Talking to Ten Year Olds about Puberty, Relationships and Reproduction: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Fathers' Perceptions and Practices.

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Advanced Healthcare Practice

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Summary

This thesis employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore eight fathers' perceptions and practices in talking to their ten year old children about puberty, relationships and reproduction. Eight fathers, of four girls and four boys respectively, participated in face to face interviews which were analysed idiographically initially, followed by analysis at the group level. Interpretations were then developed through synthesis of the findings with the wider literature and through critical application of a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower.

The results revealed a tension between the fathers' cognitions, accounts and behaviours. Their practices were largely characterised by silence yet they reported positive attitudes towards children's sexuality education and perceived themselves as equipped and willing to take on the role of sexuality educator. They also reported enjoying open relationships with their children.

Interpretations centred on contradictions and conflict between the majority of the fathers' aspirations and the compelling nature of the childhood innocence discourse as a technology of governmentality. Whilst all of the fathers felt that it was in their children's interests to learn about sexuality, all but one adhered to hegemonic protective discourses and unquestioningly integrated their normalising effects into their fathering practices. In keeping with neoliberalist values, the fathers wished to minimise risk which they managed, paradoxically, by suppressing sexuality dialogue. A contradiction between cultural expectations and the conduct of fathering also emerged for seven of the eight fathers which appeared to relate to masculinities, gender ideologies and primary socialisation.

This study has surfaced the power of subtle coercions of neoliberalist governmentality and the childhood innocence ideal in influencing fatherhood practices. However, by continuing the silence that largely characterises father-child sexuality communication, fathers are paradoxically potentially rendering their children more vulnerable both now and in the future. It is, therefore, essential that protective discourses are challenged and fathers are supported in talking to their children about sexuality in its broadest sense.

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Advanced Healthcare Practice.

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This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

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Abbreviations

ACASI	Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SRE	Sex and Relationships Education
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection

PART ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. It commences with a discussion of how the question for the study emerged, it gives a rationale for the research, it delineates its aims and objectives and it introduces its approach. It concludes by providing an overview of the structure of the thesis and a synopsis of each section.

1.1 The lived experience: a catalyst for enquiry

The "incubation period" for this thesis has been lengthy; just under forty years. It began when I was a young child, observing the world around me. Observations of families locked in silence, awkwardness and hurt. The angst that I observed was caused by unintended teenage pregnancy. My parents provided temporary accommodation for teenage girls who were pregnant and had become estranged from their families. Whilst I was a little intrigued by the girls and their growing tummies, I was struck more by the responses of adults towards them. Their hushed whispers and general awkwardness, along with a persistent silence on the part of the girls' parents, was thoroughly baffling to me as a six year old.

My observation of how sex seemingly had the power to silence adults continued through conversations with my peers in the playground. For example, when I was still age six several of my friends had younger siblings "on the way" and wanted to know where the baby had come from. However, their parents seemed unable to answer their questions. At this stage I too had a sibling "on his way". I knew exactly how babies were made; I also knew about menstruation, physical maturation and relationships. I wanted to know and so my mum had told me. I thought that this was "normal", but apparently not. I was utterly puzzled as to why adults seemed to find these conversations so difficult.

My confusion continued through adolescence with the majority of my friends' parents appearing to become mute when issues around sex and relationships arose. However, my perspective broadened on becoming a nurse specialising in sexual health. I have many stories that informed my choice of research topic but one in particular stands out. One afternoon, in the same clinic session, two twelve year old girls attended separately. One attended seeking a pregnancy test because she had deep kissed and thought that deep kissing was sex. The other attended because she had established genital herpes; she did not know that what she had was

herpes but more significantly she did not know that she had engaged in “sex”. She knew she did not like what the man was doing to her but she was not sure if that was what sex was. When I spoke to each of these girls it became apparent that their parents had never talked to them about sex and the information that they had received at school had seemed abstract and they were unable to apply it to their own worlds. An apparent lack of effective communication between adults and young people around sexual health characterised much of what I saw in the young people’s sexual health clinics.

On becoming a mother this theme re-emerged but this time from the parents’ perspective. When I started to mix with other parents at playgroups and later in the school playground, I found that once parents became aware that I had worked in the field of HIV and sexual health they would frequently confide their bewilderment regarding how to go about talking to their children about their bodies, relationships and reproduction. This theme has continued as my social circles changed to include parents of adolescents. Indeed throughout the lifetime of this thesis when I have discussed its focus with parents, it has acted as a catalyst for the majority in expressing their feelings of inadequacy in discussing sex and relationships with their adolescents.

Thus, the initial drive for this study was personal, this broadened to the professional and returned to the personal through my social encounters with parents. It took me a while to get to the point of realising that the focus of this study would be parental experiences and, more specifically fathers’ experiences, as I outline below. However, throughout the course of my doctoral studies I became cognisant of a body of literature and simultaneously a dearth of literature that supported the need for this study. Increasingly, the sexual health literature was emphasising the primacy of parents in influencing their adolescents’ sexual decision making (Campero et al. 2011, Nagamatsu et al. 2008, Ogle et al. 2008, Widman et al. 2006, Huebner and Howell 2003, Miller et al. 2001, Lehr et al. 2000, Somers and Paulson 2000). However, whilst there was a growing body of literature which examined parent-adolescent sexuality communication there was a significant paucity of literature which specifically examined parents’ experiences of early sexuality communication during their children’s formative, primary school years. The few studies that existed suggested that parents struggle in fulfilling this role (Stone et al. 2015a, Stone et al. 2015b, Stone et al. 2013, Davies and Robinson 2010, Ballard and Gross 2009, Frankham 2006, Geasler et al. 1995), in the same way that they appeared to when I was growing up in the 1970s, however, there was a very limited body of

research which explored parents' experiences in any depth. Thus, I came to the realisation that this was an area worthy of further investigation.

1.2 The emergence of a research question

My clinical work, as a nurse in sexual health, illuminated two key issues that were of significant concern to me. First, a disproportionate number of my patients were young people and second, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy appeared to significantly compromise the physical, psychological and social well-being of many of the individuals I nursed. The literature supported my observations, indeed, throughout England young people are increasingly engaging in first intercourse at an earlier age than previous generations (World Health Organization 2012) and they also have more concurrent sexual partners (Public Health England 2015a, Health Protection Agency 2012). Consequently, sixteen to twenty four year olds account for higher rates of STIs and unintended pregnancy than any other segment of the population (Public Health England 2014) and total numbers of STI diagnoses have risen considerably in the last ten years within this age group (Public Health England 2015b). In England, although sixteen to twenty four year olds represent only 12% of the population, they account for over 50% of the country's STI diagnoses (Public Health England 2015a, Health Protection Agency 2012). Indeed, in 2014 63% of chlamydia diagnoses, 55% of gonorrhoea diagnoses, 52% of genital wart diagnoses and 42% of genital herpes diagnoses amongst heterosexuals in England were attributed to young people aged fifteen to twenty four years (Public Health England 2015a).

As I observed in clinical practice, the physical and psycho-social ramifications of STIs are very significant both for the individual and society as a whole. Physically, STIs such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea can lead to infertility; syphilis can cause blindness, deafness, loss of muscle control, seizures and dementia; Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is associated with significant morbidity and mortality and certain strains of human papillomavirus are associated with various cancers (Shepherd et al. 2010). STIs in pregnant women can lead to miscarriage, pre-term birth, stillbirth and neonatal complications such as serious eye infections, pneumonia, systemic disease and physical deformity and HIV can be transmitted from mother to baby (Shepherd et al. 2010). The diagnosis of a STI also commonly leads to negative emotional and psychosocial consequences (Nack 2008), feelings of anger and embarrassment

(Royer and Cerf 2009) and anxiety regarding the impact of the STI on current and future relationships (Melville et al. 2003).

Early sexual debut is also associated with unintended pregnancy (Wellings et al. 2013). Although the under eighteen conception rate for England and Wales has continued to fall over recent years, with the most current data suggesting that rates are at their lowest since records began in 1969 at 24.5 conceptions per thousand in 2013 (Office for National Statistics 2015), the rate remains higher than in comparable Western European countries (Public Health England 2015b). Thus, although conception rates amongst young people are lower than they were prior to the turn of the millennium, they remain a concern for policy makers (Public Health England 2015b) since young women in westernised cultures who have a baby during adolescence commonly experience a number of challenges such as abandonment by parents, difficulties in completing their education and economic hardships (Department of Health 2004, Kosunen et al. 2002). Furthermore, children of adolescent parents are more likely to experience lower educational attainment and economic hardship and females are more likely to become teenage mothers themselves (Department of Health 2004).

Thus, my clinical problematisation of the field was supported and extended through reference to the wider literature and epidemiological data. However, a review of successive British governments' policy initiatives which have advocated sexual health promotion as a key priority throughout the last two decades (Department of Health 2013, 2010, 2008, 2000, 1998, 1993, 1992) coupled with systematic reviews, such as those by Lazarus et al. (2010), Owen et al. (2010), Shepherd et al. (2010) and DiCenso et al. (2002) which question the effectiveness of such policy led interventions problematized the field further. In the UK, we have historically relied upon the education system to provide young people with sex and relationships education (SRE) as discussed in Chapter Three, whereas other countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden, where teenage pregnancy and STI rates are comparatively low, compliment formalised intervention programmes with open communication regarding sex in the home (de Looze et al. 2015, Lewis and Knijn 2001). In the UK sixteen to nineteen year olds identify school as their main source of sexual health information, but the literature suggests that girls would prefer their parents to be their primary source of information and boys rank parents a very close second to schools (Macdowall et al. 2006).

Closer reading of the evaluative literature and a small study of my own (Bennett et al. 2015) suggested that the majority of sexual health promotion interventions have been "administered" in isolation, for example standalone sessions on STI awareness, often ignoring

the wider contexts in which young people operate. My critiquing of historical approaches to sexual health promotion coincided with the publication of 'A Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England' (Department of Health 2013) which promotes preventative interventions for young people which build self-efficacy through addressing self-confidence. This was reflective of a body of work which presents self-efficacy as a factor that correlates with decision-making and behavioural outcomes related to sexual health in young people (Thirlaway and Upton 2009). This led me to consider the various systems that young people operate within that contribute, or otherwise, to the development of self-efficacy.

The growing body of literature that emphasises the primacy of parents in influencing their adolescents' sexual decision making (see section 1.1) led me to consider the role of the family in this regard. Although there is some research that questions the existence of a protective relationship between parental openness and adolescent sexual decision making (Downing et al. 2011) and several papers have methodological and theoretical limitations (Akers et al. 2011, Downing et al. 2011, Lazarus et al. 2010), the general consensus is that parents shape their children's attitudes towards sex and their sexual behaviours and communication about sex early in life is a significant protective determinant of sexual risk-taking behaviour during adolescence (Novilla et al. 2006, Pike 2006, DiIorio et al. 2002). Indeed, in the UK, Stone and Ingham (2002) found that perceived parental warmth and availability throughout the primary school and teenage years was a predictor of future safer sexual behaviour. In addition, open communication regarding sexuality appeared to positively impact on young people's competence and confidence. Conversely, a lack of openness and embarrassment was associated with less effective contraceptive use.

However, whilst I identified an increasing body of literature which examines parent-adolescent sexuality communication, I found a significant paucity of literature exploring parental involvement in sexuality communication during their children's pre-teen years. In view of Stone and Ingham's (2002) findings, this was perceived to be problematic since early communication is a precursor to subsequent communication during adolescence. In identifying whether there was a "need" for early sexuality communication between parents and their children, as I have outlined in Chapter Two, a review of the literature suggested that sexuality is an integral part of children's thinking. For example, Goldman and Goldman (1982) found that children continually observe aspects of sex and sexuality in their daily lives and seek to understand and integrate their perceptions into their personal schema. Similarly, Best (1983) identified that sexual thinking is present in the world of young children and, more

recently, Renold (2013, 2005) has identified the salience of sexuality in children's perceptions of being “girls” and “boys” and becoming young “men” and “women”.

Thus, the limited research in the field suggests that a child's sexuality is very much present in both their perceptions of themselves and the world around them. However, as outlined in Chapter Two, a further review of the literature identified that only a small number of studies have examined parents’ practices and perceptions of sexuality communication with their children and findings suggest that parents largely struggle to meet their children’s needs in this regard. Thus an interest and justification for this area of research was established. It was stimulated further by performing a Derridean deconstruction of a discussion thread of an online parenting forum, Mumsnet, in which mothers shared their experiences of responding to their daughters’ menarche (Bennett and Harden 2014 - Appendix One). The deconstruction revealed significant tensions in mother-daughter, father-daughter, mother-father and brother-sister communication about menstruation with imbalances in power characterising much of the language. This, in addition to the deficits in the literature, left me wanting to know more about family communication relating to puberty, reproduction and relationships.

