If, having read this information, you have any questions, please do contact me on the details enclosed. Alternatively, if you have any questions or comments that you do not feel comfortable discussing with me, please contact my supervisor on the contact details overleaf.

Study Title:

Lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences of becoming and being a young maternal grandmother.

Who is the researcher?

The researcher for this study is Melinda Spencer, a PhD student based at the University of Northampton.

What will I have to do if I agree to take part?

The study will be completed in three stages:

- 1) A meeting or telephone conversation will be arranged between you and the researcher to discuss the process involved and to prepare you for taking a few photos that will be used for discussion in an interview. The interview will be arranged for approximately 2 weeks following this meeting.*
- 2) A face-to-face interview (with you and the researcher) will be the second stage of the research. The interview will entail several questions asking you about your experiences of becoming a grandmother. You will also be asked to prepare a few (3 to 4) items that are relevant and meaningful to your own experiences of grandmotherhood. Any items are acceptable as long as they hold meaning to your experiences and you are happy to talk about them and have them photographed. Photos that you have taken will also be discussed. The interview will be audio recorded and photos taken of your prompt objects. Photos will be used in my final thesis for illustrative purposes only and all identifying features erased or masked if requested by you. A typed transcript of the interview will be produced by the researcher and sent to you for your confirmation of accuracy.*
- 3) A follow up telephone conversation (between you and the researcher) will take place once the researcher has analysed the interview data - to discuss the interpretation and meanings that the researcher has identified and to check that you are happy with this. It is also a further opportunity for you to discuss the research process and to bring together any additional thoughts and feelings.*

Are there any risks?

It is anticipated that there will be no risks or harm to you. However, if you find that the interview becomes uncomfortable and you do not wish to continue, then you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any justification on your part.

What will happen to the information?

All information collected from you will be treated in strict confidence. However, in the unlikely event that any evidence of risk to the safety of children is identified; the researcher has a duty to report them to appropriate authorities. Pseudonyms will be used by the researcher to avoid any potential identification. Permission will be gained from you before any photos are used with regards to this research and the option given to mask any identifying features. All information will be stored securely, either in a locked location or password protected if saved on a computer. The information you give will be used for this research project only and it will not be given to any third party.

Do I have to take part?

No, you have been invited to take part. If you do not wish to take part in this study, you have the right not to participate. This information sheet explains what is involved in this study and you have the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher about anything you do not understand. If you are happy to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form at the beginning of the initial interview. However, if at any time you no longer want to take part, you have the right to withdraw from the research up to six months after your initial involvement.

Who has approved this research?

The University of Northampton Research Degrees Committee and Ethics Committee approved this research in December 2010.

Researcher Contact Information:

Melinda Spencer
The Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research
Park Campus
Boughton Green Road
NORTHAMPTON
NN2 6AL
Tel: 07977 120681
Email Melinda.spencer@northampton.ac.uk

Supervisor Contact Information:

Dr Mary Dobson
School of Health
Park Campus
Boughton Green Road
NORTHAMPTON
NN2 6AL
Tel: 01604 893538
Email Mary.dobson@northampton.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you would like to take part in this study, please contact me (Melinda) on the details above.

Appendix G – Photography Instruction Sheet

Lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood.

As part of the research into young grandmotherhood, you will be asked to take 5 to 10 photos that represent your own experiences of being a grandmother. You will be given a digital camera to use over a two-week period and then an interview will be arranged between you and the researcher to discuss your photos and talk about your experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood. The operating instructions for the camera will be given at the initial meeting between you and the researcher.

Here are some questions that you may find useful when deciding what photos to take:

- What does it mean to me to be a grandmother?
- How has becoming a grandmother affected my life?
- In what ways, if any, has it affected my work, relationships, finances, leisure activities, time, feelings and thoughts?
- What did I expect grandmotherhood to be like?

Photos can be taken of any places, objects, spaces, and people that are meaningful to you in relation to your grandmothing experiences.

Points to consider when taking photos

Private property – Normally property owners do not have the right to prevent someone from taking a photo of their property as long as the photographer is in a public place such as a public footpath when the photo is taken.

Invasion of Privacy – For the most part, you can take photos of people on public land/places. For example, park areas and streets. However, you cannot take photos of people who have a 'reasonable expectation of privacy'. If in doubt, try to avoid capturing people in the shots or ask them for their consent.

Photos of family, friends and colleagues – This is classed as 'personal data' because the individual/s can be identified. For these reasons it is good practice to explain to the people involved why you are taking the photo and ask for their consent (either verbally or written).

Photos of children – A child does not have the legal capacity to consent to having a photo taken so a parent or legal guardian must consent on their behalf.

For further details or queries regarding taking photographs please refer to the website <http://www.sirimo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/ukphotographersrights-v2.pdf> Or contact the researcher (Melinda Spencer) at email Melinda.spencer@northampton.ac.uk Phone 07977 120681

Appendix H – Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PARTICIPANT (To be completed after information sheet, photography instruction sheet and photo reproduction rights form have been read and discussed)

The purpose and details of this study have been fully explained to me. I understand that the University of Northampton Research Ethics Committee has approved all the procedures.

Please initial to confirm

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.		
I have had the opportunity to ask any questions with regards to my participation and the research.		
I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study and I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to.		
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study without giving reason.		
I understand that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed and that the information will be treated in strict confidence by the researcher.		
I agree to allow the researcher to share material from my interview (e.g. as part of conference presentations or journal articles that describe this study and its results) on condition that all my personal information is deleted or replaced.		
I agree to allow the researcher to take photos of the items I bring to the interview. I understand that the photos will be for illustrative purposes only and any identifying features will be masked or erased at my request.		
I have signed the photo reproduction rights form indicating my choice relating to the use of my photos. I fully understand that any photos I give permission to use will be for the purposes of this research only.		
I agree to participate in this study.		

Your signature_____

Signature of Researcher_____

Date_____

Appendix I – Photo Reproduction Rights Form

Lived experiences of young maternal grandmotherhood research, University of Northampton.

This form refers to photos you have taken and supplied as part of the Young maternal grandmotherhood research project in which you have participated. All photos will be stored securely by the researcher (Melinda Spencer) and used by the researcher for analysis. I would also like to use some of the photos (electronic or print form) in publications, presentations, reports and exhibitions arising from the research. Please could you sign one of the boxes below to indicate whether or not you are happy for me to do this. I have given you a copy of your photos (either electronic or print form) to assist you with your choice and for your records. I will not use any of your photos for anything other than this research.

PERMISSION TO USE ALL OF MY PHOTOGRAPHS

I give my consent for **ALL OF THE** photographs to be reproduced (electronic or print form) for educational and/or non-commercial purposes in publications, presentations, reports, exhibitions and websites relating to the young maternal grandmotherhood research. I understand that real names will NOT be used with photographs and that identifying features such as people's faces, place signs and street signs will be masked if I so request.

I request that the researcher does/does not mask all identifying features in my photographs.

Signed.....

Date.....

PERMISSION TO USE SOME OF MY PHOTOGRAPHS

If you would like to give permission for **SOME** of your photographs to be published but not all, please list, which photographs you will allow the researcher to use. I give my consent for the following photographs

.....
.....
.....

to be reproduced (electronic or print form) for educational and/or non-commercial purposes in publications, presentations, reports, exhibitions and websites relating to the young maternal grandmotherhood research. I understand that real names will NOT be used with photographs and that identifying features such as people's faces, place signs and street signs will be masked if I so request.

I request that the researcher does/does not mask all identifying features in my photographs.

Signed.....

Date.....

I DO NOT WISH ANY OF MY PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE USED

3. I do not wish any of these photographs to be reproduced in connection with the young maternal grandmotherhood research.

Signed.....

Date.....

Thank you for participating in my research. If you have any questions regarding this form, your participation in the research or the research project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Melinda Spencer
PhD Student
Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research
University of Northampton
Melinda.spencer@northampton.ac.uk
07977 120681

Appendix J - 7 criteria for evaluation of qualitative research (Elliott et al. 1999, p. 228)

Publishability guidelines especially pertinent to qualitative research.

1. Owning one's perspective. Authors specify their theoretical orientations and personal anticipations, both as known in advance and as they became apparent during the research. In developing and communicating their understanding of the phenomenon under study, authors attempt to recognize their values, interests and assumptions and the role these play in the understanding. This disclosure of values and assumptions helps readers to interpret the researchers' data and understanding of them, and to consider possible alternatives.

2. Situating the sample. Authors describe the research participants and their life circumstances to aid the reader in judging the range of people and situations to which the findings might be relevant.

3. Grounding in examples. Authors provide examples of the data to illustrate both the analytic procedures used in the study and the understanding developed in the light of them. The examples allow appraisal of the fit between the data and the authors' understanding of them; they also allow readers to conceptualize possible alternative meanings and understandings.

4. Providing credibility checks. Researchers may use any one of several methods for checking the credibility of their categories, themes or accounts. Where relevant, these may include (a) checking these understandings with the original informants or others similar to them; (b) using multiple qualitative analysts, an additional analytic 'auditor', or the original analyst for a 'verification step' of reviewing the data for discrepancies, overstatements or errors; (c) comparing two or more varied qualitative perspectives, or (d) where appropriate, 'triangulation' with external factors (e.g. outcome or recovery) or quantitative data.

5. Coherence. The understanding is represented in a way that achieves coherence and integration while preserving nuances in the data. The understanding fits together to form a data-based story} narrative, 'map', framework, or underlying structure for the phenomenon or domain.

6. Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks. Where a general understanding of a phenomenon is intended, it is based on an appropriate range of instances (informants or situations). Limitations of extending the findings to other contexts and informants are specified. Where understanding a specific instance or case is the goal, it has been studied and described systematically and comprehensively enough to provide the reader a basis for attaining that understanding. Such case studies also address limitations of extending the findings to other instances.

7. Resonating with readers. The manuscript stimulates resonance in readers reviewers, meaning that the material is presented in such a way that readers reviewers, taking all other guidelines into account, judge it to have represented accurately the subject matter or to have clarified or expanded their appreciation and understanding of it.

Appendix K - The 4 principles of Yardley's criteria (Shinebourne, 2011).

Validity and quality in IPA studies

Sensitivity to context -

- ✓ *in the initial choice of method and the rationale for its adoption.*
- ✓ *commitment to idiographic principles and a focus on recruiting participants from a particular context with a particular lived experience.*
- ✓ *during engagement with research participants with sensitivity to their individual experiences and understanding of their predicaments.*
- ✓ *in all stages of the analytic process, in particular in the commitment to care and attention to detail in analysing data.*
- ✓ *in grounding the analytic claims in participants' accounts, a good IPA study will demonstrate a sensitivity to the raw material and "will always have a considerable number of verbatim extracts from the participants' material to support the argument being made, thus giving participants a voice in the project and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made" (Smith et al. 2009, p. 180-181).*
- ✓ *taking care to offer interpretations as possible readings grounded in the data and contextualising the report in relevant existing literature.*

Commitment and rigour -

- ✓ *in selecting the sample.*
- ✓ *commitment to engaging with participants with sensitivity and respect.*
- ✓ *commitment to attending to detailed and meticulous analysis.*
- ✓ *the appropriateness of the sample to the question in hand.*
- ✓ *the quality of the interview.*
- ✓ *the completeness of the analysis.*

Transparency and coherence -

Transparency refers to the clarity of the description of the stages in the research process i.e. providing specific details of:

- ✓ *the process of selecting participants.*
- ✓ *constructing the interview schedule.*
- ✓ *the conduct of the interview and the stages in the analysis.*

Coherence refers to presentation of a coherent argument, yet finding ways to include ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the data in a coherent way. Coherence also describes the "fit" between the research question and the philosophical perspective adopted, and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken.

It is expected that an IPA study would be consistent with the underlying principles of IPA: attending closely to participants' experiential claims and at the same time, manifesting the interpretative activity of IPA.

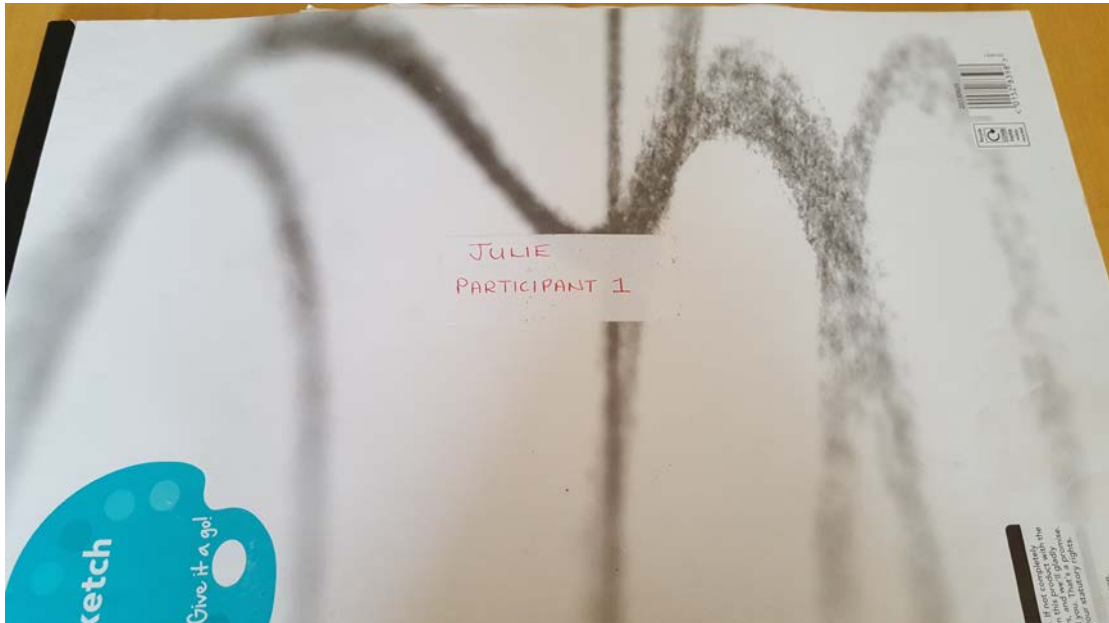
Impact and importance -

"the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged."

"there are many varieties of usefulness, and the ultimate value of a piece of research can only be assessed in relation to the objectives of analysis, the applications it was intended for, and the community for whom the findings were deemed relevant."

Appendix L – Julie (idiographic analysis process)

L1. Julie (photos of analysis)



L2. Emerging essential experiences table – Julie

Essential experiences and essences of experience	Page/Line	Extract
Becoming a young maternal grandmother – re-evaluations and responsibilities <i>Difficulties in understanding and accepting transition to grandmotherhood</i>	P4, L141	<i>"...you better not be telling me you're pregnant again" and that is exactly what she (daughter) told me..."</i>
	P10, L433	<i>"...she (daughter) called me up and said "I've got something to tell you" and again, I said "you so better not be telling me you're pregnant" and she said she was. And again, I was quite rude and there was a lot of bad language er and I just turned around and said, "I can't believe, once ok, twice you know, okish, three, you're having a laugh." I said, "This is absolutely ridiculous, <u>absolutely ridiculous</u>."</i>
	P2, L68	<i>'there's nothing you can do about it..."</i>
	P2, L52	<i>"...he (youngest son) was only very young at the time as well so it was (future grandmotherhood) quite surreal. Being a mum all over again with a 9 year gap and having a little one myself and then being told you're a grand, you're going to be a grandmother as well, it was like <u>wha:::t</u> [laughs]"</i>

		<p><i>in, if you want help, ask and I'll give you the answers but I'm certainly not going to tell you how to do it (motherhood) because everyone brings up their kids differently."</i></p>
Being a young maternal grandmother – values, conflicts and negotiations		
<i>Doing motherhood – a new territory</i>	P7, L323	<p><i>"...there was a knock on the door and we opened the door, 2 police officers. Now I at the time, was a special constable, based at that towns police station and knew both of them very well. How embarrassing. So they came in and sat down and just said, "we've um, Siobhan and Lewis, the father, had been in to the station to report that you have taken the children without their consent." So, I explained that actually, no we haven't taken the children without their consent, hence we've got travel cots, nappies, clothes for God knows how long um you know, and they said "right that's fine and because of the time of night it is um that's absolutely fine but you will have to return them by midday tomorrow" and that was really hard to do...But by this time, the police now had informed social services. So um social services then called up, they came to see us um and also Lewis's parents as well, and we all sat round, we,</i></p>

	P8, L349	<p>we, independently had sort of, not an interview, but you know, questions were asked and then a couple of days later we all sat round the table together and it was deemed at that particular time, as long as, um Siobhan and Lewis were in agreement, that the children could be returned to us."</p> <p>"...we had the children (grandchildren) again, we probably had them for about 3 months I reckon. Yeah, it was for a long while..."</p>
Moral values – cleanliness is next to Godliness	<p>P4, L168</p> <p>P27, L1187</p>	<p>"...there was one point where she (daughter) handed Bethany (eldest granddaughter) and she was wearing white, well I say white, it should've been white, baby grow, to my husband and he actually held her at arms length and just went "what do you expect me to do with that" and handed her to me. And I was like, "I'd expect to put her in a bath" and she was just absolutely filthy dirty. It, it was heartbreaking to see, um (.) <u>and</u> Siobhan (daughter) really couldn't be bothered..."</p> <p>"And it's nice (photo of grandchildren) because they're (grandchildren) all clean [laughs] which doesn't, is not always the case."</p>

<p><i>Ambivalent attachments – restrictions and rejections of being a grandmother</i></p>	<p>P32, L1394</p>	<p>“...but Leah (youngest grandchild), I’m not so sure, I don’t think that’s gonna go so well. Um I want to fight it (paternal grandparents, the system) um you know, but how often can you flog a dead horse? And how much heartache are you gonna go through to, before you can get there? You know, and it’s like hmmm, now if it was Bethany and Kieran (eldest two grandchildren), I don’t care how much money it costs, I’d do it and that sounds really awful but because I’ve got that bond with them but not with Leah. I don’t know her, she’s just a child that happens to look abit like my daughter, I don’t really know her. I don’t know her personality...”</p>
<p><i>The empowered and disempowered grandmother</i></p>	<p>P14, L638</p>	<p>“...the subject came up about when I wanted the children (grandchildren) in um August which previously Leah’s (youngest grandchild) dad had already agreed to...and was told basically, the reason they (paternal family) don’t think that I should have her is that I wouldn’t give her back. I was like, “are you joking, I’ve got enough kids at my house, thank you very much, I will quite gladly give her back” “but you haven’t had enough contact with her, she doesn’t know who you are.” ...so I thought, you know what, this isn’t the time or place...”</p>

	P8, L338	<p><i>"But by this time, the police now had informed social services. So um social services then called up, they came to see us um and also Luke's parents as well, and we all sat round, we, we, independently had sort of, not an interview, but you know, questions were asked and then a couple of days later we all sat round the table together and it was deemed at that particular time, as long as, um Siobhan and Luke were in agreement, that the children could be returned to us."</i></p>
<i>Geographic distance as an emotional protector</i>	P32, L1371	<p><i>"...they say out of sight out of mind, it's not out of mind 100 per cent but a lot of it and you know, we've had a busy couple of years as well, I've changed job um twice now um and we've moved and all the building work going on in the house, you, it sort of preoccupies you um my, Matt (youngest son) started school, you know and it's, all those different things, they preoccupy you elsewhere, where as if we were living round the corner (to daughter and grandchildren), it's not as, you can't ignore it as easily. Um and I do use, if I'm honest, sometimes use distance as an excuse. Well actually it's not an excuse, it's a reason..."</i></p>

<i>Contributing to society – gendered roles and obligations</i>	<p>P3, L131</p> <p>P24, L1085</p>	<p><i>"Lewis (daughter's ex-partner) was very much a yes man, and 'I love her,' so, you know, I told him on more than a few occasions, 'you need to grow a pair and you need to sort her out'."</i></p> <p><i>"...my mum said that she felt straight away (when becoming a grandmother), that she'd have to stop dying her hair, she'd have to stop wearing makeup, she'd have to change the way she dressed and I was like 'well, why the hell would you do that?' "</i></p>
<i>Living in hope of daughter's redemption</i>	P33, L1414	<i>"You know, Siobhan could become mother of the year next year, you never know [laughs]"</i>

L3 Julie – Analysis write up

At the time of interview, Julie was a mother to 3 children aged 22, 14 and 5 years. Julie was also a maternal grandmother to 3 grandchildren aged 4, 3 and 1 years and had become a grandmother for the first time at the age of 36 years. She lived with her second husband and 2 youngest children and described herself as white British. Her reported annual household income was between £50,000 to £59,999 and she worked full-time. Julie owned a car and her highest qualifications were connected with work.

Figure 1 – A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Julie's experiences of grandmotherhood

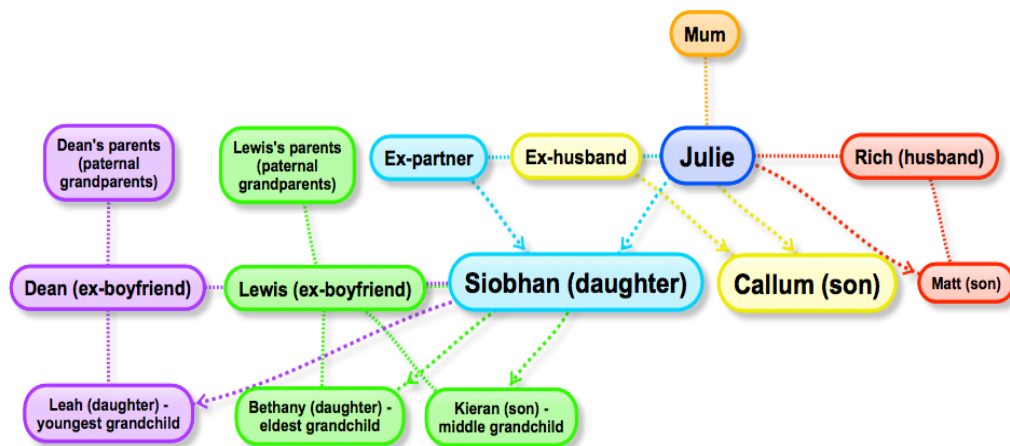


Figure 2 - A mind map illustrating Julie's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section

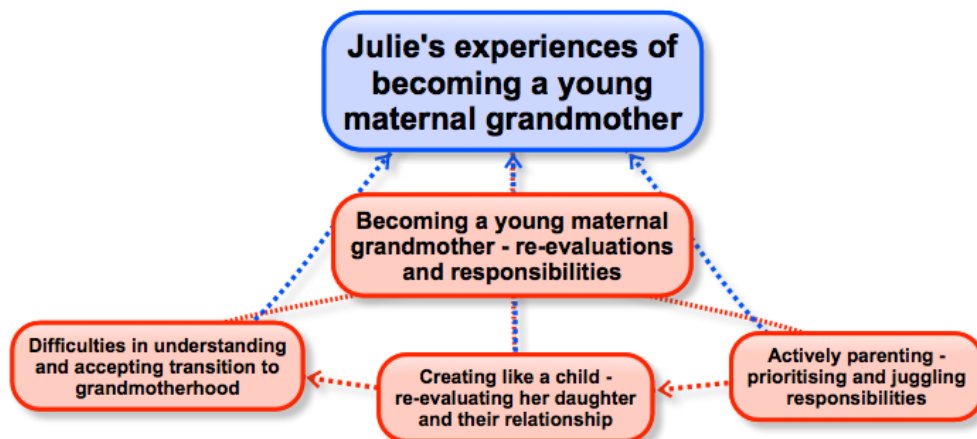
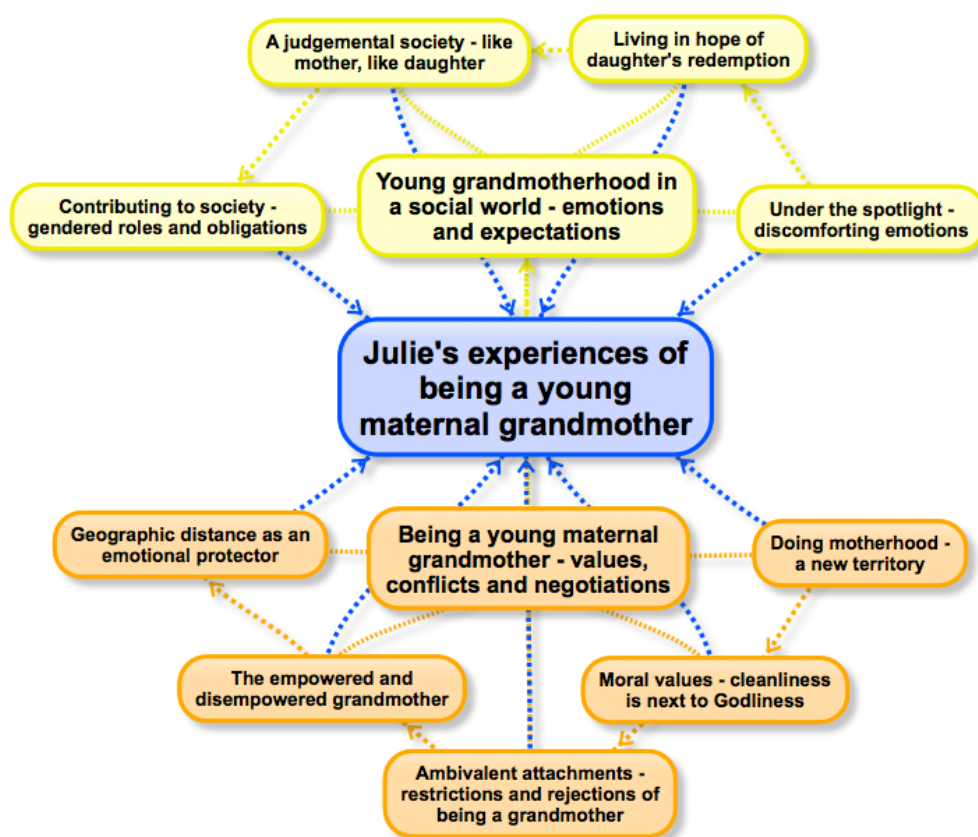


Figure 3 – A mind map illustrating Julie’s essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section



From the very start of the interview it becomes clear that Julie’s experiences of becoming and being a young grandmother have been greatly influenced by her daughter’s actions and behaviours. Throughout the interview, there is a strong sense of Julie trying to understand and make meaning out of her daughter’s behaviours and her resultant transitions to grandmotherhood. As a retrospective account, Julie recounts her experiences of grandmothing and indeed mothering as a multitude of conflicts that she continues to battle, frequently emotionless with an underlying mood of chagrin and negativity.