The justification for the focus of this study was, therefore, multi-layered. Adolescent sexual activity was problematized by arguing that it is associated with sexual risk taking and an associated high incidence of STI and unplanned pregnancy which can be detrimental to the individual and wider society. It was also highlighted that systematic reviews have questioned the efficacy of policy-led interventions and traditional approaches to sex education. An alternative perspective that suggests a relationship between parental openness and young people’s sexual decision making was then focused upon. In relation to parent-child communication, which is the precursor to parent-adolescent communication, the small amount of literature that has been published internationally suggests that children think about sex and sexuality but parents struggle with early sexuality communication. However, there is a significant paucity of detailed exploration of parents’ experiences and practices of engaging in sexuality communication to inform decisions regarding the need or otherwise for supportive interventions for parents. Thus, the focus of the study became clear and the following overarching research question was identified:

> ‘What are the perceptions and practices of parents in educating their children about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships?’

1.3 Refining the question

Whilst the overarching question delineated the general direction of the study, in order to operationalise it and to ensure that a common language was being used between me, my participants, supervisors and readers it was necessary to define and justify key concepts. In addition, as the research process progressed it became apparent that it was not possible to do justice to both the voices of mothers and fathers in this study and a decision had to be made as to who should be the focus of the enquiry. Thus concepts were clarified and the research question was refined, as outlined below.

1.3.1 Conceptual clarification

1.3.1.1 Sexuality, growing up or facts of life?

Within the literature and everyday discourses various phrases that encapsulate "physical maturation, reproduction and relationships" are used interchangeably. Although it is acknowledged that the term "sexuality" is frequently understood to be concerned only with sexual orientation, its meaning is much wider than this in that it refers to our perceptions and expressions of ourselves as sexual beings. It also extends to relationships and the way in which people are defined, by others and by themselves, as sexual (Jackson and Scott 2010). In addition, it encompasses a range of behaviours, actions and social-interactions (Mason and Woolley 2011). The literature refers to "sexuality education" and "sexuality communication" when considering physical maturation, reproduction and relationships and this term has, therefore, been adopted in the writing of this thesis.

However, such terminology proved problematic when speaking to parents. Prior to carrying out data collection I discussed my terminology with my supervisory team and some of the parents that I referred to in section 1.1. I also carried out a practice interview with a father of a ten year old and an eleven year old. I found that the term "sexuality" caused confusion because it was assumed to refer exclusively to sexual orientation. Terms such as "growing up" and "facts of life" were suggested as alternatives but the use of such terms led to narrow discussions around children's understanding of coitus and did not capture the broader issues around how the family communicated about children's changing or potentially changing bodies, how babies are made and different types of relationships. Umbrella terms were, therefore, avoided in my discussions with parents. The term "puberty" was used interchangeably with "physical maturation" to refer to the stage of development during which

a child's body matures and becomes capable of reproduction. "Reproduction" was used to refer to procreation or how babies are made, sexually or non-sexually and the term "relationships" was used in its broadest sense to refer to how people regard and behave towards each other. At the beginning of each interview these terms were defined and clarified with the participant.

In relation to my theoretical position, there are two competing standpoints concerning the nature of sexuality. Essentialist theories assert that sexuality is largely fixed, innate, instinctual and biologically driven where as social constructionist theories present sexuality as malleable and shaped by cultural norms, history and socialisation (Wellings 2012). This thesis aligns itself with the latter perspective because it has greater empirical support. In brief, examples of such studies include Ford and Beach's (1951) seminal cross-cultural survey of sexuality which illuminated significantly different sexual customs from one society to another, Gagnon and Simon's (1973) identification of the role of scripting theory in organising human sexual behaviour, Laumann et al.'s (1994) thesis which asserted that sexual behaviours may be driven by emotional and social goals and network theory and Sprecher and McKinney's (1993) research which emphasised the social nature of sexual relationships. In addition, Foucault's history of sexuality (1978) adds further support to the social constructivist perspective in emphasising the roles of history, power and economic, social and political structures in shaping the notion of sexuality. In relation to the current study, the relative recency of this work is significant since the participants who were interviewed for this study were born in the late 1960's to early 1970's which suggests that their sexual socialisation may have been influenced by a fusion of essentialist and social constructionist societal beliefs. This observation proved to be relevant to the interpretations of the findings of this study as I outline in Chapter Six.

1.3.1.2 Mothers, fathers or both?

At the outset, I was very keen to recruit fathers to this study because they were significantly under-represented in the literature. However, because studies of this type are notoriously difficult to recruit to (Martin and Torres 2014, Lefkowitz 2002), I decided to advertise the study to both mothers and fathers of children aged seven to eleven years. Mothers and fathers were defined as a biological and/or social female or male carer for a child aged seven to eleven. Whilst I advertised through venues that would attract both mothers and fathers I also purposely advertised through venues which were more likely to have a male presence such as football, rugby and cricket clubs and the Scout Association, in order to overcome the lack of

male participation that is characteristic of the international literature. Participants were recruited between April and June 2014 and, to my surprise, eight mothers and eight fathers volunteered to participate in the study. In my naivety, and as a novice to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which was the chosen methodology for this study, I accepted all volunteers as I was anxious that some may drop out, leaving me with an insufficient sample. However, nobody withdrew and I interviewed all volunteers individually, either in their own home or place of employment.

At the point of data analysis I realised that over-recruitment was a mistake since I could not analyse the data in sufficient depth to do it justice within the word and time constraints of a thesis of this nature. Thus, after discussions with my supervisory team and Cardiff University's School of Healthcare Sciences Research Ethics Committee, it was decided that the fathers' data should be the focus of this study since they are significantly under-represented in the literature and they represent a hard-to-reach group. However, the mothers' voices will still be heard since their data has been kept securely and will be analysed and written up within the six months following submission of this thesis.

1.3.1.3 Teenagers, tweenagers, or children?

As the title of this thesis indicates, this study focused on fathers of ten year old children. The rationale for this was both empirically and pragmatically driven. The empirical drive surfaced from a cycle of literature reviews and reflections on these, as outlined in section 1.2, which stimulated an interest in the experiences of parents in discussing sexuality with their pre-adolescent children. As illustrated in Chapter Two, there is a paucity of UK literature in this field and the research that has been carried out has focused on parents of very young children, aged three to seven years. Thus a gap was identified in the literature concerning the experiences of parents in communicating about sexuality with children who are in Key Stage Two of the UK education system, that is, children aged seven to eleven years.

Instead of arbitrarily deciding upon a particular age group within this band, I decided to be pragmatic in order to overcome the potential recruitment issues discussed in section 1.3.1.2. I, therefore, advertised the study to parents of children aged seven to eleven years at various venues across the Midlands. Without exception, all of those who responded were parents of children who were ten years old; thus the sample was established. Since the responses to the advert were so age specific, it appeared that there was something special about this particular

age group which motivated parents to respond. Throughout the study the children have, therefore, been referred to specifically by age rather than broad bands such as “tweenagers”, “pre-teens” or “pre-adolescents” in order to reflect the specific qualities of this stage of development that prompted parents to volunteer to participate in this study.

1.4 The study

1.4.1 Aims and objectives

The research question for this thesis evolved to become:

> ‘What are the perceptions and practices of fathers in educating their ten year old children about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships?’

Accordingly, the aims and objectives were developed to shift from their original form which pertained to “parents” to specifically refer to “fathers” and a specific age of child was referred to. The aims were, therefore, to:

1. develop a critical understanding of the practices of fathers in engaging in sexuality communication with their ten year old children.
2. surface the perceptions of fathers concerning their role in engaging in sexuality education with their ten year old children.
3. reveal fathers’ attitudes towards children’s sexuality education.

The objectives were to:

1. provide a critique of the current body of literature pertaining to fathers’ experiences, practices and attitudes regarding their role as sexuality educators.
2. interview fathers about their experiences, practices and attitudes regarding their child(ren)’s sexuality education.
3. critically analyse and synthesise the findings from the literature and qualitative interviews through a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower.
4. disseminate the learning that emerges from this study to parents, policy makers, teachers and health and care professionals.

1.4.2 Approach

This study employed IPA, however originally an exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011), which involved the study that is being reported on in this

thesis plus a large scale survey, was proposed. However, scientific review suggested that the study lacked methodological congruence and was too ambitious to be completed by a novice researcher working alone. I am very grateful for the advice given; I now understand that the approach was indefensible in that the survey would have offered very little to my understanding of parents' experiences in this field and it may have compromised the quality of the IPA study due to the demands of the design coupled with the time constraints of a doctoral study.

IPA was, therefore, used as both a methodology and a method throughout the study. Participants were recruited between April and June 2014. In keeping with IPA, I carried out face-to-face interviews with eight fathers individually, either in their own home or place of employment. Interviews took place in June and July 2014 and lasted between thirty and seventy two minutes. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed in keeping with Smith et al.'s (2009) guidance.

The School of Healthcare Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University granted approval for this study in March 2014. Confirmation of approvals is provided in Appendix Two. The study has adhered to the approved proposal throughout. Data collection took place in England, therefore, wherever possible English health policy and literature has been referred to throughout the study.

1.5 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part consists of four chapters and sets the scene for the study by providing the structural and theoretical context. Part Two is concerned with the fathers' experiences idiographically and at the group level. Part Three discusses the fathers' experiences in the wider context of theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the final part of the thesis, Part Four, provides an evaluation of the study and makes recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the study within the existing knowledge base. The chapter begins with a detailed description of the search strategies employed. The most salient themes that arose within the current body of literature are then explored and critiqued and gaps in the literature are identified. Finally a justification for the study is presented.

2.1 Scope of review

2.1.1 Aims and objectives

This literature review aimed to appraise the current body of literature pertaining to the following research question:

> 'What are the perceptions and practices of fathers in educating their ten year old children about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships?'

The objectives of the review were to evaluate the current body of knowledge relating to:

1. the practices of fathers in engaging in sexuality communication with their primary school aged children.
2. the perceptions of fathers concerning their role in engaging in sexuality communication with their primary school aged children.
3. fathers' attitudes towards children's sexuality education.

However, a scoping review identified a very low yield when the search was restricted to fathers only. The objectives of the review were therefore expanded to consider the current body of knowledge pertaining to both mothers' and fathers' practices, perceptions and attitudes as detailed below.

2.1.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for the literature review were as follows:

Types of participants

This review considered parents who have participated in research studies concerning their perceptions and practices of imparting sex education to their children. Parents were defined as a biological and/or social female or male carer for the children discussed in the studies. For

the purposes of this study review, children were defined as males or females age eleven years or under.

Phenomenon of interest

There were three phenomena of interest:

1. the practices of parents in engaging in sexuality communication with their primary school aged children.
2. the perceptions of parents concerning their role in engaging in sexuality communication with their primary school aged children.
3. parents' attitudes towards children's sexuality education.

Context

This review considered studies which focused on the family context internationally due to the paucity of UK literature.

Types of studies

The literature review considered studies that focused on qualitative data including, but not limited to, designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, action research, discourse analysis and feminist research. This review also considered studies that were quantitative in nature and those that employed mixed methods. Publications were included if they related to one or more of the phenomena of interest.

Exclusion criteria

Studies were excluded if they focused on:

- family members other than parents.
- education imparted in settings outside of the family context.
- parent-imparted education about health issues that do not relate to sexuality.
- parent-imparted normative beliefs about issues that do not relate to sexuality.

Studies were also excluded if they were published prior to 1980 because of the significant societal changes that have occurred since this time, as outlined in Chapter Three. Reviewed material was limited to English language only.

2.2 Search strategy

A rigorous search strategy was employed for this literature review in order to reduce the risks of error and bias. Table 2.1 summarises how search terms were identified and tables 2.2 to 2.4 detail the initial search terms used.

Table 2.1 Identification of search terms (Salmond 2012, Pearson et al. 2007, Glasziou et al. 2001).

Step 1:	Initial scoping search of ASSIA and CINAHL using keywords: experienc*, parent*, child*, communicat* and sex*.
Step 2:	Title, abstract and index terms of each article yielded studied to identify search terms.
Step 3:	Research objectives broken down into component parts using a Venn diagram to identify synonyms and to identify Boolean connectors.
Step 4:	Alternative spellings of the same word, truncations and wild card symbols applied.

Table 2.2 Identification of search terms for Objective 1.