Julie’s daughter was 18 years of age when she told Julie of her first pregnancy. For Julie, the news was not too much of a shock, for she had been a young mother herself and expected her daughter to cope with the pregnancy and motherhood as well as she reported herself to have done years before. However, Julie talks with a certain disdain at her daughter’s behaviour through the pregnancy, portraying her daughter as selfish and immature.

“...I was anticipating [laughs] that she (daughter) would deal with it (pregnancy) as well as I did. Um but then obviously we (family) now know that it’s not to be the case. Um throughout the pregnancy, it was quite difficult because Siobhan (daughter) deemed that she was the only person in the whole wide world that had been pregnant before. Um so there were a few cross words, er you know every 2 minutes on the phone, “should this be happening,” “should that be happening,” er “just get on with it.” P1, L40

There is an indication here that perhaps Julie’s daughter was just seeking her mother’s support and advice as she experienced pregnancy for the first time. However, from Julie’s perspective, her daughter was **creating like a child**. Whilst chronologically speaking, her daughter is an adult; there are many times throughout Julie’s narration that she exasperatingly describes her daughter’s behaviours as childlike. It also appears that Julie may be rejecting

grandmothering and indeed, mothering her daughter through her pregnancy and her first birth. Julie talks of her attendance at the birth of her first grandchild with little emotion, using derogatory comments about her daughter and her child like behaviour and at one point, explains how her mother (her daughter's grandmother) talked to her daughter over the phone to help calm the situation. Her mother's intervention is perhaps a further hint of Julie shunning grandmotherhood and motherhood to her adult daughter.

"...the cow (daughter) was in labour for 40 hours and me and Lewis (daughter's boyfriend) did not sleep a wink during those 40 hours. She (daughter) did because she got given all sorts of pain relief and she was snoring her head off, but we didn't [laughs]... she created quite a lot during labour, um and again, that annoyed me a little um because she does like to create um and at one point actually my mum was on the phone because my mum's a midwife so she gave her a pep talk and not so polite one, it seemed to work." P2, L86

Julie's transitional period to grandmotherhood seems to provoke a **re-evaluation of her daughter and their relationship**. Julie makes comparisons between her own experiences and behaviours of young motherhood and her daughter's, portraying a continuous sense of disappointment in her daughter's failings to cope as well as she had self reportedly done. Julie also reflects that their relationship had become volatile before her daughter's pregnancy, describing how her daughter had moved out a few months prior.

"She'd (daughter) just moved out, not long, she'd been gone a few months, because there had been some issues um in our relationship, myself and the daughter um and the only way I can describe Siobhan really is as a child growing up, if you could put a description in the dictionary for angel, she'd have been under it, until she got to about 17 and a half and she was in her second year of A levels and Oh My God did she pay me back for all those teenage years I should have had. Um and she's still doing it." P2, L59

This tensile relationship that Julie and her daughter appear to share and her daughter's behaviours may partly explain Julie's hesitancy to describe herself as a grandmother. A further factor that may contribute to her reluctance of grandmotherhood is that Julie is still **actively parenting** and at the time of the birth of her first grandchild, she was mother to a one-year-old son and a ten-year-old son. Julie finds this strange and surreal and there is a sense that Julie has some **difficulty understanding and accepting her transition to grandmotherhood**. Julie is young enough to be, and indeed is, a mother to a young child. She is still at the age to reproduce, to have children of her own, and appears to struggle with the fact that she will imminently have a grandchild close in age to her youngest son.

"...he (youngest son) was only very young at the time as well so it was (future grandmotherhood) quite surreal. Being a mum all over again with a 9 year gap and having a little one myself and then being told you're a grand, you're going to be a grandmother as well, it was like wha:::t [laughs]" P2, L52

Julie seems to have no control over her first and subsequent transitions to grandmotherhood and the timings. She recalls, with incredulity, the second and third times that her daughter tells her that she is pregnant again, further contributing to her reluctance and difficulty in accepting grandmotherhood in her retrospective accounts.

"..."you better not be telling me you're pregnant again" and that is exactly what she (daughter) told me..." P4, L141
"...she (daughter) called me up and said "I've got something to tell you" and again, I said "you so better not be telling me you're pregnant" and she said

she was. And again, I was quite rude and there was a lot of bad language and I just turned around and said, "I can't believe, once ok, twice you know, okish, three, you're having a laugh." I said, "This is absolutely ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous." P10, L433

As an active mother of two dependent children and in full time employment, Julie appears to **prioritise and juggle her responsibilities**. Her priorities are to her dependent children who Julie considers to be her immediate family. Alternatively, she views her daughter, an adult with responsibilities, as independent and no longer part of her immediate family.

"I had still got young children myself and I was working, my husband works, you have a routine that you do pretty much. Um you have your own family unit don't you and even though Siobhan (daughter) is part of that still, no matter where she lives, she's not an immediate part of it..." P18, L777

In her accounts of her transitional period to grandmotherhood, Julie appears to be making sense of, and prioritising her responsibilities. She tells her daughter that she will give her guidance in mothering if she needs it but she will only do this if her daughter asks. In this sense, Julie seems to be setting some ground rules for being a young grandmother and mothering an adult daughter, and further aiding Julie to prioritise and clarify her ongoing responsibilities. She will be a young grandmother but she has a young family of her own to look after whilst working full time, and implies that being a young grandmother would be secondary to her primary commitments of her dependent children and work. Her daughter would have to be independent and develop and discover her own mothering style, like Julie had done as a young mother.

"...I told her (daughter) right from the beginning, "I'm not the sort of person, I'm not going to wade in, if you want help, ask and I'll give you the answers but I'm certainly not going to tell you how to do it (motherhood) because everyone brings up their kids differently." P3, L115

However, after transitioning to grandmother, Julie faces many concerns about her daughter and boyfriend's parenting skills and abilities. This results in ongoing conflicts, negotiations and clashing of moral values, as Julie becomes grandmother to three grandchildren. Julie candidly discusses her daughter and boyfriend's uncleanness, their lack of housekeeping skills and consequently her grandchildren's dirtiness and lack of hygiene. This is a great agitation and concern for Julie that runs throughout her interview, with implications that her daughter and boyfriend are immoral.

"...there was one point where she (daughter) handed Bethany (eldest granddaughter) and she was wearing white, well I say white, it should've been white, baby grow, to my husband and he actually held her at arms length and just went "what do you expect me to do with that" and handed her to me. And I was like, "I'd expect to put her in a bath" and she was just absolutely filthy dirty. It, it was heartbreaking to see, um (.) and Siobhan (daughter) really couldn't be bothered..." P4, L168

Julie presents a photograph of her three grandchildren in her interview and talks about her fondness for the picture; not because of the love she holds dear for her grandchildren but rather that they are all clean.

"And it's nice because they're (grandchildren) all clean [laughs] which doesn't, is not always the case." P27, L1187

In the dissemination telephone conversation, Julie reported that **Cleanliness is next to Godliness** is a saying she uses frequently. Julie reports that she is not religious but obviously holds moral values associated with religion and her

past experiences within the world. Julie's morality may be part of her project (Sartre), values that fit into her day-to-day existence and that shape her choices and desires. In this case, Julie's encounters with her daughter's seemingly less moral project result in an ongoing strained relationship.

Becoming and being a grandmother seems to throw Julie's relationship with her daughter into **a new territory**; that she is experiencing and **doing motherhood** in new and often negative ways. It is a form of motherhood that she has not experienced before, of mothering an adult daughter. For Julie, her experiences of this do not match her expectations. Julie expects and wishes for her daughter to be a responsible and independent young mother, to care for her children in, what Julie considers, an acceptable way. Julie discusses what she perceives good mothering entails and shows a concern for her grandchildren's welfare.

"You know, I'm not saying I'm the perfect parent, my god no and we all make mistakes but get over it. Learn from them, don't learn from them, fine but, you know, the most important thing for me, kids are well fed, got a roof over their head, I don't care if they've got the right trainers on but they do [laughs] um and that they feel loved, is that not, I think it is, you know, to feel wanted which I don't think those (grandchildren) do. So that's, that is difficult..." P31, L1351

It appears that becoming and being a grandmother has helped Julie to articulate and make sense of what she feels are important mothering skills. Julie discusses her growing concerns about her daughter and boyfriend's abilities to care for their children and subsequently her grandchildren's wellbeing. Approximately 4 months after her second grandchild's birth, Julie's daughter attempted to commit suicide. Julie recounts this without emotion, her experiences of grandmotherhood up to this point had overwhelmed and exhausted her and hence, she expresses very little care about her daughter's mental state. Further, on the same day, her husband was made redundant and Julie recalls this day and visiting her daughter in hospital with a sense of disbelief, surrealism and repressed emotions.

"It was quite a bad day for me and I'll never forget it cause that was the day that my husband got made redundant as well, when he come in from work that was what he told me had happened, so I'll never forget the day. Um got to the hospital and I just spoke to her straight, I just said to her, "you know, come on it's not all about you, what about them 2 children. You've been offered the help and you just, you know um and you've just got everyone else involved, what's it," and I don't believe that it was a serious attempt, shall I say. I mean obviously in jobs that I've done before I come across quite a few attempts um and you normally can tell which ones are for real and which ones are for attention." P5, L232

Again, Julie portrays her daughter as a child, seeking attention. It is after this incident that her daughter leaves her boyfriend and children and Julie concerns herself further with her grandchildren's welfare as her daughter's boyfriend struggles to care for the two children. Julie arranges with her daughter, boyfriend and his parents to take her grandchildren temporarily into her and her husband's care. At this moment, Julie finds herself **doing motherhood** again with her two grandchildren. However, later that same night there was a knock at her front door.

"...there was a knock on the door and we opened the door, 2 police officers. Now I at the time, was a special constable, based at that towns police station and knew both of them very well. How embarrassing. So they came in and sat down and just said, "we've um, Siobhan and Lewis, the father, had been in to the station to report that you have taken the children without their consent." So, I explained that actually, no we haven't taken the

children without their consent, hence we've got travel cots, nappies, clothes for God knows how long um you know, and they said "right that's fine and because of the time of night it is um that's absolutely fine but you will have to return them by midday tomorrow" and that was really hard to do...But by this time, the police now had informed social services. So um social services then called up, they came to see us um and also Lewis's parents as well, and we all sat round, we, we, independently had sort of, not an interview, but you know, questions were asked and then a couple of days later we all sat round the table together and it was deemed at that particular time, as long as, um Siobhan and Lewis were in agreement, that the children could be returned to us." P7, L323

Momentarily empowering herself as a grandmother, this empowerment is quickly quelled by her daughter, boyfriend and the police. It appears that Julie continues to fight to **empower** herself as a mother and grandmother throughout her discourse. Whilst possibly not aware of this, Julie retells numerous instances where her attempts to empower herself are thwarted by her daughter, her daughter's boyfriend, and authorities such as social services and the police. These occurrences also highlight the sensitive nature of grandparents' rights within the UK today. It is only after the agreement and intervention of social services that Julie and her husband care for her two grandchildren for a further 3 months before returning them to their father as primary caregiver. From then on, Julie is satisfied with the care that her grandchildren receive from their father, resigning herself to accept that the situation is as good as it will get. However, she talks with disdain towards her daughter, discussing family meetings with social services and her daughter's behaviours.

"...to be completely honest, I could've smacked Siobhan in the mouth throughout most of those meetings (with social services) because she either contributed no: thing or it was everyone else's fault apart from hers and that was really annoying...Um and eventually it was deemed that um Lewis would take the children back with him and he would stay at the house... to this day um (2) sound this, sound this, this is going to sound awful, those children (eldest two grandchildren) will never be the most brainiest of children or have the best morals and values because (1) for want of a better word, Lewis is thick as shit. That's awful but his heart's in the right place and that house is still spotless as we speak." P8, L354

Further on in Julie's experiences of grandmothering, after the birth of her third grandchild to a different father, Julie finds the paternal grandparents as her greatest adversary to empowerment. In the middle of a weekend away with her husband, her daughter phoned her to say that she and her boyfriend had argued, he had thrown her out and his mother had taken her third grandchild to her house. Julie and her husband travel back from their interrupted weekend to negotiate with the paternal grandparents on her daughter's behalf. Julie had previously arranged to have all three grandchildren to stay with her for a couple of weeks in the summer holidays and now finds herself arguing with the paternal grandparents about this.