Question part	Question term	Search terms
Perspective	Parents	parent*, mother, father, m*m, dad, care giver, family Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1	Communication	educat*, communicat*, dialogue, convers*, talk* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 2	Children	child*, son, daughter Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 3	Sexuality	sex*, relation*, pubert*, pregnan*, menarche, menstruat*, reproduc* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1-3	Engaging in sexuality communication with their children	Boolean connector 'AND' for intervention variables 1-3
Evaluation	Practices	experience*, practice, feel*, view, opinion, assess*, evaluat*, observ* Boolean connector 'OR'
Search string: (parent* OR mother OR father OR care giver OR family OR m*m OR dad) AND (educat* OR communicat* OR dialogue OR convers* OR talk*) AND (child* OR son OR daughter) AND (sex* OR relation* OR puberty* OR pregnan* OR menarche OR menstruat* OR reproduce*) AND (experience* OR practice OR feel* OR view OR opinion OR assess* OR evaluat* OR observ*)		

Table 2.3 Identification of search terms for Objective 2.

Question part	Question term	Search terms
Perspective	Parents	parent*, mother, father, m*m, dad, care giver, family Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1	Communication	educat*, communicat*, dialogue, convers*, talk* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 2	Children	child*, son, daughter Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 3	Sexuality	sex*, relation*, pubert*, pregnan*, menarche, menstruat*, reproduc* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1-3	Engaging in sexuality communication with their children	Boolean connector 'AND' for intervention variables 1-3
Evaluation	Perception	Perception, perceive, view, opinion, experience, belie*, feel Boolean connector 'OR'
Search string: (parent* OR mother OR father OR care giver OR family OR m*m OR dad) AND (educat* OR communicat* OR dialogue OR convers* OR talk*) AND (child* OR son OR daughter) AND (sex* OR relation* OR puberty* OR pregnan* OR menarche OR menstruat* OR reproduce*) AND (perception OR perceive OR view OR opinion OR experience OR belie* OR feel)		

Table 2.4 Identification of search terms for Objective 3.

Question part	Question term	Search terms
Perspective	Parents	parent*, mother, father, m*m, dad, care giver, family Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1	Education	educat*, communicat*, dialogue, convers*, talk* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 2	Children	child*, son, daughter Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 3	Sexuality	sex*, relation*, pubert*, pregnan*, menarche, menstruat*, reproduc* Boolean connector 'OR'
Intervention variable 1-3	Engaging in sexuality communication with their children	Boolean connector 'AND' for intervention variables 1-3
Evaluation	Attitudes	attitude, stance, position, feel*, opinion, viewpoint, belie* Boolean connector 'OR'
Search string: (parent* OR mother OR father OR care giver OR family OR m*m OR dad) AND (educat* OR communicat* OR dialogue OR convers* OR talk*) AND (child* OR son OR daughter) AND (sex* OR relation* OR puberty* OR pregnan* OR menarche OR menstruat* OR reproduce*) AND (attitude OR stance OR position OR feel* OR opinion OR viewpoint OR belie*)		

To identify primary studies each of the bibliographic databases outlined in table 2.5 were interrogated individually. A wide range of databases were searched because of the cross-cutting nature of the study. When carrying out the search, the keyword system of each database was used so that the 'explode' function could be utilised to capture all synonyms. Text word searches were also carried out to ensure that any incompletely coded articles were

identified, as recommended by Glasziou et al. (2001). However, the above searches yielded a total in excess of 60,000 articles which appeared to miss the articles that I knew existed in the field. After consultations with a librarian who specialises in systematic review it was agreed that an alternative approach would be to merge all of the objectives in order to capture relevant publications within one broadened yet simplified search: (parent* AND child* AND sex*). This was much more successful, as reflected in table 2.6.

Table 2.5 Electronic bibliographical databases used for the searches.

- Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)
- PsycINFO
- Sociological Abstracts
- PubMed
- British Nursing Index
- Scopus
- Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)

The bibliographies of papers yielded through database searches were also checked to identify any articles that were not identified in the initial search and contact was made with key authors such as Nicole Stone at Southampton University, Julie Bayley at Coventry University, Colleen DiIorio at Emory University in Atlanta and Erika Pluhar who was also at Emory University. In addition, a citation search, using the Social Sciences Citation index and the 'cited references' function on the electronic databases was conducted as recommended by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (2008). A hand search of the journal *Sex Education* and conference proceedings was also carried out. In addition, grey literature and book publications were referred to in order to minimise publication bias (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination 2008). Inclusion criteria or "limits" were applied as outlined in section 2.1 throughout the search. Table 2.6 summarises the process of the search strategy for the bibliographic databases and the associated yield.

Table 2.6 A summary of the database search strategy with the frequency of articles selected at each stage for each objective.

Database	Limiters applied	Initial yield after limiters applied		Papers selected for abstract screen		Papers selected for inclusion in review
CINAHL	Nil.	Nil		Nil		Nil
ASSIA	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015.	107		24		2 (Pluhar et al. 2008, Wyckoff et al. 2008)
PsycINFO	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015, search term "communicat*" added to reduce yield from 17,335 to 1075, limited further to 'children < 12 years'.	345		23		12 (Martin and Torres 2014, Stone et al. 2013, Newby et al. 2011, Wilson et al. 2010, Miller et al. 2009, Byers et al. 2008, Pluhar et al. 2008, Frankham 2006, Pluhar et al. 2006,Kirkman et al. 2005, DiIorio et al. 2001, Downie and Coates 1999)
PubMed	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015, search term "communicat*" added to reduce yield from 37,945 to 1293, limited further to 'nursing journals' in view of other databases accessed.	197		3		1 (DiIorio et al. 2001)
IBSS	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015, subject: Sociology.	197		4		4 (Turnbull et al. 2011, Byers et al. 2008, Frankham 2006, Walsh et al. 1999)
Scopus	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015, subject area: Social Science.	529		28		11 (Morawska et al. 2015, Fisher et al. 2015, Stone et al. 2013, Turnbull et al. 2013, Dyson and Smith 2012, Wilson and Koo 2010, Wilson et al. 2010, El-Shaieb and Wurtele 2009, Wyckoff et al. 2008, Byers et al. 2008, Kirkman et al. 2005)
Sociological Abstracts	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015.	221		25		5 (Martin and Luke 2010, Byers et al. 2008, White et al. 1995, Fisher 1986, Gilbert and Bailis 1980)
British Nursing Index	Peer reviewed, English language, 1980-2015.	12		2		Nil
				Total after duplicates removed:		25

2.3 Emerging themes

The themes that emerged within the literature centred on:

- Early sexuality: present yet absent.
- Parents' perceptions and experiences of early sexuality communication.
- The impact of gender on parents' perceptions and experiences of early sexuality communication.

2.3.1 Theme one: early sexuality, present yet absent

Goldman and Goldman (1982) argue that despite the wide acceptance of Freud's (2006) work on infantile sexuality, children are widely regarded as asexual in their thoughts and behaviours and childhood is characterised as an age of innocence unaffected by any interest in sex (Martin and Torres 2014, Egan 2013, Egan and Hawkes 2010, Faulkner 2010). More recently, in the introduction to her discourse analysis of the sexualisation of girls, Egan (2013) expands on this theme further, using the Derridean (Derrida 1981) binary opposites of "presence" and "absence". She draws on the work of Foucault (1978) and Egan and Hawkes (2010) to explain that although children are conceptualised as having the potential capacity for sexuality at a physiological level, due to their anatomical characteristics, this capacity is widely held as affectively absent until puberty.

These arguments may help to explain the significant "absence" of research that has been published in the field of early sexuality, juxtaposed with the "presence" of a plethora of publications that deal with adolescent sexuality. However, the small amount of work that has been published demonstrates that sexuality is an integral part of children's thinking. Goldman and Goldman (1982) interviewed 838 five to fifteen year-olds in Australia, North America, Britain and Sweden. Their qualitative and quantitative data analysis suggests that children continually observe aspects of sex and sexuality in their daily lives and seek to understand and integrate their perceptions into their personal schema. They found that if explanations are not available to children they will invent theories for themselves in order to make sense of their sexual world. Children not only seek sexual knowledge but they strive to understand it and make sense of it. However, Goldman and Goldman (1982) found that children's efforts are frequently thwarted by taboos enforced by sometimes evasive, repressive or even coercive behaviours by adults.

Best's (1983) educational ethnography of American elementary school children's sexual learning also demonstrates that sexual thinking is absolutely present in the world of young children. She describes a 'hidden curriculum' that takes place when adults are not watching, for example, children talked to her about playing mummies and daddies, publicly kissing, dating, engaging in private genital touching and playing watching games of 'look and see' and 'show and tell'. More recently UK studies have demonstrated how six year old children 'date', 'dump' and 'two-time' each other (Epstein et al. 2001). Skelton's (2000) ethnographic case study also demonstrates how boys aged six to seven years in one school class in the North East of England negotiated masculine identities through behaviours that were associated with their perceived sexualities. Halstead and Waite's (2001) focus group interviews with thirty five children aged nine and ten, in the south-west of England, also demonstrated the centrality of sexual identity to boys' and girls' lives. Similarly, Renold's (2005) ethnographic study of fifty nine children (twenty six boys and thirty three girls) attending two primary schools in the East of England, aged ten and eleven, demonstrates the salience of sexuality in children's perceptions of becoming 'girls' and 'boys'. She demonstrates the strong emotions that the children experience in making sense of their gender and sexual identities and the centrality of sexuality to their everyday lives. More recently, Renold (2013) has provided further support for these findings in an exploratory study with 125 pre-teen children aged ten to twelve in Wales. Through the use of participatory methods and follow-up individual and paired interviews with twenty one of the children, she shows how children actively negotiate and learn about how sexuality shapes their identity, their sense of self, their activities and relationships. Again, through the words of the children that participated in the study, Renold demonstrates that sexuality and sexual learning is part of children's everyday lives.

Thus, although there is a significant paucity of research that intersects the fields of childhood and sexuality (Egan and Hawkes 2010), the limited research that does exist demonstrates that a child's sexuality is very much present in both their perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

2.3.2 Theme two: parents' perceptions and experiences of early sexuality communication

Although there is a growing body of research which describes how parents communicate with their adolescents about sexuality and sexual matters, there is a dearth of literature which

examines parents' experiences and perceptions of early sexuality communication and education (Stone et al. 2013). The literature suggests that this may be due to a variety of reasons. The first is related to the language associated with the field; terms such as sex, sexual and sexuality are frequently associated with coitus which may explain why individuals may feel that it is inappropriate to apply the term "sexual" to children (Goldman and Goldman 1982) and the associated challenges associated with accessing participants for research in the field (Martin and Torres 2014, Lefkowitz 2002). In addition, it is widely held that children's sexual thinking is linked to biological maturation (Davies and Robinson 2010, Egan and Hawkes 2010, Foucault 1978). However, Goldman and Goldman (1982) argue that studies of children with hormonal anomalies which lead to premature puberty suggest that children's thoughts regarding sexuality are more congruent with their chronological age than their physical maturity.

The small number of studies that have examined the perspectives of parents regarding their role in sexuality education with their young children illuminate a number of challenges that parents experience. El-Shaieb and Wurtele (2009) surveyed 214 American parents of children with a mean age of 6.75 years (SD=3.27), regarding their plans for sexuality discussions with their children. The survey examined demographic factors, parents' personal experiences of family-based sex education and parents' plans regarding the age at which they would plan to discuss the following with their children and their self-rated effectiveness: genital differences between the sexes, human reproduction, birth, masturbation, sexual abuse, menstruation, sexual intercourse, dating, marriage and divorce, sexual orientation, STIs, contraception, abortion, nocturnal emissions and AIDS. Whilst the results are limited by the convenience sample used and the limitations of the survey design (Lefkowitz 2002), the findings suggest that parents struggle to provide effective, accurate and timely sexuality education for their children. These findings are congruent with those of Nguyen and Rosengran's (2004) study with 125 American parents of three to four year olds and 145 parents of five to six year olds. Through the use of a survey, the study identified that amongst a wide variety of childhood misconceptions the most common were concerned with reproduction. It was also identified that parents were more reluctant to discuss issues of a sexual nature with their children than any other topic and they believed that children should learn about these issues at an older age than other biological concepts. The authors concluded that parents may indirectly maintain certain misconceptions and outlined the role that parents can play in enabling young children to acquire factually accurate knowledge.

Wyckoff et al. (2008) carried out an Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview (ACASI) survey with 135 triads of African-American mothers, fathers and their nine to twelve year old off-springs which required each member of the triad to complete a ten-item measure of communication concerning dating, puberty, menstruation, what sex is, abstinence, reproduction, condoms and HIV/AIDS. The response set was 'Never', 'Once or twice' or 'Lots of times'; on analysis the latter two categories were merged. Overall, a majority of parents and their preadolescents reported communication about risk factors, sexuality education and sexual risk prevention topics. Mothers and fathers were found to be equally likely to communicate with their sons about the issues listed in the survey but mothers tended to have greater communication with their daughters than the fathers. However, the validity, sensitivity and reliability of the findings are severely limited by the data collection techniques employed. Indeed, Lefkowitz (2002) and DiIorio et al. (2003) highlight that survey methods characterise much of the parent-child sexuality communication field and, therefore, our understanding of the various determinants and the nature of communication in this domain is superficial.