"...the subject came up about when I wanted the children (grandchildren) in um August which previously Leah's (youngest grandchild) dad had already agreed to...and was told basically, the reason they (paternal family) don't think that I should have her is that I wouldn't give her back. I was like, "are you joking, I've got enough kids at my house, thank you very much, I will quite gladly give her back" "but you haven't had enough contact with her, she doesn't know who you are." ...so I thought, you know what, this isn't the time or place, the whole time the poor little girl (youngest granddaughter) sitting there, like watching a tennis match." P14, L638

As a consequence of her daughter's behaviour as a parent, Julie speaks of her **ambivalent attachments** to her grandchildren. For the eldest two, who she has temporarily cared for as a mother, she talks mainly with fondness and that her grandmother/grandchildren relationship continues to strengthen, as they grow older. The relationship with the youngest grandchild however is very different.

"...but Leah (youngest grandchild), I'm not so sure, I don't think that's gonna go so well. Um I want to fight it (paternal grandparents, the system) um you know, but how often can you flog a dead horse? And how much heartache are you gonna go through to, before you can get there? You know, and it's like hmmm, now if it was Bethany and Kieran (eldest two grandchildren), I don't care how much money it costs, I'd do it and that sounds really awful but because I've got that bond with them but not with Leah. I don't know her, she's just a child that happens to look abit like my daughter, I don't really know her. I don't know her personality..." P32, L1394

Being a grandmother for Julie means having a connection, an attachment to her grandchildren. Because of the circumstances with her youngest grandchild, she feels a lack of attachment to her. This brings with it a sense of guilt, that maybe she should fight harder to form that 'bond' but feels that it would be like flogging a dead horse, a waste of effort and heartache on something when there is little chance of being successful. There is a sense here that Julie is **disempowered** as a grandmother, she is grandmother but she is not being grandmother. She is **restricted** in being a grandmother by the consequences of her daughter's actions but there is also a feeling of **rejecting** grandmotherhood, Julie appears to have lost the will to fight being a grandmother to her youngest grandchild.

As a result of her experiences of grandmotherhood, Julie appears to emotionally distance herself from the realities that she narrates. Because Julie's account is retrospective, this further explains her reluctance and hesitancy in accepting grandmotherhood. Julie, her husband and two sons move 120 miles away from her daughter and grandchildren to find work for her husband. This **geographic distance** between mother and daughter appears to be an **emotional protector** for Julie, it relieves some of the everyday stresses that she experienced as a grandmother and that could not be escaped from when she lived close by. Further, by moving away, it perhaps helps Julie to concentrate on her main responsibilities, her immediate family and work.

"...they say out of sight out of mind, it's not out of mind 100 per cent but a lot of it and you know, we've had a busy couple of years as well, I've changed job um twice now um and we've moved and all the building work going on in the house, you, it sort of preoccupies you um my, Matt (youngest son) started school, you know and it's, all those different things, they preoccupy you elsewhere, where as if we were living round the corner (to daughter and grandchildren), it's not as, you can't ignore it as easily. Um and I do use, if I'm honest, sometimes use distance as an excuse. Well actually it's not an excuse, it's a reason..." P32, L1371

Julie's narration of becoming and being a young grandmother seems to be underpinned by social influences, of living in a social world with social expectations of how roles should be performed, stereotypical behaviours and images of certain groups of people resulting in the apparent need for Julie to justify herself as a young mother and young grandmother. Julie appears to feel **under the spotlight**, that because of her 'youngness' at her first transition to motherhood and grandmotherhood, and her daughter's 'youngness', she experiences many **discomforting emotions**. Guilt, disappointment, embarrassment, doubt and shame are all emotions that Julie talks about in relation to her grandmothering experiences. Julie tells her story with reflection and a sense of mean making, continually questioning herself as a mother and

grandmother, her reactions to her circumstances and the emotions she feels. Perhaps these discomforting emotions are both an indication of how she feels she will be viewed socially as a young mother and grandmother (three grandchildren by the age of 40 years) but also a result of the social perceptions and expectations that grandmotherhood is a positive experience associated with positive emotions.

"...it's the embarrassment and some, feeling quite ashamed of, because (2) people quite often will say to you, if they find out that you're a grandparent, and they'll go 'no way, no way, how old are they? Is it a boy or is it a girl?' And I could lie and just turn round and say Bethany's 4 or Leah's 1 because that looks even better but you, you sort of say it and it's out and they're like '3?' " P18, L816

The age at which Julie became a mother herself appears to perturb her greatly, that because she was young, she must likely be viewed as a 'slapper'.

"...they're (people) like how many wrinkles has she got, how old is she or hopefully they think oh she's looking good for 45, 46 do you know what I mean, you're never quite sure and when people say how old are you, you say 40 and they're like 'rea:lly' and you're thinking are they being polite now. How old was she when she had hers, is she a slapper?" P28, L1213

For her daughter then to do the same puts Julie **under the spotlight** as a young grandmother and brings back the self-consciousness she experienced as a young mother that she has had to continually prove herself since becoming a young mother. Two understandings can be interpreted here. Firstly, that this may be Julie's own perception of young motherhood; that teenage girls who fall pregnant are indeed promiscuous. And while she was a young mother herself, it is something that she would not relish disclosing publicly. Secondly, it positions Julie within the context of the social world and the social views and expectations held about teenage pregnancy in general.

There is a sense of **like mother, like daughter**. Julie was a young mother and so too was her daughter. Presenting an image of teenage girls, Julie talks about the stereotypes of this age group, the results of living in a **judgmental society**. Julie suggests that the only thing missing from the image is a pushchair.

"...that to me is the only thing that's missing from that picture is 3 pushchairs. That's just your stereotypical um and do you know what if you'd asked me the same question with regards to me being, when I was 16 and had Siobhan, I would come up with a very similar image..." P30, L1274

Julie refers here to her own experiences of young motherhood and suggests that over time the image may change but the stereotype remains. By becoming a young grandmother, Julie is uncomfortably reliving her experiences of young motherhood. Arguably, these teenage girls are living up to social expectations except for the absence of young children/babies in pushchairs. Julie further goes on to propose that certain behaviours are expected within certain groups and whilst her daughter was still a teenager at the time of her first child, she expected her daughter to change her behaviour to meet the expectations of her new mothering role.

"...you expect that behaviour from a teenager but then when you become responsible for someone else's life, I mean, I wouldn't have dared do what she did..." P18, L811

Julie further presents an image of the Jeremy Kyle show, a UK talk show that presents family feuds. Julie reports that her daughter has previously appeared on the show to support her friend who was accused of being a bad parent. Julie

finds this extremely ironic considering her daughter's own questionable parenting skills. It is also suggested that these types of media shows represent and influence the social expectations of the time with regards to **gendered roles, obligations** and stereotypes. Julie feels that because of her daughter's behaviours and actions as a young mother, her own family could go on the show and fill a whole series.

"Yep, I reckon we (family) could make a series [laughs] on our own, not just a programme, it's only on for about half an hour isn't it?" P29, L1260

As a mother, wife, daughter, grandmother and full-time worker, Julie presents, on many occasion, her perceptions and expectations of how certain roles should be performed. Julie refers to how she expects men to behave as a boyfriend/husband and father on several occasions. Talking about her eldest two grandchildren's father with an air of frustration, Julie recounts a time when she told him to be more masculine and be more authoritative with her daughter. This is not only an indication of Julie's perspective on how men should behave within the family but also her understanding of grandmothering and mothering. She takes on a more active voice in her daughter's relationship and perhaps feels that it is part of her grandmotherly rights and responsibilities.

"Lewis was very much a yes man, and 'I love her,' so, you know, I told him on more than a few occasions, 'you need to grow a pair and you need to sort her out'." P3, L131

As the man of the house and the father and partner to her grandchildren and daughter, Julie wants him to be more assertive and to take responsibility for his family. It also, to some extent, indicates Julie's positioning within the matriarchal lineage, the grandmother being the head of the maternal family line and the need to step in where she feels necessary. Talking about the actions and behaviours of mother and grandmother, Julie holds firm ideas of what is expected. While she does not agree with her own mother's expectations of young grandmotherhood, she does confess that she looks nothing like what she expects a grandmother to look like.

"...my mum said that she felt straight away, that she'd have to stop dying her hair, she'd have to stop wearing makeup, she'd have to change the way she dressed and I was like 'we:ll, why the hell would you do that?' " P24, L1085

For Julie's mother, who also became a grandmother before the age of 40 years, grandmotherhood is associated with later life and hence, felt the social expectancies to conform accordingly.

Ultimately, Julie continues to hope that her daughter will act accordingly as a mother. At the time of interview, her daughter was staying with Julie after the separation with her boyfriend and with the paternal grandparents taking care of her daughter, Julie's youngest grandchild. After all the dramas, after all her daughter's parenting mishaps, Julie appears to still **live in hope for her daughter's redemption**. She wants her to be a good mother, to move away from the stigma of young motherhood, to not be what society expects of young mothers and perhaps, more importantly, to redeem Julie as a young mother and grandmother.

"You know, Siobhan could become mother of the year next year, you never know [laughs]" P33, L1414

Reflexivity

From Julie's spoken words, it was apparent that Julie liked to be in control of her life and that grandmotherhood (timings, doing and actioning) was

uncontrollable. From the beginning of Julie's interview, I had the sense that she was not at all happy with her grandmothering experiences. Her daughter appeared to determine Julie's experiences and their relationship, with Julie often demonstrating frustration and disbelief. Grandmotherhood for Julie was a new and unknown form of mothering; it was mothering a daughter whom she felt should be acting with maturity and responsibility. And yet, Julie continued to attempt to rescue her daughter, and consequently her grandchildren, from the situations her daughter created. I found myself disliking Julie's daughter for her neglect of her young children and as a result of this, I also felt a certain amount of agitation towards Julie for her continuous efforts to help her daughter. I wondered if I would do the same as a mother. What is it that makes a mother stand by their child when they know they are in the wrong? The intimacy, nurturing and history shared through birthing and caring for your child as they grow and develop, of being a part of you, of being blinded by the love, knowledge and hope of the goodness within your child. More importantly in Julie's experiences, it was the wellbeing of dependent young children (her grandchildren) that incited her interventions and negotiations.

Julie continually portrays her daughter as a child and that she knew her daughter was not ready for motherhood. I also felt that Julie, as a result of her own young mothering experiences, was not ready for grandmotherhood. By becoming a young grandmother, Julie found herself being socially scrutinized again, uncovering her own young motherhood that she would rather remain concealed. I thought that perhaps Julie had managed to escape the stigma of 'youngness' for some time and that becoming and being a grandmother to three grandchildren by the age of 40 years, plummets her back into the social spotlight. Further, as her daughter continues to replicate the negative stereotypes of young motherhood, so Julie increasingly has to justify and defend her own 'youngness'.

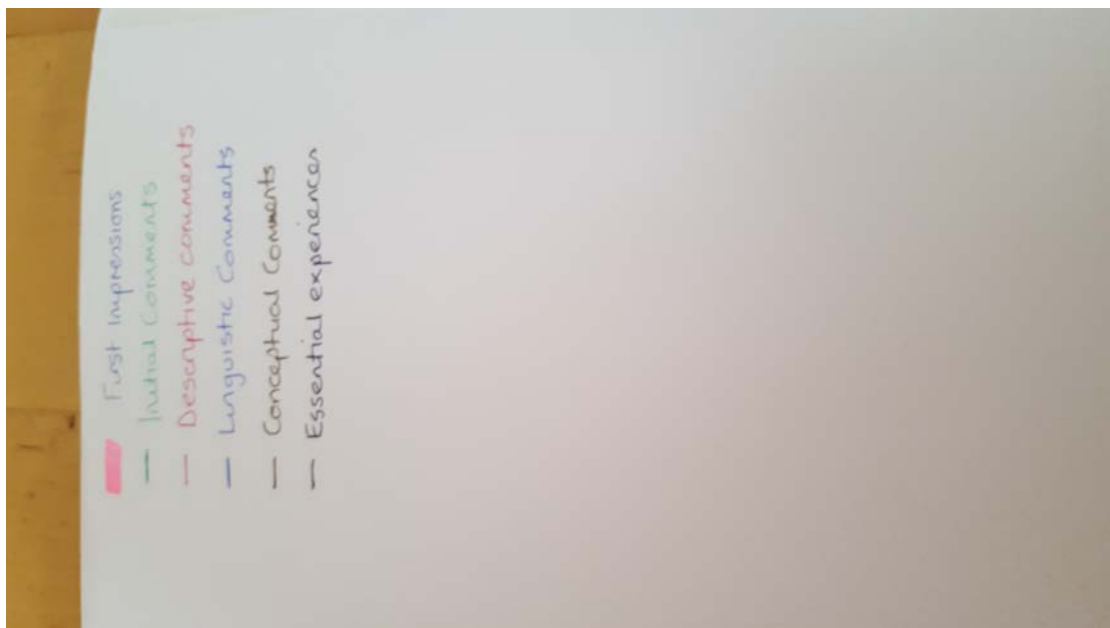
Julie's accounts of grandmotherhood are retrospective and she reflects back over her experiences with negativity. She talks with little emotion about events in her life that most certainly would have been emotional (the birth of her first grandchild, her daughter's attempted suicide). Her emotional distancing and repression are evidenced in her frequent pronoun usage (you're instead of I'm). Julie also states that grandmotherhood means nothing to her. I found myself doubting this, particularly as she discussed her willingness to care for her grandchildren full time if the need arose. I felt that grandmotherhood did mean something to Julie, that she did care for her grandchildren and that she would give up her work and make room in her immediate family for her grandchildren. The 'nothingness' of grandmotherhood for Julie is rather a result of her tarnished experiences by the actions of her daughter and a subsequent numbness of emotions, heightened by her own awareness of the social positive perceptions of grandmotherhood.

What is it that makes Julie's experience of grandmotherhood what it is? It is her daughter's childlike actions and behaviours that fail to meet Julie's expectations and result in an ongoing strained mother/daughter relationship. It is a reluctance to accept grandmotherhood while Julie is actively parenting her two dependent children and finding herself in a new territory of motherhood, mothering an adult child and temporarily mothering two young grandchildren. Julie continues to try to empower herself as grandmother, being thwarted in her attempts by her daughter, boyfriends, paternal family and authorities. This results in ambivalent attachments to her grandchildren and her endeavours to distance herself both emotionally and geographically from her daughter and grandchildren. The young ages of motherhood and grandmotherhood bring back discomforting feelings, of being in the spotlight, of living in a judgemental world where her daughter's behaviours will reflect on her. It is her hope that her daughter will redeem herself and by doing so, relieve Julie from her own young motherhood and grandmotherhood. These,

I perceive from my own positioning within the world, are Julie's essential experiences of grandmothering.

Appendix M – Michelle (idiographic analysis process)

M1. Michelle (photos of analysis)



GC = good but well loved

Strength in numbers - evolutionary?

Fitting with ideals
Growing family relationships
A perfect experience

A sense of completion,
of fulfillment

Re-awakens appreciation
of life

A new and higher dimension

Romanticism of GM

Grandchildren bring a
warmth within

Worrying about what other
people think of age

Young GM - degraded

Defending her young
motherhood

GM comes naturally

236 ok that's £10 off my shopping bill (laughs). So yeah it is, they're
237 spoilt rotten. But not, they are spoilt rotten but they're, they're well
238 loved.
239 M. Yes. What about your relationships within the family, how's it
240 affected family relationships?
241 M. For all better. Oh yeah massively. Sarah and my youngest one,
242 she's going now, and I suppose because they're getting older as
243 well, you've not got that sister rivalry going on but their bond has
244 just grown immensely, yeah, yeah it's really good and also like Sam
245 is quite intense with the children as well so she's quite involved with
246 them and she likes being with them. Um luckily it's put her off
247 having her own children so I've not got to worry there.
248 M. How old is she again?
249 M. She's 17 yeah. Um but it has, it does, it does bring you together
250 as a family so much more and you're, like your celebrations and
251 things like that, you know, like they're always involved in
252 everything um oh yeah it just makes the whole family unit much
253 stronger. In my experiences, it's just been nothing but perfect all
254 the way through and you know, I've not had to, have to have a bad
255 experience, thank goodness.
256 M. That's good. So um how have you changed as a person do you
257 think? I've learned to love? Learned to love at a higher level?
258 M. (3) I've learned to love. Honestly, it's um, cause sometimes you
259 just go with your day-to-day life and things like that but these
260 children just bring a different feeling to you and you just start to
261 appreciate everything that you've really got. Um and as a person,
262 for me, I always worry about what's gonna happen the next day,
263 well I used to but now I live for the next day. I live for thinking I've
264 got my grandchildren, I can nip over the road and I can see them
265 and it, in, in that sense it's, it, it gives me a warmth. I've got more
266 of a, as I'm getting older as well, I've got more of a warmth that
267 goes on within me and it's, it's those kids that have brought it to
268 me.
269 M. Yeah aww ok thank you. So when you found out you were going
270 to become a grandparent for the first time what were your
271 expectations of what grandparenting would entail?
272 M. Do you know, I don't know because I think like from when I was
273 younger grandparents were always quite old. You know, you always
274 see grandparents quite old, older. I, I was like I'm 36, how do I tell
275 people I'm gonna be a grandma at 36, you know, they'll look at me
276 and say, and a few people did actually, well you must've been really
277 young then and I almost felt like I was being degraded at the fact
278 that because I was 36 and yes, because I was quite young when I
279 had Carl but we've always had a good strong family unit. Um but
280 my expectations, I, I don't know, I didn't know what to expect. I
281 didn't know what I had to do and it just almost, it just kind of liked
282 starts falling into place when they come along. And I think because
283 I didn't know what to expect - it all just
284 fell into place - a natural progression/
285 GM comes naturally

Spent but well loved
changed or learned?

Affected relationships for the better
Strengthened their family unity
Strength in numbers
Daughter's relationship has grown
Youngest daughter involved with her
GC

fits her ideals, completes her

A perfect experience
Stronger family unit

Re-awakens your appreciation of life - of the little things

Brings a new dimension - a different perspective of the world - a new dimension - a higher plane

Live for the next day

Romanticism of grandmotherhood

Romantic

Grandchildren bring a warmer existence

Grandchildren bring a warmth within

Grandparents seen as older people

Degraded - reduced in rank, position, reputation

Worried about what other people would think at her young age

Degraded

Her young motherhood - didn't stop her from having a good strong family unit - in defense

Defending her young motherhood

M2. Emerging essential experiences table - Michelle

Essential experiences and essences	Page/Line	Extract
<p>Becoming a young grandmother – The right time</p> <p><i>Expecting young grandmotherhood</i></p>	<p>P7, L318</p>	<p>"...I always knew I was gonna be a gran, a, a nan early. I always knew I was gonna be a young grandmother. <u>If I was younger than 36 I'd a probably been a bit concerned</u> [laughs] but I always knew I'd be a grandma before I was 40 because I had my children so young obviously the next generation starts to come in doesn't it so um hopefully I can be a great grandma when I'm not so old, you know? No, I always knew I'd be an early grandma."</p>
	<p>P1, L36</p>	<p>"Initially it was kind of like, oh my gosh, I'm gonna be, I'm <u>36</u> and I'm gonna be a nanny but then within sort of 10 minutes, it just kind of like, <u>my god I'm gonna be a nanny</u> [laughs] so it was like, I had this <u>really (.) wonderful (.)</u> feeling about becoming a nanny, I couldn't wait and I was so excited about it so it was just such a joyful evening, about becoming a nanny..."</p>
<p><i>Defending young motherhood</i></p>	<p>P6, L274</p>	<p>"I, I was like I'm 36, how do I tell people I'm gonna be a grandma at 36, you know, they'll look at me and say, and a few people did actually, well you must've been really young then and I almost felt like I was being degraded at the fact that because I was 36 and yes, because I was quite young when I had Carl (son) but we've always had a good strong family unit."</p>
<p><i>A good time for Grandmotherhood – young and energised</i></p>	<p>P7, L311</p>	<p>"So I wouldn't want, I wouldn't want to have had my grandchildren when I was older um I were quite content at having them at 36 and moving forward with them so I was quite happy with that because, yeah quite rightly I'd got more</p>

Meeting the new grandchild – feelings and emotions	P7, L307	<p>energy to do things with them and er but no if I'd had them older I wouldn't have any energy left."</p> <p>"...the way my grandchildren have come along, being at 36 was, was a good time for it to happen um because being 42 now, I tell you, I can tell the difference from being 36 to 42. If I have them, I, it wears me out you know and I think Oh my gosh."</p>
	P8, L338	<p>"She (Rose) was my first grandchild who was 4 weeks premature um and this was the first time that I saw Rose and it was an extremely emotional day because you didn't actually know (.), although she was only 4 weeks premature, you don't know what's gonna happen and you've got all these, all these wires and all tubes and all these bleeps going on and stuff and the only, the only thing you could do through the incubator is put your hand in there and, and touch her little hand... But um that's the first time we saw her and it were very emotional."</p>
	P12, L439	<p>"Um I didn't go in till probably the last 4 hours of her labor because she didn't want me sitting around all night you know, it can be a long time can't it? But um those 4 hours that I were there were fabulous. I just would not have missed it for the world and to watch him be born, you know to watch his head and his shoulders and his body, just appear, it's absolutely fab. You come out and it's like (.), did that really just happen? Have I just watched a baby being born? It's just a very surreal time, a really surreal time. So I have got with Marc a very strong bond because I was there and I was like one of the people to hold him so I, yeah very strong bond with Marc."</p>

<p>Being a young maternal grandmother – space, time, ownership and obligations</p> <p><i>Ideals, expectations, duties and obligations – what grandmotherhood will be and not be</i></p>	<p>P5, L226</p> <p>P9, L356</p> <p>P12, L437</p> <p>P2, L55</p> <p>P4, L172</p>	<p><i>"If I'm out (.), I'm just going down Tesco's just to get some shopping, I will always come home with something for the kids. Always. Um they'll always have, I don't know, nappies or clothing or it's Easter so they've got like an Easter bag each with bits going in so I always feel that I <u>have</u> to get them something. So yeah they always get a little bit of something in the basket. And especially Marc, if I can take him with me, it's um whereas with my own kids, I'd say don't ask cause you're not getting. Marc has only got to go nanny can I have this and I melt and I go of course you can Marc [laughs]."</i></p> <p><i>"Um and especially to see Carl (son) as well because I know he's a lad and they sometimes don't show their emotions but you know, Carl, I think at that time needed his mum as well. Just as much as Clara (daughter-in-law) had got her mum on the doorstep, Carl needed his mum as well..."</i></p> <p><i>"...she (daughter) wanted me there to support her and her partner at the time of the, Marc's (grandson) birth."</i></p> <p><i>"That was quite difficult for me because them being up in (place name) and me being down here, it was kind of like, you felt that you, you couldn't be there to help or support or do the things that a mum should do um so it was quite difficult at the time..."</i></p> <p><i>"...I think because she's (daughter), you know, um it's ok having your partner go in with you, Adam's (daughter's partner) a little bit kind of</i></p>
<p><i>The difference between maternal and paternal grandmothering – intimacy and ownership</i></p>		

Grandmothering as effortful – tackling distance and time	P3, L126	<p><i>don't like the gory bits, you know and I think she was a bit worried about, you know, things happening and then him getting worried and things like that whereas she's, with me there, I think she just felt a bit more supported and Adam as well felt supported cause I could say to him, no it's ok, no it's fine, it's quite normal, it's all ok, you know. But second time round they were absolutely fine. I think they knew what to expect so."</i></p>
	P3, L139	<p><i>"I think when you've got that mother daughter relationship, you always have that relationship with the children that come along as well. Whereas I suppose with Clara (daughter-in-law), she's got that bond with her own mum and although she's been around for 10/11 years, you know, I'm not her mum and I'd never take the place of her mum, I'll support them all the same but there is a difference between your son and your daughter having children."</i></p>
	P2, L73	<p><i>"I can say to Sarah (daughter) I want to take them here, I want to take them there, you've got, you know, and that's fine and she'll let me do that but if it was just Clara (daughter-in-law), you know, I don't, I wouldn't feel that I would have the um I'm trying to put it, I haven't got that bond with Clara because she's not mine, to be able to say well I want to go and do this or I want to go and do that or can I have her for a week because I remember I asked to have Rose for a week and it caused so much tension."</i></p> <p><i>"...there was one thing that I wasn't going to do and I was gonna try, I wasn't going to be a distant grandma and just pop up once a year or anything like that, it had to be a regular thing. So, you know, on one Saturday morning we'd just say right come on we're off,</i></p>

Teaching grandchildren – delighting in their development	P3, L95	<p>we're up to, we're going up to Yorkshire and that's how, we'd just do it um because I didn't want to be a distance grandma, I didn't want there not to be a bond between myself and Rose (eldest grandchild). And there never has been. Uh sorry, there <u>always has been</u> a bond between us."</p>
	P2, L65	<p>"So Ray (second grandchild) was the second boy um so again, with that bonding, you know, you have to make the effort to go and see them."</p>
	P13, L469	<p>"...you had to make the effort to go up to Yorkshire and, and visit the grandchildren um you know and vise versa for them as well. And they're only a young couple so moneywise and things like that, to be able to travel backwards and forwards, it's, it's difficult. But we, we do have a strong relationship, we have a good bond."</p>
	P14, L483	<p>"This is Marc (third grandchild, maternal), I took him out for lunch one day and um we were having a pub meal as you do and Marc um he learned to kiss that day but kiss with his hand...Well he'd kiss on the lips and then we'd start blowing kisses cause he got a bit bored with the game after a while and then he just found it so joyful that he could do this kiss like this. He was just, he thought it was so funny um but yeah that's how I taught him to do that that day...that was nice so he could go home and I'd say to him give mummy a kiss and he'd do like this with his hand [laughs]."</p> <p>"I just, if, if you spend the time with them um and play with them and do things with them, they pick things up so quickly. And Marc absorbs everything so if you taught him a song he will go home and he will sing that song to, to mum..."</p>