Geasler et al. (1995) conducted focus groups with twelve fathers and sixteen mothers of children between birth and five years, in the USA, to identify parental concerns regarding the sexuality education of their young children. They identified a tension between parents' aspirations to provide better sexuality education than that provided by their own parents and their ability to do so. There was, therefore, dissonance between the parents' behaviours and their desires. They also identified parental concerns regarding the timing of conversations. Four years later, in 1999, Kniveton and Day identified a significant relationship between British parents' personal experiences of learning about sex related issues in their homes and their own parenting behaviours. Through the use of questionnaires and face to face interviews with fifty mothers of children aged four to seven, Kniveton and Day identified a statistically significant relationship that suggested that mothers who talked more openly about sexual issues with their children had been talked to openly by their own parents when they were children. The authors concluded that if mothers' early learning about sex related issues was a dysfunctional experience it is likely that this behaviour will be replicated in their own approach to this domain of parenting. More recently, Byers et al. (2008) also identified that parents' own experiences of parent-imparted sex education influenced their communication with their children. 3413 Canadian mothers and 426 Canadian fathers of both young adolescents and pre-adolescents participated in a survey which identified that those parents who had received comprehensive sex and relationships education from their own parents felt more

knowledgeable and comfortable in providing this guidance for their own children, although it was noted that these parents still had difficulties in discussing the less-biologically orientated topics such as coercion, assault and sexually transmitted infection. They also identified that parents reported talking in greater depth with their young adolescent children across a range of sexually related topics than they did with their older pre-adolescent children. Whilst the authors note that these findings need to be interpreted with caution because they are based on self-reports and may reflect bias in the sample, in that the volunteers may have been more predisposed to discuss these issues than non-respondents, they add further support to Kniveton and Day's (1999) findings and are, therefore, worthy of consideration. In addition, Dyson and Smith's (2012) study, which is outlined below, strengthens support for these findings. Dyson and Smith reported that parents described how their own lack of education in the home made it more difficult for them to educate their children in this regard and those parents who had had positive parental role models found it easier to communicate openly with their children about sexuality.

In 2009, Ballard and Gross conducted a study in the USA which examined the perspectives of twenty five parents of pre-school children, from birth to age six, about parent-child sexual communication. Their data, which was generated through four focus groups, identified that parental discussions largely focused on the biological aspects of sexuality rather than personal relationships and discussions reflected what parents believed to be developmentally appropriate. Davies and Robinson (2010) explored these findings further in focus group discussions with nine mothers and one father and ten children aged three to five years in New South Wales, Australia. The authors used four images of gendered relationships frequently represented in popular media to stimulate discussion with both the adults and the children. Data was analysed using critical discourse analysis and revealed a disjuncture between parents' perceptions of their children's understanding of sexuality and the children's actual knowledge in that parents appeared to underestimate their children's capacity to understand sexuality related information. Similarly, Frankham (2006) identified through analysis of fifty interviews with parents and ten family interviews in the UK, that parents took a 'child-centred' approach to sexuality communication. That is to say, the parents were guided by their children's questioning and they relied upon this as an opening to dialogue as they felt that this prevented them giving the children 'too much' and/or 'too soon'. However, Frankham found that this frequently led to closed or incomplete responses.

Dyson and Smith's (2012) study involved twenty eight mothers and three fathers of forty five children aged up to eleven years and thirty children and young people aged twelve to eighteen years residing in Australia. Through focus group interviews Dyson and Smith identified that a range of behaviours were described by parents which varied from the parents pro-actively engaging their children in discussions related to sex and relationships education to those who waited for the children to raise the question. The latter was described as potentially problematic since several parents of teenagers who participated in the focus group interviews reported that their children had never asked questions. In addition to the findings that have been reported on above that outline a relationship between parents' own experiences of parent-imparted sex and relationships education and their own practices, the study also outlined a number of concerns expressed by the parents relating to the potential effects of exposure to 'too much' (p224) information. A perceived threat to childhood innocence was also described by the parents as a barrier to communication about sexual issues with their children.

Stone et al. (2013) used purposive sampling to recruit twenty parents of children aged between three and seven years, in the South of England, for focus group discussions which aimed to explore the experiences of parents in dealing with early sexual socialisation. Their findings mirrored those of Dyson and Smith's above. They found that the parents perceived childhood as a time of sexual innocence and parents felt that children do not or should not know about sexuality. Egan and Hawkes (2010) and Faulkner (2010) also identified childhood as a cultural category which is intertwined with the idea of sexual dormancy. Egan (2013) described protective narratives that are underpinned by the belief that if a child's sexuality is stimulated it may become uncontrollable and dangerous. This latter theme does not emerge in Stone et al.'s (2013) analysis but the discourse suggests that parents view sexuality related knowledge as inappropriate and superfluous to the lives of young children. The results of this research are consistent with Davies and Robinson's (2010) Australian study which suggests that parents perceive early sexual maturity as a threat to the childhood innocence ideal which may lead to some parents placing restrictions on children's opportunities for learning.

Stone et al. (2013) also identified a biologically orientated approach to sexuality amongst parents and a lack of understanding of the wider issues that characterise sexuality such as self-confidence, gender perceptions and body comfort. Parents were also described as lacking confidence in their abilities to initiate and discuss issues concerning sexuality and a general sense of nervousness and anxiety was conveyed. The parents appeared unable to utilise

positive learning of their own with regards to sexuality education and were described as having to navigate their way through the taboos and prohibitions that they were exposed to through their own experiences of sexuality socialisation, as identified in the earlier studies cited above by Dyson and Smith (2012), Byers et al. (2008), Kniveton and Day (1999) and Geasler et al. (1995). Whilst these findings cannot be generalised due to the qualitative nature of Stone et al.'s (2013) study, they provide a valuable insight in to some of the challenges that parents perceive in engaging in early sexuality communication.

More recently, Stone et al. (2015a) extended their original study to explore parents' experiences of talking to their children, aged four to seven years, about 'relationships, babies and bodies' (p1). The study took place within London and South Central England. A sample of 110 parents participated in focus groups and forty nine participants took part in follow-up interviews. Stratified sampling was employed to ensure that parents were drawn from varying cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The study identified that whilst parents wish to be open and honest with their children about sexual issues, their anxieties stymie their attempts. Whilst parents felt that knowledge about sex and relationships would protect their children and they wanted to be able to have strong, open relationships with their children, several reasons to not engage in such conversations were identified. Reasons pertained to parents feeling that such knowledge was a threat to childhood innocence, it was inappropriate at this stage of development, it may trouble children and it may lead to sexual experimentation and early sexualisation. In addition, parents described being unsure as to how to initiate these conversations and some expressed concern that others may perceive their child negatively if they were knowledgeable about reproduction, relationships and bodies. Thus, there was consistency between Stone et al.'s (2013) earlier findings and those identified in their more recent and extensive research.

Martin and Torres (2014) study gives an insight in to the complexities that parents face in teaching young children about sexual issues. Instead of relying upon retrospective reports as the studies above have, Martin and Torres audio-recorded the conversations of forty nine American parents with their fifty four pre-school children whilst they read books about reproduction together; the parents also participated in a survey. Whilst it was acknowledged that the sample was not representative in that the parents were middle class and highly educated its findings are of value since they demonstrate how challenging these types of conversations can be. Although the parents foreclosed certain conversations and largely chose to use a book that was scant in detail for the same reasons outlined in the studies above, the

majority tried to respond openly and factually to the children's questions and misconceptions. The real value of this study was that it was able to capture the multiple tasks involved in such conversations. Whilst acknowledging the potential for the "Hawthorne Effect", the quotations demonstrated how parents had to navigate their way through a sea of misunderstandings, translate their young children's perceptions, respond to their children's fears as well as cope with their own lack of experience and apprehensions, whilst trying to convey factual knowledge sensitively and get on with the usual business of parenting. Thus, whilst the research to date has been useful in identifying parents' reported challenges in discussing issues of a sexual nature with their children, this study illuminates another factor in highlighting the complexities of these types of conversations.

Thus, the small amount of literature that has been published internationally suggests that parents struggle with early sexuality communication but there is a lack of research which specifically examines parents' experiences at the pre-adolescent phase.

2.3.3 Theme three: the impact of gender on parents' perceptions and experiences of early sexuality communication

Gender and sexuality are inextricably linked and it is widely recognised that parent-adolescent sexuality communication is highly gendered (Martin and Luke 2010). However, little is known about the impact of gender on parental discourses in relation to parent-child sexuality communication, the messages conveyed and the sexual cultures of younger children (Rahman and Jackson 2010). This section of the literature review aims to illuminate what is known in the field.

The most recent literature which specifically examines the impact of gender on parents' experiences and perceptions of sexuality communication with their children dates back to 2010. In this year, Martin and Luke presented contrasting arguments concerning the asexual and sexually innocent cultural representations of childhood juxtaposed with childhood as an intensive period of gender socialisation. Against this theoretical framework, the authors tested four hypotheses concerning the gendered behaviours of mothers in imparting sexuality related knowledge to their three to six year old boys and girls. 641 web-based surveys were completed by American mothers who were members of an established panel of respondents. Whilst this facilitated recruitment to the study, it must be noted that the lack of a random sample may have introduced bias. In their analysis, Martin and Luke identified that early

childhood is far from free of gendered sexual socialisation, in that the mothers talked more to their daughters than their sons about romantic relationships, morality and the reproductive body. The authors suggest that these findings may reflect a cultural double standard regarding the mothers' aspirations for their sons' and daughters' sexual behaviours later in life and reinforces the belief that women are responsible for negotiating sexual encounters.

In the same year, Wilson and Koo (2010) published an analysis of an online survey which examined differences in sexuality communication between mothers, fathers, sons and daughters in America. 829 fathers and 1113 mothers of children aged ten to fourteen participated in the study which used eight measures of communication about sex with one response being limited to a yes/no answer and the others limited to a four item Likert Scale. Whilst acknowledging that the sample under-represented non-white nationals and those of average and lower educational levels, in addition to the limitations of yes/no responses and Likert Scales, the results provided a powerful insight in to the impact of gender on parental practices in educating children and young adolescents about sexuality. The results suggested that fathers communicated with both sons and daughters about sex-related issues less than their mothers did. In examining factors that are associated with this finding, the authors identified that fathers had lower self-efficacy and lower expectations of the benefits of discussing sexuality with their children than their mothers. The gender of the child was also found to influence the behaviours of both parents in that the parents of daughters talked more about sexual topics with them, were more concerned about the potential negative ramifications of sexual activity and held more negative attitudes concerning early sexual debut for their daughters.

Pluhar et al. (2008) carried out a descriptive, cross-sectional study using a convenience sample of 298 African-American mothers of predominantly low to middle income groups and 298 of their six to twelve year old children. The aim was to study correlates of sexuality communication between mothers and children through the use of audio computer-assisted interviews which allowed participants to self-administer a questionnaire with the assistance of a talking touch-screen computer. The children were interviewed face to face, using the same technology but interviewers read the questions to them and entered their responses. The authors identified that mothers were more likely to talk to daughters than sons and older children than younger children. In addition, high self-efficacy and comfort regarding sex-related communication promoted the mothers' engagement in sexuality education.

In another study that specifically examined African-American maternal communication with pre-adolescents about sex-related issues, Miller et al. (2009) analysed computer-administered surveys completed by 1066 mothers and their children who were aged nine and ten. Three outcome variables were examined: mother-child communication regarding abstinence, puberty and reproduction. The covariates included child's gender, mother's responsiveness in relation to knowledge, comfort, skills and confidence and the child's sexual development cues such as pubertal changes, age and readiness to learn. Mothers with higher responsiveness were found to be significantly more likely to discuss reproduction, puberty and abstinence. Signs of puberty were also likely to increase the chances of discussion occurring. It was also identified that mothers were more likely to discuss issues of a sexual nature with their daughters than their sons.

Wyckoff et al.'s (2008) study examined patterns of sexuality communication between 135 African-American mothers, fathers and their nine to twelve year old children. Using audio computer-assisted interviews, each member of the triad completed a ten-item measure of communication including eight sexuality topics and two items regarding alcohol and drug use since they were perceived by the research team as risk factors for sexual behaviour. The response set was limited to "never", "once or twice" or "lots of times", meaning that responses may have lacked sensitivity and validity. However, with this limitation in mind as well as the limitations of self-reporting, the findings suggested that mothers and fathers were equally likely to communicate with their sons but mothers were more likely to communicate with daughters than fathers were.