<p>A perfect experience – love and relationships</p> <p><i>Romanticism of grandmotherhood – a new and higher dimension</i></p>	<p>P6, L258</p> <p>P7, L326</p> <p>P14, L503</p>	<p><i>"I've learned to love. Honestly, it's um, cause sometimes you just go with your day-to-day life and things like that but these children just bring a different feeling to you and you just start to appreciate everything that you've really got. Um and as a person, for me, I always worry about what's gonna happen the next day, well I used to but now I live for the next day. I live for thinking I've got my grandchildren, I can nip over the road and I can see them and it, in, in that sense it's, it, it gives me a warmth. I've got more of a, as I'm getting older as well, I've got more of a warmth that goes on within me and it's, it's those kids that have brought it to me."</i></p> <p><i>M. Yeah ok. So what does grandparenthood mean to you?</i></p> <p><i>Mi. The world. Absolutely the world. Those children just give me every bit of joy and love and I talk about them all day.</i></p> <p><i>M. Do you?</i></p> <p><i>Mi. Yeah I would do given the chance, yeah [laughs]. Honestly, that's how I can sum it up, they're my life. They've made me a better person.</i></p> <p><i>"...they just give you a different lease of life. They revitalise you, they bring something new into your life and every time I see Marc and Annie, even if I've skipped one day and seen the next day, they'll be doing something different. Marc would've learned something new, Annie</i></p>

<i>A family in bloom – the importance of attachments</i>	P5, L195	<i>would be walking um she's learned how to say nanna, you know, so it's just, they just learn so quickly um and I just take every bit of pride in them. I'd put them on the mantle piece [laughs] if they'd sit still. Yeah I would, I just, I absolutely love every bit about them. Yeah, lots of joy from them."</i>
	P6, L241	<i>"And many people that I speak to say do you find it really strange that you know, you've got this different kind of love. I wouldn't be without them. I, if I don't get to see them, I miss them terribly. Very much so."</i>
	P6, L249	<i>"Sarah (eldest daughter) and my youngest one, their bond now, and I suppose because they're getting older as well, you've not got that sister rivalry going on but their bond has, has grown immensely."</i>
	P13, L447	<i>"...it does bring you together as a family so much more and you're, like your celebrations and things like that, you know, like they're always involved in everything um oh yeah it just makes the whole family unit much stronger. In my experiences, it's just been nothing but perfect all the way through and you know, I've not had to, have to have a bad experience, thank goodness."</i>
<i>Grandmotherhood – what it will be and what it will not be</i>	P2, L83	<i>"So I have got with Marc (third grandchild, maternal) a very strong bond because I was there (at birth) and I was like one of the people to hold him so I, yeah very strong bond with Marc."</i>
	P10, L384	<i>"...I think for myself with my dad and my children, there was never that bond because he always lived away and that's what made me think I've got to make the effort, you've got to do it because you miss out on so much if you, you don't have it. So it was really important that that happened."</i>

<p><i>Independent children</i></p>	<p>P5, L216</p>	<p><i>"Yeah they are and great great grandparents. So Marc and Annie's great great grandparents, Sarah and Sian's great grandparents and my grandparents but my grandparents didn't know any of my children. Um I think the last time they saw my Carl was when he was about 3 months old. So yeah that would've been the last time I would've seen them... they only live in Surrey. It's, it's just because [sighs], it's families. Um they'd fallen out with my dad."</i></p> <p><i>"...not had to worry about split parents or anything, it's just, they're (adult children) very stable, they've got their own houses, their own lives and they, they don't rely on me."</i></p>
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M3 Michelle – Analysis write up

Michelle became a paternal grandmother at the age of 36 years. After 2 paternal grandchildren, Michelle then became a maternal grandmother to a further 2 grandchildren, the eldest of these grandchildren born before she became 40 years. At the time of interview, Michelle was 42 years of age with 3 adult children, 4 grandchildren and a 5th grandchild (paternal) due to be born the following month. Michelle was planning for her partner to move in with her imminently and was arranging their wedding for the following year. Her youngest daughter lived with her and she considered herself to be white British. Michelle worked full-time and reported a household income of £40,000 to £49,999.

Figure 1 – A family tree. Introducing family members discussed throughout Michelle's experiences of grandmotherhood

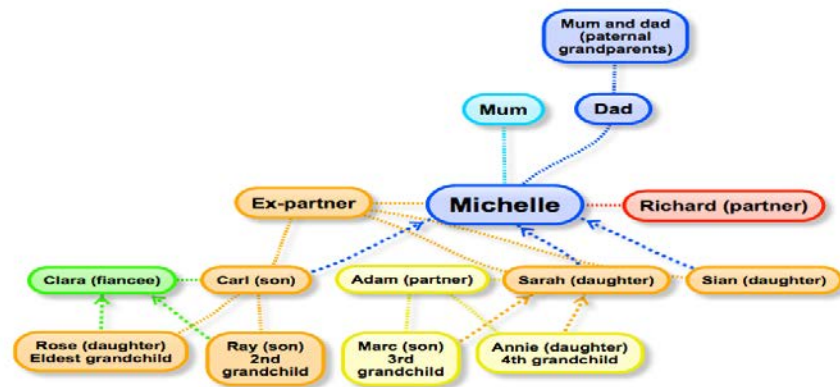


Figure 2 – A mind map illustrating Michelle's essential experiences of becoming a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section.

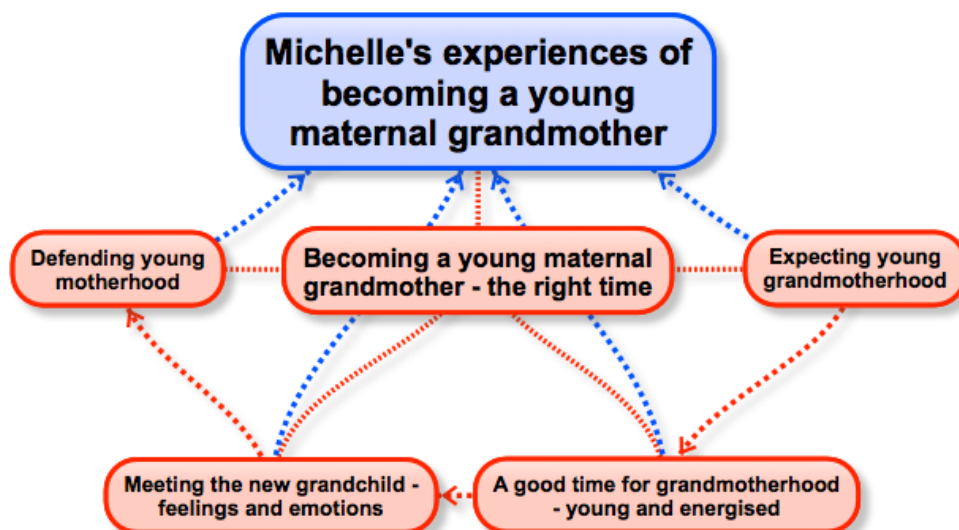
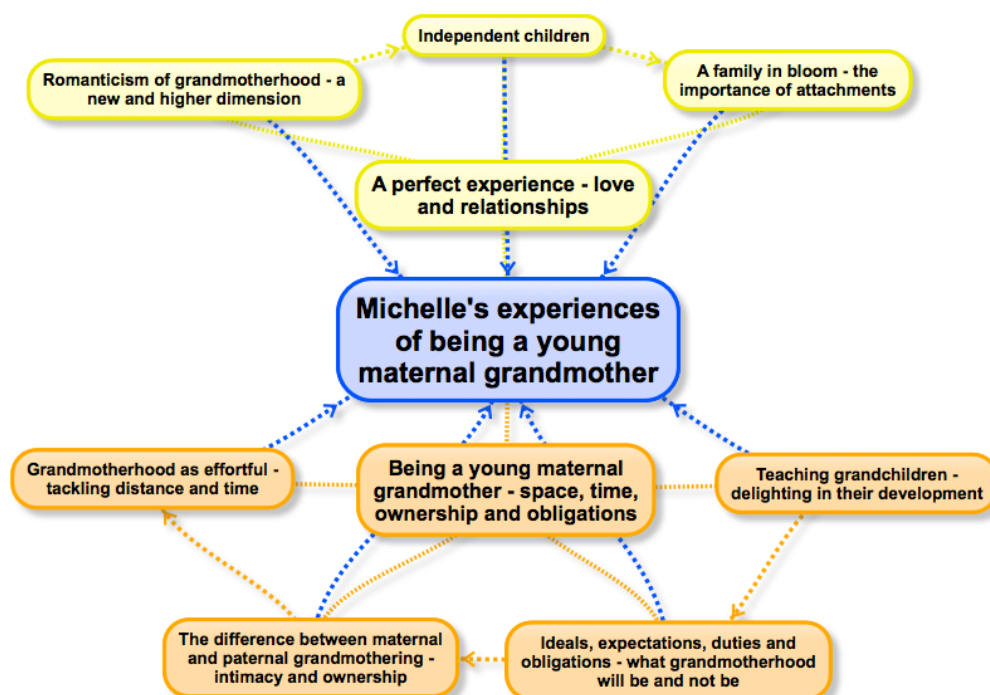


Figure 3 - A mind map illustrating Michelle's essential experiences of being a young maternal grandmother to facilitate reading of this section.



Michelle discusses when she was first told, by her son, that she was going to become a grandmother. She talks of a short-lived shock (all of ten minutes) before being consumed with excitement, joy and anticipation.

"Initially, it was kind of like, 'oh my gosh, I'm gonna be, I'm 36 and I'm gonna be a nanny' but then within sort of 10 minutes, it just kind of like, 'my god I'm gonna be a nanny' [laughs] so it was like, I had this really (.) wonderful (.) feeling about becoming a nanny, I couldn't wait and I was so excited about it so it was just such a joyful evening, about becoming a nanny..." P1, L36

Michelle **expected to be a young grandmother**, that because she had been a young mother, young grandmotherhood would be inevitable. This may partly explain her almost instantaneous acceptance; she had assumed she would be a young grandmother based on her young motherhood.

"...I always knew I was gonna be a gran, a, a nan early. I always knew I was gonna be a young grandmother. If I was younger than 36 I'd a probably been a bit concerned [laughs] but I always knew I'd be a grandma before I was 40 because I had my children so young obviously the next generation starts to come in doesn't it..." P7, L318

Michelle's use of the word 'early' suggests that her transition to grandmotherhood could be socially viewed as before the usual time. Indeed, Michelle does voice some concern at what people would think, feel and say about her young age. For her to be a young grandmother would expose her young motherhood. Michelle's embodiment within the social world has resulted in her awareness of the stigma surrounding young parentage and as a consequence, she almost feels degraded; a perception that she belongs to a group of young parents socially devalued and viewed as incompetent. This is

perhaps a worry that Michelle has lived with since her transition to motherhood and as such, champions her case without provocation. She **defends her young motherhood**, she believes she was, and still is, a good mother who has produced a strong family unit who function well within society.

"I, I was like I'm 36, how do I tell people I'm gonna be a grandma at 36, you know, they'll look at me and say, and a few people did actually, 'well you must've been really young then' and I almost felt like I was being degraded at the fact that because I was 36 and yes, because I was quite young when I had Carl (son) but we've always had a good strong family unit." P6, L274

Apart from the worries about what people may think of her age, Michelle relays that 36 years of age was **a good time for her to become a grandmother**. She is **young and energized** enough to be physically active with her grandchildren, to enjoy time with her grandchildren without being fatigued. Michelle implies that being an older grandparent corresponds to a diminishment of energy that she can enjoy as a young grandmother.

"So I wouldn't want, I wouldn't want to have had my grandchildren when I was older um I were quite content at having them at 36 and moving forward with them so I was quite happy with that because, yeah quite rightly I'd got more energy to do things with them and er but no if I'd had them older I wouldn't have any energy left." P7, L311

Michelle's son and daughter-in-law live a fair distance away from Michelle and although Michelle did not attend the birth of her first grandchild, she talks of her desperation **to meet her granddaughter for the first time**. Her granddaughter, Rose, was born 4 weeks premature and so when Michelle does meet her for the first time, Rose is in an incubator and Michelle describes the whole experience as emotional.

Photo 2 – Meeting Rose for the first time



"She (Rose) was my first grandchild who was 4 weeks premature um and this was the first time that I saw Rose and it was an extremely emotional day because you didn't actually know (.), although she was only 4 weeks premature, you don't know what's gonna happen and you've got all these, all these wires and all tubes and all these bleeps going on and stuff and the only, the only thing you could do through the incubator is put your hand in there and, and touch her little hand... But um that's the first time we saw her and it were very emotional." P8, L338

Michelle projects distress at the physical barrier of the incubator, she cannot physically connect with her baby granddaughter completely, and she can only touch her hand. The importance of this initial physical contact is further evidenced at the birth of her first maternal grandson, Marc. Michelle does attend his birth and discusses the pleasure of witnessing him being born, of being one of the first people to hold him and welcome him into the world.