Downie and Coates' (1999) survey of 371 Australian parents of pre-school children aged five and pre-adolescent children aged twelve identified that mothers engaged in more sexuality communication with their children than fathers. Whilst the self-selecting nature of the subjects is acknowledged as a threat to the validity and generalisability of the findings, the study illuminates some thought provoking points regarding the gendered nature of the content as well as the frequency of communication. Whilst mothers engaged in more sexuality communication with both the five year old and twelve year old children, it was identified that mothers communicated equally with the boys and girls when they were age five, but at age twelve, it was found that the mothers discussed sexuality more with their sons than their daughters. Whilst overall frequency of communication was less for the fathers it followed the same pattern in relation to the increased likelihood of fathers discussing sexuality more with their sons than their daughters as they advance in age.

In relation to content it was identified that mothers talked more than the fathers about birth with their pre-school sons and almost twice as many mothers discussed menstruation with their pre-school daughters than their sons. Fathers were significantly more likely to discuss obscene words with their five year old sons than their daughters and they were six times more likely to discuss rape with pre-school daughters than pre-school sons. It was noted that although only a small percentage of fathers had any discussions with their five year olds they appeared to deal with factual topics rather than the more sensitive issues.

Analysis revealed that discussions with children at the age of twelve differed in content. Mothers talked about birth, body differences, reproduction, menstruation, AIDS, contraception, homosexuality and rape more with their sons than their fathers did. Mothers were also more likely to talk about birth, body differences, sexual intercourse, menstruation, contraception, dating and homosexuality with their daughters than their fathers were. In turn, fathers talked about body differences, sexual intercourse, obscene words and masturbation more to their sons than their daughters and mothers were more likely to discuss reproduction and masturbation with their sons than their daughters. The authors conclude that these findings reflect 'traditional' parenting roles in that the mothers were pragmatic and engaged in a broader range of conversations than the fathers who appeared to be less involved in this aspect of parenting. However, Downie and Coates (1999) also emphasise how unusual these findings are in that the majority of studies highlight the lack of input received by boys from their parents with regards to sexuality. This has also been demonstrated in the current literature review, for example Martin and Torres' (2014) American study, which is outlined above, identified that parents were more likely to avoid boys' questions and Byers et al.'s (2008) Canadian study, which is discussed in section 2.2.2, identified that parents reported talking in greater depth with their daughters across a range of sexually related topics than they did with their sons. In explaining this anomaly Downie and Coates (1999) suggest that cultural differences in Australian men and historical beliefs which privileged males over females in the acquisition of sexual knowledge may be contributory factors. They also suggest that parents may have over-compensated in trying to address the recent imbalance regarding the isolation of boys in learning about sexuality in the home. Regardless of the cause, the authors conclude by asserting that these findings suggest that parents support a double standard in society in relation to the sexual socialisation of their children.

Only two studies pertaining specifically to fathers' perceptions and experiences of engaging in discussions with their children about sexuality were identified in the course of this literature

review. Walsh et al. (1999) carried out a discourse analysis of eight Australian fathers' accounts of their communication with their six year old sons. Each participant was interviewed, in-depth, about their personal experiences of and feelings associated with learning about sexuality and teaching their sons about sex related issues. The discourse analysis identified seven common themes that characterised the fathers' attitudes and limited their involvement in the sexuality education of their six year old boys namely: sexuality education is an important duty of parenting, providing sexuality education depends on a close parent-child bond, providing sexuality education is a difficult and dangerous process, providing sexuality education may threaten the child's "innocence", the child should be able to control sexuality education through asking questions, parents should rely on "experts" to direct this process and use of correct language for sexual body parts and behaviours is inappropriate for young children. These assumptions were interpreted by Walsh et al. as presenting significant obstacles for the majority of the fathers in fulfilling the role of early sexuality educator for their sons. Furthermore, several fathers were described as struggling with the dominant cultural ideologies surrounding fathers' roles in providing sexuality education for their children. As the authors note, these findings are particularly significant because the eight participants were the only volunteers who responded to 140 invites distributed through five primary schools in Brisbane, which suggests that the participants may have been more willing to communicate with their children about sexuality than other fathers.

The second paper by Wilson et al. (2010), whilst also including mothers in the sample, specifically focused on fathers' experiences of engaging in sex-related discussions with their children aged ten to twelve years. Sixteen focus groups comprising 131 parents in three American cities were carried out with separate groups being held for fathers and mothers as well as different ethnic groups. Group sizes ranged from six to eleven participants. Content analysis revealed that there was agreement that fathers have a responsibility to teach their children about sexuality. Whilst some had not talked to their children about sex and had left this role to the children's mothers, others had discussed it in detail on several occasions. Several fathers suggested that this was associated with personality rather than gender roles, with a number of fathers describing themselves as the primary educator in this regard because they were more comfortable in discussing these issues with their children than their wives were. Topics that the men had discussed with their children included the biology of sex and puberty, delaying intercourse, the potential negative outcomes of sex, self-respect and managing peer pressure, contraception and safe sex, the meaning of sex and healthy sexuality, warning daughters about how males think and warning daughters about sexual predators.

Fathers felt that they were better suited to discussing topics such as male puberty and how young men think in comparison to more female orientated issues such as menstruation. Many fathers were more protective of their daughters than their sons and several found it difficult to discuss sex with their daughters. The child's gender, therefore, appeared to impact on the fathers' practices. They tended to be more protective and restrictive with their daughters and more permissive with their sons and, in some cases, were encouraging of their sons to have sex, thus reinforcing the double standard discussed by Martin and Luke (2010) and Downie and Coates (1999). Some of the fathers expressed a greater need to protect their daughters because of the risk of pregnancy and the potential emotional impact of sexual relationships. Several fathers also reported teaching their sons to respect women and were anxious about the potential consequences of sex for their sons. Many of the fathers acknowledged that despite their commitment to supporting their children in learning about sexuality they found it very difficult in practice. Generalisations cannot be drawn from this study since the sample is not representative of the general population in America as the vast majority of fathers lived with their children and the children's biological mother full-time. In addition, it is important to note, as with Walsh et al.'s (1999) study, these fathers were likely to be more comfortable than others in discussing sexuality with their children as they volunteered to participate, which limits the reliability of the study's findings.

2.4 Summary

> 'Regardless of the preferences of parents or their children, and whether intentional or not, the family determines to a large extent the context, the content and the attitudinal setting of the child's initial learning about sexuality' (Kniveton and Day 1999 p32).

This review has identified a dearth of literature pertaining to parent-child, and in particular father-child, sexuality communication. This paucity is especially marked in relation to UK literature concerned with children in the seven to eleven years age bracket. However, the small amount of literature that has been published internationally suggests a consensus that cultural representations of childhood as a period of innocent asexuality are at odds with the reality of children's lives which are very much shaped by their experiences and understandings of sex and sexuality. However, despite the growing body of literature that highlights the realities of children's lives in this domain, there is a very limited body of literature that

examines how parents facilitate their children in learning about this aspect of themselves and others. This paucity is particularly marked in relation to the experiences of fathers.

Of the little literature that does exist, the research uniformly suggests that parents largely struggle to engage in meaningful sexuality communication with their children due to their own primary socialisation, a perceived lack of skill, low self-efficacy and concerns underpinned by cultural ideologies regarding childhood innocence. Parents' behaviours also appear to be highly gendered with mothers consistently being identified in the literature as their children's primary educators in this domain. In addition, the literature is consistent in demonstrating that boys and girls receive different messages from their parents that promote a double standard regarding sexual freedoms. The existing body of research also suggests that girls largely receive more parent-imparted sexuality education than boys, although interpretations of why this may be the case differ amongst authors.

In relation to the current study, it is widely accepted that fathers can play a significant role in teaching their children about puberty, relationships and reproduction even when communication about such issues is minimal (Wilson and Koo 2010, Wilson et al. 2010). Whilst it is acknowledged that a greater number of fathers are estranged from their children than mothers, whether fathers live with their children full-time or not they are seen as a central figure in the majority of children's lives (Collier and Sheldon 2008). However, fathers' practices and perceptions of engaging in sexuality education with their children remain largely unexplored internationally. As demonstrated in this review, fathers are significantly under-represented in the literature and when they have been included it has largely been as part of a study that has focused generically on "parental" perspectives and experiences and the majority of the research has been quantitative.

DiIorio et al.'s (2003) review of the literature pertaining to parent-child communication about sexuality led them to conclude that qualitative research in to father-child communication and communication with children under eleven years of age was required as a priority because of the paucity of research in these fields. Such recommendations have also been made by Wilson et al. (2010), Wilson and Koo (2010), Wyckoff et al. (2008) and Walsh et al. (1999) because of the central role that fathers can play in this domain and the specific challenges that appear to deter many fathers from fully engaging with their sons and daughters in this aspect of communication. This study aimed to address this need and was the first study to specifically examine the experiences and practices of fathers in educating their ten year old children about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter sets out the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of this study. First, its epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions and their alignment with the research question will be explored. Foucault's concept of governmentality and biopower will then be presented as the theoretical lens through which the study has been designed and the data has been analysed and interpreted. The ontological, theoretical and methodological fit of the study will then be argued and justified and the themes presented throughout the chapter will be drawn together.

3.1 Epistemological, ontological and axiological stance

The ontological, epistemological and axiological positions that I brought to this study situated it in the constructivist paradigm. Ontologically I believed that multiple realities existed both on my part and on the part of the fathers I interviewed, in the form of many and varied mental constructions and co-constructions, created through meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially. Epistemologically, I believed that knowledge would be transactional and subjective and findings would be co-created by me as the researcher and the study participants. Axiologically, the purpose of the research was to make a positive impact on society in that it was hoped that the propositional knowledge that emerged from the study would be of value to parents, children, young people, teachers and healthcare professionals. However, rather than constraining the study by what Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe as "paradigmatic barriers" I believed that it would be more helpful to adopt a relativist position and a postmodern stance since this was in keeping with my interest in discursive practices and my particular perspective on research, society and clinical practice.

3.2 Postmodernism and IPA

Postmodernism rejects Enlightenment notions of linear progress and is concerned with cultural, intellectual and societal discontinuity (Agger 1991). In contrast to modernist assertions, history is not assumed to be progressive, that is, going from prehistory to the end of history and the present is no longer perceived as a stopping point en route to something higher or better. A basic tenet of postmodernist thought is the "problem" of meaning as not

only is it impossible to ascribe explanations and "metanarratives" to events, it is also impossible to ascribe meaning to what people say. Thus a postmodern position asserts that meaning is what is intended by the speaker, that meaning is created by and contained in the language itself and that meaning is created by the listener (Barthes 1977).

There is no formulaic approach to studies which adopt a postmodern stance, as this would be in conflict with the central tenets of postmodernism which reject grand narratives and instead embrace juxtaposition, disjunction and multiple perspectives (Bennett and Harden 2014). However, as a novice researcher I required a methodology and a method that would provide me with guidance in operationalising my research aims. IPA was chosen as the most suitable approach to this study since it can work in synergy with a postmodern stance. IPA is discussed in detail in Chapter Four, however, a brief overview is provided here in order to establish a justification for using IPA in the context of a postmodern position.

Phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiography and symbolic interactionism inform IPA as both a methodology and a philosophy (Smith et al. 2009). It is concerned with an in-depth focus on the particular and, as such, it is committed to a detailed analysis of life and the lived experience. Ontologically IPA 'endorses social constructionism's claim that sociocultural and historical processes are central to how we experience and understand our lives, including the stories we tell about these lives' (Eatough and Smith 2008 p184). From a social constructionist perspective, narrative is not a 'window into something else' but rather it is 'of the world, not about it' (Daiute and Lightfoot 2004 p x-xi). That is to say that meaning and interpretation are mediated through language. Such assertions are congruent with my personal beliefs and the fundamental tenets of postmodernism and IPA. IPA also shares some commonalities with narrative analysis because of its focus on meaning-making (Smith et al. 2009) and Foucauldian discourse analysis because of its shared focus on 'how people's worlds are discursively constructed and how these are implicated in the experiences of the individual' (Eatough and Smith 2006b p118-119). Eatough and Smith (2008 p184), therefore, locate IPA at the 'light end of the social constructionist continuum' ontologically.

Epistemologically IPA is phenomenological, interpretative and idiographic. In relation to a phenomenological epistemology some would argue that this approach is at odds with the postmodern position I have taken above. Phenomenology is sometimes linked to a modernist agenda (Moran 2000) in that phenomena are seen as being made up of identifiable essential structures that can be described as representing the "real world" (Finlay 2009). However, Finlay (2009) suggests that such an interpretation of phenomenology is flawed in that it is

antithetical to the phenomenological project, for example, Hegel emphasised that essence is a dynamic, dialectical process (Mills 2005). Ihde (2003) introduces a notion of post phenomenology which is 'the style of phenomenology which explicitly and … 'consciously' takes multidimensionality, multistability, and the multiple 'voices' of things into account', stating 'to that degree it bears a family resemblance to the postmodern' (Ihde 2003 p26). Indeed, Finlay (2009) asserts that many phenomenologists view "truth" and "reality" as a matter of perspective, embracing ambiguity and a more relational unfolding of meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1968). Knowledge is seen as intersubjective and fluid and the researcher and participant are seen as co-creators of research. If postmodernism is characterised by avoiding privileging one authority or method, Finlay (2009) suggests congruence between this position and that of many phenomenologists.

Whilst little is written that explicitly links IPA with postmodernism I would assert that IPA's focus on phenomenology as dynamic and the emphasis that is placed on not privileging one particular strand of phenomenology over another, along with its emphasis on interpretation, subjectivity, nuance, variation and the particular (Smith et al. 2009) means that it is congruent with the philosophical position of this study. Further support for this proposition is its ontological compatibility with the 'light end of the social constructionist continuum' described by Eatough and Smith (2008 p184). Thus, the study employed IPA whilst applying a Foucauldian lens in relation to his concept of governmentality and biopower.

3.3 Governmentality as a theoretical lens

Throughout the first two years of my Professional Doctorate programme my thinking shifted from seeing the world pragmatically to becoming increasingly analytical. This led me to question my personal beliefs about how I viewed the world and it also helped me to advance my thinking in relation to the potential for research to take account of people's competing social realities. I found myself drawn to Foucault, who had written extensively about sexuality. This, in turn, led to a focus on governmentality as I became increasingly interested in how power is asserted at the macro, meso and micro levels. Specifically, an understanding of the concept of governmentality helped me make a connection between macro level public health discourses around young people's sexual health, the more subtle controls exercised by the media, for example through messages around the (hetero)sexualisation of children and primary school based SRE, and the fathers' discourses and lived experiences at the micro level.

Furthermore, I found that adopting this lens helped me to unravel what the fathers said, thus facilitating an insight in to their cognitions, accounts and behaviours, which is one of the aims of IPA (Smith and Eatough 2012).

Conceptually, governmentality originates from the work of Foucault (1979). It refers to the 'subtle, comprehensive management of life drawing both from a top-down exercise of power over conduct … with a subjectivity constituted in a sense of personal responsibility, rights, freedoms and dependencies' (Fox 1993 p32-33). Such government 'implies all those tactics, strategies, techniques, programmes, dreams and aspirations of those authorities that shape beliefs and the conduct of the population' (Nettleton 1991 p99). Governmentality is characterised by pervasive surveillance and disciplining of the individual and the population 'in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest in the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth' (Foucault 1980 p122).

Governmentality has been a feature of sex education since the Public Health Act of 1848. For the purposes of this discussion Wyness's (1996 p98) definition of sex education as 'the deliberate and intentional handling of knowledge about sexual matters' is extended to acknowledge the values framework that sex education operates within (Mason and Woolley 2011). However, the terminology used throughout the discussion will reflect the historical period that is being referred to; the term sex education was used in policy that pre-dates the year 2000 and the term 'sex and relationships education' (SRE) was used from 2000 onwards. More recently the term Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) has been used to incorporate sex education.

Sex education has been, and continues to be, underpinned by the dominant view of children as simultaneously sexually innocent yet potentially sexually corruptible (Pilcher 2005). Throughout the history of sex education, specific reference to provision for primary school children has been sporadic with the focus centring principally on the enlightenment and disciplining of adolescents. Practice has stemmed largely from local and central government with a particular emphasis on teachers, youth work and, to a progressively lesser extent, parents. Sex education has been and continues to be shrouded in controversy, ambiguity and contradiction depending upon the political and social contexts of the time, resulting in a far from linear, progressive development. Table 3.1 gives a historical account of the introduction of children and young people's health surveillance and interventions along with the history of sex education from 1848 to the present day.

The discourses of sex education for children have been described as being located in the medico–moral discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Mort 1987). Indeed, the system of the "panoptican" (omnipresent vision) in relation to child health was firmly embedded within main stream education with the Elementary Education Act of 1870. Foucault's concept of medicalisation (Foucault 1963) demonstrates how the medical gaze provided a vehicle for the expansion of governance to the body. In relation to child and teenage sexuality, governmentality has been exercised by a cadre of experts such as politicians, clergy, the medical profession, public health professionals and educators. Children and young people were, and still are, viewed as non-agentic yet they were/are expected to engage in practices of self-restraint at best or, at worse, the use of contraception and condoms in order to support the state and create normative families (Barcelos 2014).

Historically, perceived threats to public and moral health in England, such as the increased prevalence of STIs during the two world wars, the fear surrounding HIV in the late 1980s and the increased STI rates amongst young people since the 1990s, has galvanised government intervention. However, beyond times of "moral crisis" sex education messages from central government have been equivocal. Pilcher's (2005) analysis of the first detailed official guidance manuals concerning the teaching of general health education in schools, issued in 1928, 1933 and 1939 respectively, illustrates this point. She remarks that 'given that virtually every other bodily system, function and process, from the frequency of bowel movements to the proper way to breathe, are specified, the human sexual and reproductive body is conspicuous by its absence' (Pilcher 2005 p156). By avoiding the topic of reproduction Pilcher asserts that the suggestion was that sex should not be taught in schools. This argument could be advanced to include the limited reference made to the provision of sex education for primary school aged children from 1848 to the present time.

In 1943, against the backdrop of increased STI rates associated with World War II, guidance on sex education for head teachers and teachers was strengthened and a sense of urgency was conveyed. It was suggested that although responsibility for sex education lay primarily with parents, sex education should take place 'at an early age' (Board of Education 1943 p9). Older adolescents should receive 'instruction and advice directed to the understanding and control of sexual impulse and emotion, leading on to the establishment of mutual understanding and respect between the sexes, and … to an adequate preparation for marriage' (Board of Education 1943 p3–4). Thus, the aim of sex education was to channel the "sexual instinct" into the socially acceptable contexts of heterosexuality, marriage and parenthood. As Pilcher

(2005) argues, the dominant construction of the 'sexual impulse' was a negative one with sexuality being aligned with 'moral and social problems' (Board of Education 1943 p1–2). The scientific truths of sex were privileged over the lived truths of sexual pleasure (Pryce 2001).

Although the emphasis placed by central government on the importance of sex education barely extended beyond the end of the war (Hall 2004) governmentality persisted through dispersed forms of self-governance and the 1940s saw a more active approach to sex education for children in schools (Pilcher 2005). The social changes resulting from World War II continued to disrupt previously established standards of sexual behaviour. As Hall (2000 p166) asserts, at the start of the 1950s there was a sense that 'old constraints were falling away, that erotic energies nurtured by a buoyant economy and the Welfare State were threatening to break out'. In response, 'the deafening silence on sex education … had been shattered and the long period of official 'fence sitting' on the place of sex in the health education curriculum was beginning to end' (Pilcher 2005 p160).

The official discourses of sex education persisted at this time by presenting sex as an 'impulse' or 'urge' which should be properly managed through marriage and parenthood (Ministry of Education 1956 p51–53). The position was maintained that sex education was 'by general agreement' best given by parents but the position of schools as sexuality educators was significantly strengthened (Ministry of Education 1958 p189). As indicated in table 3.1 the fifth edition of the handbook of health education published in 1968 made reference to contraception and sexually transmitted diseases for the first time. Whilst the need for parental support and cooperation was noted, the need for schools to provide sex education was emphasised. A pathological construction of sexuality was introduced through descriptions of STI transmission and symptoms that persists today (van Loon 2008). Thus, the regulation of sexuality and, more specifically, sexually transmitted infection amongst young people created new roles for experts and expert knowledge in the government of young people and children and the regulation of their personal identities. As Mort (1987 p208) suggests 'sex education firmly reinstated normalising hierarchies of knowledge, which set teachers above parent …'.

In 1968 Schofield published a study which raised concern about teenage sexual debut and an associated increase in the incidence of STIs amongst young people. Such concerns galvanised a wide ranging number of religious, medical and educational organisations such as the Church of England, the British Medical Association, Birmingham Education Committee and London County Council (Meredith 1989, City of Birmingham Education Committee 1967) to hold conferences or publish reports on sex education which aimed to redress the shift in social and

moral codes. Several government reports on health education were also published around this time such as Plowden (1967), Cohen (1964) and Newsom (1963) all of which placed responsibility for sex education upon schools.

During the 1970s a move towards sex education being presented as part of a holistic programme that encompassed self-awareness, self-esteem, responsibility, human relations and contraceptive awareness was announced (Department of Education and Science 1974) and this was reflected in the 1977 edition of the handbook of health education as outlined in table 3.1. There was a significant shift whereby sex education was concerned less with physiology and more with morality to 'protect boys and girls from hazards to health created by their own behaviour' (Department of Education and Science 1977 p28). Thus there was a shift in emphasis from restraint to an acceptance that young people may engage in sexual activities but they had a responsibility to ensure that the interaction was hygienic. The position that parents held 'chief responsibility' for sex education was maintained but a more disciplined approach through the education system was seen as necessary.

Thus, by the mid-1980s sex education provision in schools had become 'firmly integrated into the curriculum as a whole … and it was increasingly part of a programme of personal and social development led by teachers within the school' (Allen 1987 p193). However, concern grew from the political right that school-based sex education programmes encouraged not only a 'precocious and promiscuous' heterosexuality but also homosexuality as an acceptable form of sexuality (Durham 1991 p111). Consequently, a national, prescriptive statutory framework for the teaching of sex education was developed, as outlined in table 3.1. The 1986 Education Act along with Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act 'frightened off' teachers from addressing sex education issues (Pilcher 2005 p166). By the mid-1990s children's rights to sex education were very limited; they faced restrictions regarding the particular "moral framework" of sex education that would be presented to them by their schools, they had no right to receive sex education if their parents decided to withdraw them from these lessons and they had no right to confidentiality if they disclosed their sexual activities to teachers (Pilcher 2005). 1986 also saw the AIDS awareness campaigns reach their heights, emphasising the importance of "safe sex". However, despite the censorship on sex education in schools and the public health campaigns associated with HIV and AIDS teenagers continued to engage in sexual risk behaviours (van Loon 2008).

In its time in government (1997-2010), the Labour Government repealed Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act and issued new guidelines to head teachers, teachers and school

governors on the teaching of SRE in schools (Department for Education and Employment 2000). Pilcher (2005) asserts that the guidance on SRE issued to schools in 2000 marked a return towards the more expansive scope and vision of sex education in the 1970s. However, an analysis of the language used in the new guidance suggests a continuity of previous discourses with the term 'relationship' being used in the singular throughout and an emphasis on marriage and family life. Furthermore, a critique of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) by van Loon (2008 p51) suggests a prevailing discourse that rendered young people, particularly females, 'ignorant', 'ill-informed' and 'careless' to the extent that their integrity as individuals was overruled by a need for pervasive control. By rendering young people 'vulnerable' governmentality was permitted to exert pastoral power (Foucault 1982), thus permitting targeted regulation and control.

The synopsis to date suggests that governmentality, at all levels, has been far reaching in trying to persuade young people to minimise their sexual risk taking. However, the investment in educating younger children about sex and relationships is minimal in comparison and implicitly suggests that sex education is of little relevance to primary school children although many will experience the onset of puberty well before leaving the primary school system (Downing and Bellis 2009). Indeed, a review of SRE in primary and secondary schools by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) in 2013 identified that in primary schools pupils were found to be ill-prepared for the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty. In response the House of Commons Education Committee (2015) published a report 'Life lessons: PSHE and SRE in schools', the recommendations of which are summarised in table 3.1. The associated discourse was wide ranging and heated with varied interpretations and perspectives both in support of and in opposition to the recommendations. Whilst these interpretations reflected the prevailing conservative values of the time and a context of fear regarding the sexual abuse of children arising from a number of high profile scandals that had recently come to light in England, such as the Savile and Harris cases, they were also reflective of a much longer history.