Photo 3 – Holding Marc



"But um those 4 hours that I were there were fabulous. I just would not have missed it for the world and to watch him be born, you know to watch his head and his shoulders and his body, just appear, it's absolutely fab. You come out and it's like (.), 'did that really just happen? Have I just watched a baby being born?' It's just a very surreal time, a really surreal time. So I have got with Marc a very strong bond because I was there and I was like one of the people to hold him so I, yeah very strong bond with Marc." P12, L439

Michelle depicts the surrealism of Marc's birth, to watch her grandchild born, the miracle of life. Her physicality at the birth holds much significance to her, she is there in body, she perceives the birth of her grandson through her senses and she makes a new physical and emotional connection to Marc at the very start of his life.

Michelle talks of her **ideals, duties and obligations** of motherhood and grandmotherhood. She holds ideals of the spoiling grandmother and discusses how she feels the need to buy presents for her grandchildren. Michelle appears to be complying with the social expectations of grandmotherhood and how it is socially acceptable to spoil children as a grandmother but not as a mother.

"I will always come home with something for the kids. Always. Um they'll always have, I don't know, nappies or clothing or it's Easter so they've got like an Easter bag each with bits going in so I always feel that I have to get them something. So yeah they always get a little bit of something in the basket. And especially Marc, if I can take him with me, it's um whereas with my own kids, I'd say 'don't ask cause you're not getting.' Marc has only got to go 'nanny can I have this' and I melt and I go 'of course you can Marc' [laughs]. So I come out spending like £10 on Marc and I think, well ok that's £10 off my shopping bill [laughs]. So yeah it is, they're spoilt rotten. But not, they are spoilt rotten but they're, they're well loved." P5, L227

Whilst Michelle believes (from her own experiences of living within the world) it is suitable to spoil her grandchildren as their grandmother, she implies that it is not as acceptable for a mother to spoil her children; that this is where damage can be done. The fact that she spoils her grandchildren does not mean

that she is causing them any harm for this is socially acceptable behaviour as a grandmother and they are “well loved”.

Influenced by her past experiences of her own grandparents and father's grandparenting example, Michelle discusses her expectations of **what grandmotherhood will be and will not be**. Due to her grandparents and her father having distant relationships with her and her children, Michelle is determined to be an active grandmother to her own grandchildren, to give her grandchildren what she and her children never had.

“...I think for myself with my dad and my children, there was never that bond because he always lived away and that's what made me think I've got to make the effort, you've got to do it because you miss out on so much if you, you don't have it. So it was really important that that happened.” P2, L83

As a mother of adult children, she perceives her duties as supportive, that she should support her children as they experience their transitions to parenthood and beyond. Whilst she is anxious to meet her granddaughter, Rose, for the first time, Michelle is mainly concerned with being there for her son.

“That was quite difficult for me because them being up in (place name) and me being down here, it was kind of like, you felt that you, you couldn't be there to help or support or do the things that a mum should do um so it was quite difficult at the time...” P2, L55

Michelle's ideal of a supportive mother extends throughout her narrative and again, suggests the importance she applies to her physical presence. For Michelle, support means being physically present, to be a physical source of strength and comfort but also a source of expertise and knowledge. The significance of her physical presence becomes clearer when she discusses her attendance at the birth of Marc, her first maternal grandson.

“I think she (daughter) was a bit worried about, you know, things happening and then him (Adam, daughter's partner) getting worried and things like that whereas she's, with me there, I think she just felt a bit more supported and Adam as well felt supported cause I could say to him, 'no it's ok, no it's fine, it's quite normal, it's all ok', you know.” P4, L172

With her son and his family living at a distance, Michelle speaks of the effort she makes not to be a distant grandmother, both physically and emotionally. In this sense, Michelle imparts **grandmothering as effortful, tackling distance and time** in her aspirations to see and be near her son and grandchildren regularly. For Michelle, her physicality is an important part of her grandmothering. Because of the geographical distance between her and her son and grandchildren, Michelle discusses her determination to make the effort to keep the distance in her grandmother/grandchildren relationships to a minimum.

“...there was one thing that I wasn't going to do and I was gonna try, I wasn't going to be a distant grandma and just pop up once a year or anything like that, it had to be a regular thing...you had to make the effort to go up to (place name) and, and visit the grandchildren um you know and vise versa for them as well. And they're only a young couple so moneywise and things like that, to be able to travel backwards and forwards, it's, it's difficult. But we, we do have a strong relationship, we have a good bond.” P2, L65

As a result of this geographic distance, Michelle tries to make sense of **the differences between maternal and paternal grandmothering**. She admits to herself that there is a difference between grandmothering her son's children and her daughter's children. This is not so much a result of her closer proximity

to her maternal grandchildren (who do live close by) but because she feels more comfortable to do grandmothering with her daughter's children. For Michelle, her daughter-in-law has a mother who lives nearby to her and understandably is her daughter-in-law's main support. However, it is through the use of Michelle's words that a more probable reasoning for her perceived differences is illuminated.

"I can say to Sarah (daughter) 'I want to take them here, I want to take them there,' you've got, you know, and that's fine and she'll let me do that but if it was just Clara (daughter-in-law), you know, I don't, I wouldn't feel that I would have the um I'm trying to put it, I haven't got that bond with Clara because she's not mine, to be able to say 'well I want to go and do this' or 'I want to go and do that' or 'can I have her for a week' because I remember I asked to have Rose for a week and it caused so much tension."
P3, L159

Michelle feels comfortable enough to direct her maternal grandmothering because she shares an historic relationship with her daughter. They share an **intimacy**; she knows her daughter thoroughly as her daughter knows her; she gave life to her daughter and raised her with beliefs and practices that her daughter shares. The use of the word "mine" suggests that Michelle owns her daughter, that her daughter and consequently, her daughter's children are hers. This sense of **ownership** may extend to her son but not to her daughter-in-law who has her own relationship with her mother, who shares familiarities with her own mother as Michelle does with her own daughter. This is not to say that Michelle does not enjoy a good relationship with her daughter-in-law but that she feels there are tighter boundaries to comply with based upon her embodiment within the social world. For motherhood is socially constructed as a central care-giving role and for Michelle to do paternal grandmothering, she has to negotiate the less intimate relationship with her daughter-in-law and not her son.

Michelle's experiences of being a grandmother involve **teaching her grandchildren and delighting in their development**. Michelle presents a photo of her and her grandson, Marc, and explains this moment in time when she taught Marc to blow kisses.

Photo 4 – Blowing kisses



"This is Marc (third grandchild, maternal), I took him out for lunch one day and um we were having a pub meal as you do and Marc um he learned to kiss that day but kiss with his hand...Well he'd kiss on the lips and then we'd start blowing kisses cause he got a bit bored with the game after a while and

then he just found it so joyful that he could do this kiss like this. He was just, he thought it was so funny um but yeah that's how I taught him to do that that day...that was nice so he could go home and I'd say to him 'give mummy a kiss' and he'd do like this with his hand [laughs]." P13, L469

Michelle revels in her time spent with her grandchildren and being part of their lives; of seeing them grow and develop but more importantly, being able to play a part in their learning of new experiences and skills. Michelle also indicates here that whilst her grandmothering is delightful, it is also transient; that she takes her grandson home to his mother at the end of their time together.

Throughout her narrative, Michelle portrays her grandmothering as **a perfect experience**. Her **independent children** are a key contributory factor in this. Michelle appears relieved that her adult children are in stable and secure relationships, that they are self reliant and never impose too much on her as their mother and as their children's grandmother. For Michelle, this means that she can enjoy grandmotherhood comfortably and relaxingly without worry of her children and grandchildren's welfare.

"...not had to worry about split parents or anything, it's just, they're (adult children) very stable, they've got their own houses, their own lives and they, they don't rely on me...It's lovely, it's like [big sigh]" P5, L216

Michelle presents a **romanticism of grandmotherhood and a new and higher dimension** to her existence. Her love for her grandchildren is undeniable; she talks of them with a twinkle in her eye and smile on her face. Michelle frequently implies that since becoming a grandmother, her life is more fulfilled, more complete. Her grandchildren give her inner warmth that surpasses any feeling she has experienced before.

"I've learned to love. Honestly, it's um, cause sometimes you just go with your day-to-day life and things like that but these children just bring a different feeling to you and you just start to appreciate everything that you've really got. Um and as a person, for me, I always worry about what's gonna happen the next day, well I used to but now I live for the next day. I live for thinking I've got my grandchildren, I can nip over the road and I can see them and it, in, in that sense it's, it, it gives me a warmth. I've got more of a, as I'm getting older as well, I've got more of a warmth that goes on within me and it's, it's those kids (grandchildren) that have brought it to me." P6, L258

Perhaps what Michelle means when she says "*I've learned to love*" is that her grandchildren have re-awakened her zest for life, that she re-assesses her priorities in life as a result of their existence. In this sense, Michelle paints an idyllic grandmothering picture, a romance between grandmother and grandchild, a love eternal.

Michelle further relates throughout her interview of the **importance of attachments**, frequently referring to the 'bonds' she has with her children and grandchildren. This appears extremely significant to Michelle in both her mothering and grandmothering experiences. By forming and maintaining strong attachments to her children and grandchildren, she as the matriarch, experiences her expanding and evolving family strengthen in unity and relational connections, stemming from her own individual attachments to each family member and resulting in **a family in bloom**.

"Sarah (eldest daughter) and my youngest one, their bond now, and I suppose because they're getting older as well, you've not got that sister rivalry going on but their bond has, has grown immensely...it (grandmotherhood) does bring you together as a family so much more and you're, like your celebrations and things like that, you know, like they're

always involved in everything um oh yeah it just makes the whole family unit much stronger. In my experiences, it's just been nothing but perfect all the way through..." P6, L24

Reflexivity

I felt that Michelle's experiences of grandmotherhood were idyllic, that they were all that she expected to be and more. Unlike other grandmothers who had shared their experiences with me, Michelle's appeared to meet all of her expectations and ideals. Her children were in stable relationships, her own personal life was blossoming, her grandchildren were healthy and happy, and perhaps most significantly, she was an active part of their lives. Life was good for Michelle.

I pondered over the fulfillment that Michelle implied in her narration. Other grandmother's that I had interviewed also spoke of a different and better kind of love that envelops them in grandmotherhood. I did wonder whether a male researcher would interpret this as romantic or whether it was purely a result of my womanhood and motherhood, of my existence in the world as a female. Would a male perceive and interpret this experience as romantic? I was initially dubious to use the word 'romanticism' because of the social connections between romance and sexual attraction. However, after going back and forth within Michelle's analysis, I could not move away from these romantic notions. Michelle loves her grandchildren at first sight; she bonds to them, she commits to them, she shares an intimacy with them, they mean the world to her. I was listening to and reading a love story, Michelle's story of grandmotherhood, of the warmth, joy and delight that her grandchildren bring to her life, a romance between grandmother and grandchild.

Whilst Michelle was happy with the timing of her grandmotherhood, she worried about what other people would think of her age. More specifically, worrying about how people would connect her young grandmotherhood to her young motherhood. I believed this to be a result of Michelle's embodiment within the social world, where young mothers are categorized into a group, stigmatised for their 'off-timing' of motherhood and resulting in characterizations of unfit, idle and inadequate. I found myself doing exactly what Michelle was fearful of: mentally working out her age at her transition to motherhood. I wondered if this was just a natural curiosity associated with being human or if it was part of my researching process. I concluded that it was a mixture of both and therefore, found myself relating to Michelle's unprovoked justification of her mothering abilities; perhaps a practice she had developed over her time as a mother.

What is it that makes Michelle's experience of grandmothering what it is? It is the right time for Michelle, to become and be a grandmother; to be young and energized. Meeting her grandchildren for the first time and the importance of making physical and emotional connections with them. Michelle has expectations and ideals of grandmotherhood that are actualized, based on her experiences of her own parents and grandparents. From the outset, she makes the effort not to be a distant grandmother, both physically and emotionally and spurns geographical distance as a barrier to grandmotherhood. Michelle enjoys a freedom and confidence of maternal grandmothering resulting from the intimacy of her relationship with her daughter and an ownership of her daughter and her children. She acknowledges differences between maternal and paternal grandmothering, where she has less familiarity with her daughter-in-law and negotiates her grandmothering more diffidently. She receives pleasure in being a part of her grandchildren's development, of witnessing them grow and learn. Of being the centre of a family in bloom, a family strongly built with healthy relational attachments. She has no concerns about her children and grandchildren's welfare, secure and content in the knowledge of her children's independence and stability. Michelle's grandmotherhood is romantic, an

advancement to a new and higher dimension of existence, transcendence, and a perfect experience. These, I perceive from my own positioning within the world, are Michelle's essential experiences of grandmothering.

Appendix N – Demographics form

Questions:

Age group (years): Please tick your age group

under 20

20-29

30-39

40-49

50+

Gender: Please tick your gender:

Male

Female

Household composition

Please state the number and age of adults in the household

Please state the number and age of children in the household

Marital status: Please tick from selection below:

Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

Cohabiting

Country of origin:

In which country were you born?

If you were born outside the UK: When did you first arrive in the UK?

Ethnic group

To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong? Please circle the relevant number

White British	1
Any other White background	2
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3
Mixed - White and Black African	4
Mixed - White and Asian	5
Any other Mixed background	6
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	8
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	9
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background	10
Black or Black British – Black Caribbean	11
Black or Black British – Black African	12
Black or Black British - Any other Black background	13
Chinese	14
English Gypsy/Roma	15
Irish Traveller	16
Any Other	17

Household income

Please tick the income group for your household income before any deductions/expenses:

Less than <£10,000,
10,000 to 19,999,
20,000 to 29,999,
30,000 to 39,999,
40,000 to 49,999,
50,000 to 59,999,
60,000 to 69,999
70,000 to 79,999
80,000 to 89,999
90,000 to 99,000
100,000 or more

Employment status

Working full-time	1
Working part-time	2
Unemployed	3
Student (incl. pupil at school, those in training)	4
Looking after family at home	5
Long-term sick or disabled	6
Retired from paid work	7
Not in paid work for some other reason	8

Postcode

Please provide your postcode below. E.g. NN16 8RA

Communication equipment

Do you have a computer with internet access in your house?	Yes	No
Do you have a mobile phone which supports 'Apps'?	Yes	No

Mobile Phone

Is your mobile phone "pay as you go?"	Yes	No
Is your mobile phone on a contract?	Yes	No

Transport

Do you have a car?	Yes	No
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Education

Do you have any qualifications (Please tick all that apply)

from school

from college

from university

connected with work

from government schemes

No qualifications

Other (please describe these qualifications below]

Appendix O – ‘Becoming’ across cases essential experiences tables

‘BECOMING’ (1) EXPERIENCING ACCEPTANCE (OR LACK OF ACCEPTANCE) OF HER DAUGHTER’S PREGNANCY

GRANDMOTHER	READY FOR MOTHERHOOD?	(DIS)APPROVAL OF DAUGHTER’S PARTNER/BABY’S FATHER	A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE REASON FOR PREGNANCY	RE-VISITING YOUNG MOTHERHOOD
JULIE	- Creating like a child.	Talks of concern at his age and his adequacy for parenting.	No acceptable reason.	- The judgemental society – Like mother, like daughter.
NIKKI	- Concerns for an unborn grandchild – daughter still a child.	Talks of concern at his dependency on drugs.	No acceptable reason.	Talks of her own experiences of young motherhood.
NATALIE	Talks of her concerns for her young daughter’s future. Supports her daughter’s decision.	- The ‘outsider’	No acceptable reason.	- Young motherhood. Like mother, like daughter.
SARAH	Talks of her concerns for her daughter’s future plans.	Not a concern.	- Dealing with an unexpected but valid pregnancy – adaptations.	Talks of her own experiences of pregnancy and motherhood.
SAM	- Acceptance and non-acceptance at the choices made.	- ‘This person’ and ‘someone like him’. - Overstepping the mark.	No acceptable reason.	Makes comparisons to her own experiences – married and stable.
MICHELLE	Not a concern.	Not a concern.	No acceptable reason.	- Defending young motherhood.
CATHERINE	Expected her daughter would need her support because of young age.	Not a concern.	- Acceptance of daughter’s young age – a genuine reason.	Not discussed.
AMANDA	- Daughter too young for motherhood. Affecting the mother/daughter relationship.	- Who’s the father?	No acceptable reason.	Talks of her own youngness.
SIOBHAN	- Daughter’s readiness for motherhood.	Not a concern.	No acceptable reason.	- Like mother, like daughter. Continuation of ‘youngness’ in the maternal line.
TONI	- Daughter’s loss of innocence and childhood. - Not the right time.	Acceptance that he was young and still a child. Some reference to taking her daughter’s innocence.	No acceptable reason.	- “I should’ve known better”. Like mother, like daughter.

'BECOMING' (2) EXPERIENCING ACCEPTANCE (OR LACK OF ACCEPTANCE) OF HER GRANDMOTHERHOOD

GRANDMOTHER	CHOOSING A NAME TO IDENTIFY AS GRANDMOTHER	GAINS, LOSSES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	READY FOR GRANDMOTHERHOOD?	FROM STRANGE TO REAL
JULIE	Nan.	- Creating like a child. Re-evaluating daughter and their relationship.	- Actively parenting. Prioritising and juggling responsibilities. - Difficulties in understanding and accepting transition to grandmotherhood	Talks about birth with little emotion.
NIKKI	Nanna.	- Preparing for a grandchild. Buying baby stuff. Supports her daughter who is still a child. Tensions mount during pregnancy.	- Preparing for a grandchild. Grandmothering ideals. - Grandmothers are old	Amazing. Would take the pain away from daughter if she could have.
NATALIE	- The 'strangeness' of becoming a young grandmother. Deciding on a name. (Nanny)	Her daughter moves back in with her. Present at the birth. Closeness and support.	- Awareness of own reproductive age	Fantastic. - Love at first sight. Romanticism of grandmotherhood.
SARAH	- Too young to be called 'nanny'. (Mamma)	- A new experience, new technologies. - A mother's love	- Awareness of own reproductive age	- It all becomes real with the safe arrival.
SAM	Nanny.	- An empty purse. The financial impact. Conflict over pregnancy and partner.	- The positives of being a young grandmother.	Conflict resulted in not being present at the birth.
MICHELLE	Nanny.	Supportive.	- A good time for grandmotherhood – young and energised - Expecting young grandmotherhood	- Meeting the new grandchild. Feelings and emotions.
CATHERINE	Nanna.	- Excitement followed by practicalities. - A welcome distraction – gains and losses.	Expected to be greatly involved as a supportive mother.	- Mother's and grandmother's pride. Look at this big baby, look at my grandson.

AMANDA	Nanna.	<p>- Interfering with lifestyle. A loss of lifestyle</p> <p>Acceptance towards end of pregnancy – conflict prior to this.</p>	<p>- I can't be a nanna, I'm only 34 years old</p> <p>Expected grandmotherhood would make her look older.</p>	A phenomenal experience (picture).
SIOBHAN	Granny.	Present at the birth.	- The 'niceness' of young grandmotherhood.	- Support, expertise and sign of the times. Attending the births.
TONI	Nanna.	<p>- Shock followed by practicalities. Preparing for a baby.</p>	<p>- A forced hand. Having to take responsibility.</p> <p>- Not the right time.</p>	- Dissolution of doubts and beliefs. It all becomes real at the birth.

Appendix P – ‘Being’ across cases essential experiences tables

‘BEING’ (1) DISTANCE, TIME, PLACES AND SPACE OF GRANDMOTHERHOOD

GRANDMOTHER	BEING A MOTHER AGAIN	(UN)CONFLICTED BY DISTANCE AND TIME	GRANDCHILD CARE AND TIME	ACCOMMODATING GRANDCHILDREN – PLACES, SPACES AND THINGS
JULIE	- Doing motherhood – a new territory	- Geographic distance as an emotional protector	N/A	N/A
NIKKI	- Doing Mam again but not the ‘tummy mummy’	Granddaughter living with her	N/A	N/A
NATALIE	- Just the 3 of us – reliving and re-constructing motherhood	All the family geographically close to each other	- Doing Nanny things	- There’s no place like Nanny’s home... - Symbolisations of relationships
SARAH	- A second chance - Working around children again	Living very close to each other	Enjoys quality time – handing back	- Grandchildren have their own bedroom - Photo of 3 grandchildren
SAM	N/A	N/A	- Life changes but it doesn’t	- Photo of grandchildren
MICHELLE	N/A	- Grandmothering as effortful (tackling time and distance)	Enjoys quality time – handing back - Teaching grandchildren (delighting in their development)	N/A
CATHERINE	N/A	Living close to each other	Enjoys quality time – handing back	- “I think about him and everything just goes away.” In presence and in absence
AMANDA	- Behaving and feeling like a mother (one of my own kids)	5 Generations of maternal line living close to each other	Enjoys quality time – handing back	- Grandchildren photos all around living room
SIOBHAN	N/A	- Living across the road (geographic and emotional closeness)	- Taking the best bits (fun, love and freedom of choice)	N/A
TONI	- Almost a mother again (another little person)	- “I can’t help not being there.” Conflicted by time and distance	- Photo – spoiling with time	- Photos – playing games & knitting - Photos – bowl & empty bedroom

'BEING' (2) GRANDMOTHERHOOD IN THE SOCIAL WORLD

GRANDMOTHER	DOING OR NOT DOING WHAT GRANDMOTHER'S DO	BEING A 'GOOD' MOTHER AND 'GOOD' GRANDMOTHER	THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF A SUPPORTIVE PARTNER	THE GATEKEEPERS TO GRANDMOTHERHOOD
JULIE	Talks of her perceptions of gendered roles and obligations. - The empowered and disempowered grandmother	Stepping in to temporarily care for grandchildren	Husband as main source of support – particularly with grandchild care	- The empowered and disempowered grandmother
NIKKI	- Grieving the loss of grandmotherhood	- The powerless protector. Grappling a faulty system - Giving up work, income and leisure time	Estranged husband supports her grandchild custodial care daily	- The powerless protector. Grappling a faulty system
NATALIE	- Doing 'Nanny' things Work gets in the way	- The backbone of the family. In sickness and in health	In the absence of a partner, her parents are a main source of support	N/A
SARAH	- The rule breaker - It's just the way of life. Working around children again Work gets in the way	- The dutiful grandmother	Her husband partakes in babysitting - The dutiful grandmother (and step-grandfather)	N/A
SAM	- Doing grandmothering by text - What grandmothering could be...	N/A	Her partner helps with financial impact	- The gatekeepers to grandmothering. Giving and taking away
MICHELLE	- Teaching grandchildren Works full time	- Duties and obligations	Not discussed	- The differences between maternal and paternal grandmothering
CATHERINE	- Doing what grandmother's do. Showcasing grandson	- A name forever, a tattoo forever, a grandmother forever	New relationship - Mutual approvals and new beginnings	N/A
AMANDA	- Not acting like a grandmother. Climbing trees and racing	N/A	Her wife helps with grandchild care	- Intricacies of a 5 generation maternal line. Who does what?
SIOBHAN	- Energised and fit. The positives of 'youngness' Not constrained by work commitments	- The 'good' mother and the 'good' grandmother	- Valuing long term and stable relationships – shared values	N/A
TONI	- Acting like grandmother - Differences in life projects	Distance as a perceived barrier	Not discussed	- The challenge from step-grandparents – feelings of jealousy and guilt

'BEING' (3) OWNING AND ROMANCING THE GRANDCHILD, EXPERIENCES OF CONNECTEDNESS AND DISCONNECTEDNESS

GRANDMOTHER	TAKING OWNERSHIP OF GRANDCHILDREN	A LOVE STORY (ROMANTICISM OF GRANDMOTHERHOOD)	CONNECTEDNESS AND DISCONNECTEDNESS
JULIE	Takes temporary care of her eldest 2 grandchildren	N/A	Ambivalence - Ambivalent attachments. Restrictions and rejections of doing grandmotherhood
NIKKI	Takes on full care of granddaughter	- An ultimate love	Alienated from daughter. Together with her granddaughter - The evil daughter. Eradicating the problem - The depersonalized and anonymised 2nd grandchild
NATALIE	- My 3 girls	- Love at first sight. Romanticism of grandmotherhood	- Closeness of 4 maternal generations. 'We' as a collective.
SARAH	Grandchildren are hers and she breaks the rules with them	It is everything.	- Continuation of family values and traditions. From me to them - A whole family effort - 1st generation at the core. The start of everything
SAM	2 grandsons are hers even if they are strangers	Total adoration for her grandchildren even when she has never met her 2 nd grandchild	Alienated - Feelings of alienation. The broken link (image) - Grandchildren as strangers. Missing out
MICHELLE	- Intimacy and ownership	- Romanticism of grandmotherhood. A new and higher dimension	- A family in bloom - Teaching grandchildren (delighting in their development) - the importance of attachments
CATHERINE	- A mother's and grandmother's ownership	Photo – smiley face	- Sounding like my mother - From where it all started. A personal achievement - Strengthening mother/daughter relationship. Supporting and needing each other
AMANDA	Photo – 'My' baby	Adoration for her grandchildren. They are like her own children	- Looking like their mums - 5 generations of the maternal line living within close distance of each other - Doing mother, strained relationships. Doing grandmother, improved relationships
SIOBHAN	N/A	Adoration – fun and love	- Family history and the maternal lineage - Shared values. Valuing long term relationship - Together and belonging. "That's what it's all about"
TONI	N/A	Adoration – devotes her time to granddaughter because of infrequency due to distance	- The meaning of life and continuation of family. Reassurance and security