The child is present yet absent in the governmentality of their sexuality. The prevailing discourse acknowledges that children have the potential for sexuality physiologically but the belief is that this should remain latent until puberty (Egan 2013). Such discourses align with the history of attitudes towards sexuality in Europe (Foucault 1978). Foucault's four 'strategic unities' about sex have been highly relevant to the 'deployment of sexuality' (Foucault 1978 p103-105) through the governmentality of sex education. The 'psychiatrization of perverse

pleasure' has been evident through the heteronormative emphasis of sex education that persists today; the 'hysterization of women's bodies' underpinned many of the gendered assumptions relating to the history of sex education up to the turn of the century outlined by Pilcher (2005); 'a socialization of procreative behaviour' explains the emergence of discourses around contraception in the fifth edition of the handbook of health education published in 1968; and the 'pedagogization of children's sex' through which children's sexuality became a moral and a medical concern created systems of surveillance and discipline predominantly through schools. The repressive attitudes and practices by the end of the nineteenth century where the discourse was confined to the realms of the heterosexual, legitimately married, procreating couple persist today. Equally, regulatory practices through the state, the church, medicine, society, the family and the self (Crowley and Kitchin 2008) persist but with differing degrees of power and influence. England's increasingly secular society and the shift in emphasis away from the 'family as Panopticon' (Pryce 2001 p154) and its role in primary socialisation (van Loon 2008) has led to greater state involvement as captured in table 3.1.

Thus, the dominant discursive regime has acted to instil modes of self-discipline and has marginalised, disciplined and tried to subordinate young people as potentially dangerous. However, it would appear that few tangible benefits have emerged from the various strategies that have been employed since the inception of formalised sex education because STI rates continue to rise amongst young people. Foucault is frequently criticised for neglecting to consider the processes by which power is resisted (Hayter et al. 2008), however, in keeping with Lupton (1997) and Macleod and Durrheim's (2002) assertion that resistance may not always be exercised overtly it would appear that young people have used forms of resistance that subtly counter surveillance and regulatory practices. Thus resistance and, hence, the development of power on the part of young people has developed.

Table 3.1 Key reports, historical references and government policies concerning health surveillance and sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools in England.

1848	Public Health Act	School health guidance published, including guides on sex education for parents to aid them in educating their children. These guides were for older children since education for younger children was not yet widely available.
1870	Elementary Education Act	Opened education to young children from poor backgrounds. No mention of sex education is made but School Boards were shocked at the health status of the children and health surveillance and interventions were introduced through the appointment of medical officers, free school meals, improving the sanitation and ventilation of schools and the creation of public baths.
1913	The 'Dronfield' case (cited in Mort 1987)	The headmistress of Dronfield School, Derbyshire, gave instruction regarding the beginnings of life and the dangers of immorality. The lesson led to protests from parents and others in the local community

		and to an investigation by the inspector of the local Board of Education.
1914	London County Council (cited in Mort 1987)	Rejected the issue of sex education for school children.
1914	Board of Education	Emphasised parents' responsibilities in educating their children about sex through evening courses on "sex hygiene" for parents.
1916	Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease	Instruction in sex hygiene was required in 'all types and grades of education' (cited in Mort 1987 p199). The government funded the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease (NCCVD) to undertake sex education work with parents, youth leaders and teachers to address the growing prevalence of STIs associated with World War I.
1918	Education Act	Medical inspections of elementary school pupils made mandatory; local authorities given powers to inspect pupils in secondary schools. Emphasis on health promotion but no reference to sex education made.
1928	Board of Education	The first edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published – no reference made to sex education.
1929	Historical reference	Withdrawal of central funding for the sex educational work of the British Social Hygiene Council, replacing it with discretionary funding from local authorities. Many declined the option (Hall 2004).
1929	Annual report of the Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education (Board of Education 1930)	The Board of Education no longer overtly prescribed the sex education curriculum as it had done previously. Report stated that it is 'open to question whether direct class instruction in this subject is either advisable or practicable and no definite recommendations to this effect have been made …' (Board of Education 1930 p 48).
1930	City of Leicester Education Committee	Senior girls provided with instruction on topics such as 'self-reverence, self-control and true modesty' and boys were given talks on the 'temptation of factory and workshop life' on leaving school, with special reference to sex.
1933	Board of Education	The second edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published – no reference made to sex education.
1939	Board of Education	The third edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published – no reference made to sex education.
1943	Board of Education	In approximately half of England's local education authorities there was 'carefully planned instruction' on sex education in 'at least a few' of the elementary schools, with more attention given to the subject in girls' schools than in boys' schools (Board of Education 1943 p6). In secondary schools, it was reported that approximately two thirds gave sex education either 'slight attention' or total avoidance (p12). Clearly presented an argument for SRE in both primary and secondary schools, using World War II as the rationale because of the associated increased incidence of STIs.
1944	Education Act	Medical inspections became mandatory for pupils of all ages. The high incidence of STIs associated with World War II led the Ministry of Education to publish pamphlets on sex education for schools and teachers.
1950s-1960s	Historical reference (Reiss 2005)	Lessons about reproduction became more common place, but only in biology lessons through description of plant and non-human animal reproduction. It is likely that boys, especially those educated in fee-paying boarding system, may have received warnings about the dangers believed to be associated with masturbation. Girls were more likely than boys to receive school sex education. Reports on health education (Newsom 1963, Cohen 1964, Plowden 1967) all placed responsibility for sex education upon schools.

1956	Ministry of Education	The fourth edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published – for the first time a whole chapter, entitled 'School and the future parent', was devoted to sex education.
1968	Department of Education and Science	The fifth edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published indicating a broader understanding of what sex education should comprise including, for the first time, reference to contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.
1974	Department of Education and Science	A move towards sex education being presented as part of a holistic programme that encompasses self-awareness, self-esteem, responsibility, human relations and contraceptive awareness was announced.
1977	Department of Education and Science	The sixth edition of the 'Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education' was published which had been rewritten to explicitly address sex education in schools. For the first time the need to educate both boys and girls about the experiences of the other sex during puberty was outlined and topics such as masturbation, contraception, venereal diseases, 'sexual deviations', sex as a pleasurable activity and homosexuality were identified as potential topics within sex education.
1986	Education Act	Schools permitted to provide no sex education. Where sex education was provided, the Act allowed for a parent to withdraw their child. It also prescribed a content to sex education, requiring that any provision be given with 'due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life'.
1987	Circular 11/87 Department of Education and Science	Specified that SRE should focus on the risks of 'casual and promiscuous sexual behaviour' and promote the benefits of 'stable married and family life'. It stated 'there is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the ''norm'', or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils' (para 22). It explicitly warned teachers that 'giving an individual pupil advice [on contraception] without parental knowledge or consent would be an inappropriate exercise of a teacher's professional responsibilities, and could, depending on the circumstances, amount to a criminal offence' (para 26).
1988	Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act	Banned local authorities from 'promoting' homosexuality in schools.
1993	Education Act	Made sex education in schools compulsory, including education about HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Parents given the statutory right to withdraw their child from any or all parts of a school's sex education programme.
1999	Revision to the National Curriculum	Key Stage Two (ages seven to eleven years) National Curriculum for Science required schools to teach about reproduction. The term 'reproduction' was interpreted differently by schools leading to variations in practice (Mason 2010).
1999	Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999)	Detailed policy strategy aimed at reducing both the conceptions and the social exclusion of young parents.
2000	Department for Education and Employment - SRE Guidance	Recommended that schools teach the broader aspects of SRE within the PSHE curriculum and that all primary schools should have a SRE programme tailored to the age and physical and emotional maturity of the children. It should ensure that both boys and girls know about puberty and how a baby is born, as set out in Key Stages One and Two of the National Science Curriculum. Stated that all children need to know about puberty before they experience the onset of physical changes. Recommended that education about relationships should

		focus on friendship, bullying and self-esteem. In secondary schools, recommended that schools should set sex education within a broader base of self-esteem and responsibility for the consequences of one's actions.
2000	Learning and Skills Act (2000).	Requires that young people learn about marriage and its importance for family life and bringing up children and that they are protected from inappropriate teaching in relation to age, religion and culture. Parents had the right to withdraw children from SRE outside of National Curriculum Science.
2003	Local Government Act	The Local Government Act received Royal Assent and Section 28 was removed from statute.
2004	Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills 2004)	Included targets to reduce teenage pregnancy rates in England.
2007	Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA)	Published key stage statements for PSHE Education for secondary schools including sections on SRE but the teaching of PSHE remained optional for schools and were free to adopt the QCA curriculum, adapt it or devise their own.
2010	White Paper: The Importance of Teaching (Department for Education 2010)	Emphasised the need for children to receive high-quality SRE which encompassed discussions around the context of love and individual autonomy to inform their decision making.
2013	National Curriculum Review (Department for Education 21013b)	Concerns raised during the consultation process about the amount of SRE included in the revised curriculum in that the science programme of study for primary schools omitted detail on reproduction and growth. This was subsequently revised but questions remained about the amount of detail that teachers would be able to include for example the role of hormones.
2013	OFSTED report on PSHE and the teaching of SRE	SRE required improvement in over a third of schools. In primary schools this was because too much emphasis was placed on friendships and relationships, leaving pupils ill-prepared for physical and emotional changes during puberty, which many begin to experience before they reach secondary school. In secondary schools it was because too much emphasis was placed on 'the mechanics' of reproduction and too little on relationships, sexuality, the influence of pornography on understandings of healthy sexual relationships, dealing with emotions and staying safe.
2014	House of Commons: Requirements on SRE in Schools (Long 2014)	All maintained secondary schools required to provide SRE as part of the basic curriculum, and must meet the requirements of National Curriculum Science (i.e. the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction). Governing bodies and head teachers of maintained primary schools must decide whether SRE, beyond that set out in National Curriculum Science, should be include in the school's curriculum, and if so what it should consist of and how it should be organised. Section 405 of the Education Act 1996 still applicable in enabling parents to withdraw their children from sex education other than that covered in the National Curriculum.
2015	House of Commons Education Committee report 'Life lessons: PSHE and SRE in schools'	Investigated the actions taken by the Government to improve PSHE following OFSTED's findings in 2013. Recommendations included: age-appropriate PSHE and SRE should be introduced as statutory subjects in primary and secondary schools, schools should be required to consult with parents on the school's SRE provision, the parental right to withdraw their child from elements of SRE should be retained, funding of continuous professional development for PSHE teachers and school nurses should be reinstated and SRE should be renamed

		'Relationships and Sex Education' to emphasise the relationships element of the subject.
2014-2015	Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (Statutory Requirement) Bill (Department for Education 2015)	A Bill to require the Secretary of State to make PSHE a statutory requirement for all state funded schools; for PSHE to include Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and education on ending violence against women and girls; to provide for initial and continuing teacher education and guidance on best practice for delivering and inspecting PSHE and SRE education. Government response committed to further improvement to PSHE and SRE and did not discard the recommendation that the subject be made statutory. The Government response concluded: '*We want to make significant progress on this issue this parliament, and will consider in full the arguments put forward by the Select Committee as part of this work before reporting back later this year.*'

3.3.1 Biopower and parenting

Foucault (1978 p140) argues that governmentality's continuous surveillance and corrective mechanisms made bodies transparent and rendered them open to manipulation, thus fostering the emergence of 'biopower'. Biopower refers to the 'technologies of power that address the management of, and control over, the life of the population' (Nadesan 2008 p2). It is concerned with maximising the functionality of individuals, families, the economy and the state and promoting social discipline (Beck 1992). Foucault locates productive power in the human body in relation to its function as well as its place in time and space. Power becomes biopower when it is associated with the level of life (Barcelos 2014). For Foucault, biopower was the dominant system of social control in modern Europe throughout the 20th century.

Biopower constructs truth discourses concerning "normal" sexuality and it also produces authorities who exert power in speaking about them, thus enabling subjugation (Rabinow and Rose 2006). Modern conceptions of sexuality were crucial in facilitating a shift from the old juridical regimes to biopower since sexuality links biopolitics at the micro individual level, to the macro population level (Rabinow and Rose 2006). Unlike previous regimes which exerted power over life, biopower brings 'life and its mechanism into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life' (Foucault 1978 p143).

In relation to the management of childhood sexuality, pedagogization facilitated biopower in that 'the sexualization of children was accomplished in the form of a campaign [for the] health of the race (precocious sexuality was presented from the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century as an epidemic menace that risked compromising not only the future health of adults but the future of the entire society and species)' (Foucault 1978 p146). As evidenced in section 3.3 the beginning of the 20th century saw a shift towards more medical

conceptions of health. Consequently a more nuanced, subtle management of the body at the individual level as well as at the population level began to occur within the discourses of sexuality (Egan and Hawkes 2010). Thus, the child's body and its associated sexuality provided a conduit for control with the aim of enhancing the health of future generations and racial betterment (Egan and Hawkes 2010). Indeed, the impetus for social medicine was closely aligned with state security (Nadesan 2008).

Biopower has socially pathologised adolescent childbearing. As outlined in Chapter One teenage pregnancy is portrayed as indisputably "bad" for young women, their children and wider society (Barcelos 2014). As the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) demonstrates, the "epidemic" of adolescent pregnancy is characterised as problematic from a public health, medical, social and economic perspective. Barcelos (2014) suggests that Foucault's (1978) 'repressive hypothesis' can help to explain this pathologising discourse in that he identifies a paradoxical belief that whilst society has and continues to repress sexuality in children and young people it valorises motherhood, promotes heteronormative relationships and sexualises young girls.

For biopower to operate effectively, judgements have to be made in order to establish norms surrounding sexuality and its expression, childbearing and mothering (Barcelos 2014). By constructing notions of normality and deviance, power promotes norms as right and moral, thereby creating a desire to conform. Whilst these judgements are made and reinforced at the population level, parents and young people are duty bound to engage in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and STI transmission. Adolescents are required to engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline and thereby subjugate themselves.

An example of the role of parents in operationalising biopower was seen in the 'hygiene movement' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which was concerned with improving the health and productivity of the nation. Although the movement was facilitated by a cadre of professionals it also interpellated families, in particular wives and mothers, to achieve its aims (Porter 1999). The nuclear family's role was key in ensuring that children were socialised into healthy, productive and, within acceptable moral frameworks, reproductive citizens (Parsons and Bales 1956). The centrality of the family for the deployment of sexuality was repeatedly emphasized by Foucault. In The Birth of the Clinic, Foucault wrote that 'the natural locus of disease is the natural focus of life – the family' (Foucault 1963 p44). In his Psychiatric Power lectures, Foucault argued that the family acts as the hinge that links the individuals to disciplinary apparatuses (Foucault 2006). Today, the normalising role of the

nuclear family persists as governmental apparatus for social control as demonstrated in the Children and Families Bill (Department for Education 2013a) which outlined the government's intention to 'support strong families'.

Foucault asserts that the hystericized female body was highly visible in the family space where women assumed 'biologico-moral responsibility' for children (Foucault 1978). In view of the pedagogization of children which entailed the 'double assertion' that all children 'indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity', and that activity 'posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers' (Foucault 1978 p104) this was and continues to be a significant responsibility. Thus governmentality and biopower are highly relevant to the discourse surrounding fathers' experiences and practices in educating their children about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships. They were, therefore, chosen as the theoretical lens through which to analyse and critically interpret the findings of this study.

3.4 Ontological, theoretical and methodological 'fit'

Epistemological, ontological, paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological congruence is a feature of this study. As previously established, ontological congruence exists between the relativist position adopted in this study and IPA since many phenomenologists view "truth" and "reality" as a matter of perspective, embracing ambiguity and a more relational unfolding of meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1968) and Eatough and Smith (2008) assert that IPA is consistent with this position. The theoretical "fit" of a Foucauldian lens with IPA has also been established since both are concerned with how context impacts upon the experiences of the individual (Smith et al. 2009) and there is a shared focus on language. In addition, like Foucault, IPA asserts the primacy of social constructions (Ashworth 2008) in that the truth is seen as a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine perceptions of truth (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002). Furthermore, in keeping with IPA, Foucault asserts that we only have knowledge of things if they have a meaning and it is discourse, rather than the things themselves, which produce knowledge (Hall 2001).

3.5 Summary

The epistemological assumptions that underpinned this study asserted that knowledge would be subjective, dynamic, contextual and co-created. Ontologically, it was argued that there would be multiple constructed realities and axiologically it was acknowledged that the enquiry was being carried out within the value system of the researcher and the participants. The research was carried out in a social constructionist paradigm through the theoretical lens of Foucault's governmentality and biopower. The use of IPA with its emphasis on the idiographic, interpretation and the 'emic' insider's perspective, which seeks to understand the multiple realities of insiders in order to understand why people think and behave as they do, (Fetterman 1998) aligned with the philosophical assumptions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY DESIGN

This chapter outlines and justifies the design of this study. It presents a rationale for the choice of IPA over other approaches and it provides an overview of the procedures taken in identifying the sample and carrying out data collection and analysis. A discussion of the ethical issues that were addressed throughout the study is also presented.

4.1 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

This study employed IPA which draws from the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Schleiermacher and Gadamer (Smith et al. 2009). Philosophically IPA is informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. IPA is also influenced by symbolic interactionism with its concern for how meanings are constructed by individuals within both their social and their personal world. IPA has a dual aim of providing an in depth exploration of people's lived experiences as well as an examination of how people make sense of these experiences. It also facilitates a focus on social cognition in that it is concerned 'with unravelling the relationship between what people think (cognition), say (account) and do (behaviour)' (Smith and Eatough 2012 p442) which was of particular value to this thesis since it was concerned with both the perceptions and practices of fathers.

4.1.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenological philosophers have presented diverse interpretations of phenomenology as both a method and a philosophy (Moran 2000). IPA, and hence this study, draws from these different perspectives in an endeavour to explore people's lived experiences and the meanings which they attribute to these experiences. Rather than viewing plurality of perspective as problematic it is viewed as an opportunity for advancement, which is in keeping with a postmodern perspective.

IPA is influenced by the phenomenological and existential perspectives of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Schleiermacher and Gadamer who assert that the individual is embodied and embedded in the world, in a particular historical, social and cultural context (Shinebourne 2011). This perspective was particularly salient to this thesis since sex and

relationships educational practices, both in the home and in the education and public health systems, have been significantly shaped by culture, history and society (Foucault 1978).

The focus of this study was on fathers' experiences of being-in-the world in relation to their practices as early sexuality educators for their children, which draws specifically from the work of Heidegger (2010). Heidegger uses 'Dasein / dasein' both for 'the entity being' (e.g. a human being) and for this entity's 'being there' respectively. Heidegger (2010) asserts that being-in-the-world refers to three inextricably linked aspects of dasein: the world, the self and the relation between the self and the world. The self is related to both animate and inanimate entities in the world; these entities have no meaning in isolation. For example, several of the fathers I interviewed referred to books that they had used to help their children learn about puberty and reproduction. However, a book is only a book because of its meaning; a thing to give pleasure or a thing to learn from. The book only has meaning because of its relation to its purpose. Entities are understood through reference to inter-related systems of meaningfulness (Heidegger 2010, Sembera 2007); an understanding of being is always embedded in a broader context (Heidegger 2010). This was evident in the data presented in Chapter Five when fathers related their own experiences of learning about physical maturation, reproduction and relationships to their practices with their own children. Similarly, Dasein is always experienced in relation to other people. Heidegger asserts that we construct our meanings in relation to others, even if these other people are not present in the actual situation (Heidegger 2010). This was observed in my interviews with fathers in that they all made reference to the practices of other parents in making sense of their own behaviours. People do not exist as separate entities; they are integral parts of a shared world. Meanings and understandings are, therefore, co-created with the world and individuals (Conroy 2003).

4.1.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Whilst interpretation is at odds with the precepts of postmodernism, it is important to note that Heidegger translates the Greek word logos as "discourse" (Moran 2000) which, he asserts, describes the primordial human capacity to communicate with others through language (Heidegger 2010). Discourse, he asserts, underpins interpretation and thus meaning. Since discourse is a primordial human capacity, people's perceptions will reflect their dasein or 'being there' and interpretation will, therefore, be contextualised in previous experiences and understandings of the world. Thus, interpretation for Heidegger concerned the individual's interpretation of their own lived

experiences which was likely to lead to the many and varied realities that postmodernism acknowledges and which characterised the findings of this particular study.

Epistemologically, hermeneutics is, therefore, described as subjective and transactional since meanings are co-constituted in the context of an interrelationship which, by definition, will be subjective (Mills et al. 2006). IPA advocates a "double hermeneutic" which refers to the process whereby 'The participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world' (Smith 2004 p40). Thus, the knowledge generated from this study was transactional and co-constituted.

4.1.3 Why IPA in preference to other qualitative approaches?

Interpretative phenomenology was employed for this study rather than descriptive phenomenology because it resonated more closely with the study's aims. By going beyond description and looking for meanings embedded in the fathers' experiences as early sexuality educators it was hoped that an insight in to their lifeworld would be possible where the influence of contexts such as personal history, socialisation, culture, peer attitudes and beliefs would be illuminated (Heidegger 2010). However, IPA presented even further possibilities than interpretative phenomenology with its focus on social cognition. In addition, this thesis sought to deepen the fathers' understanding of their experiences and, therefore, required a broader interpretative approach which was facilitated by IPA's double hermeneutic.

Although no previous studies in this field have employed IPA a review of the IPA literature supports its applicability in researching topics that are multifaceted, dynamic and sensitive such as this. As a novice researcher IPA provided structure yet allowed freedom of thought and action (Larkin et al. 2006). Grounded theory also provides structure to the novice researcher but it was rejected as an approach because the aims of this thesis demanded a more interpretative approach and a focus on personal experiences as opposed to social processes (Willig 2001). In addition, the paucity of previous studies suggested that an exploratory study was required before theory could be developed since a theoretical pretext was lacking, thus privileging IPA as a methodology (Reid et al. 2005).

Discourse analysis was also considered because of my earlier interest in language (Appendix One). However, a focus on the fathers' beliefs, motivations and actions was felt to be necessary to truly inform this thesis. Whilst IPA emphasises the importance of language, its

mild constructionist stance was more in keeping with the epistemological and ontological position of this study than discourse analysis's strong constructionist stance. In addition, my beliefs are congruent with Eatough and Smith's (2006a p485) assertion that whilst our words may suggest agency and function to support us in achieving our objectives 'the lived life with its vicissitudes is much more than historically situated linguistic interactions between people'.

4.2 Research procedure

4.2.1 Sample

As discussed in Chapter One, the inclusion criteria for recruitment to this study was originally mothers and fathers who had a child or children in key stage two of the English education system (age seven to eleven years). Mothers and fathers were defined as a biological and/or social female or male carer for the children referred to in the research interviews. No other inclusion criteria were applied as recruitment to studies of this nature is reputed to be problematic (Martin and Torres 2014, Lefkowitz 2002).

Participants were recruited between April and June 2014 via adverts placed across the Midlands with regional Family Support Services, the 'Involve' website, the Mothers Union, the National Childbirth Trust, a Local Education Authority, a University, the Scout Association, the Guide Association, the Football Association, cricket clubs, rugby clubs, football clubs, community groups that would promote access to hard to reach participants within the Midlands area and social networking sites. A broad range and high number of advertising venues were utilised in order to overcome the problems of under recruitment identified above. Sports clubs and the Scout Association were specifically targeted as a means of recruiting fathers to the study as men were underrepresented in the literature. Permissions were sought, in writing, from relevant gate keepers prior to the data collection phase of the study (Appendix Three). The advert is presented in Appendix Four.

Sixteen people responded to the advert. However, three of the respondents had misread the advert regarding the age range of the children that would be referred to in the interviews; they were all women in same sex relationships and were very keen to participate but their children did not meet the inclusion criteria since they were age three. The on-line dialogue and telephone conversations that I had with these women prompted me to explore access to Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) communities since there was an absence of research that specifically explores the experiences of LBGT parents in the context of this study.

The women that I spoke to advertised the study through their networks and social media and I also advertised the study through LBGT community websites; however, the yield was poor and all of the people I corresponded with had children of pre-school age. Due to the time constraints of the study after six weeks of advertising I did not pursue recruitment from this community any further, although this was noted as a potential area for exploration post-doctorally. I had also hoped to recruit from hard to reach communities such as young and/or disadvantaged parents but the community groups that I made contact with were experiencing significant challenges around funding and felt unable to promote my study because of competing priorities. Again, after six weeks of correspondence I decided not to pursue this further due to the time constraints of the thesis. However, this is another area that I would like to explore post-doctorally using the same approaches so that comparisons can be drawn with the current study (Smith et al. 2009).

The remaining respondents all had children aged ten and in year five of the English education system and therefore met the inclusion criteria for the study. One of the participants went on to recommend the study to two fathers and one mother all of whom wished to participate; they also had children aged ten and in year five of the English education system. Thus, a total of sixteen participants, eight fathers and eight mothers, volunteered for and were recruited to the study. I was aware that this was a large sample for an IPA study but, as discussed in Chapter One, I was concerned that participants may drop out, leaving me with too little data to analyse. I, therefore, deliberately over-recruited to compensate for this potential risk. In retrospect, this was an unwise decision as it led to me becoming overwhelmed with the data that I collected and I had to make a decision to write up the mothers' findings elsewhere due to the word and time constraints of this thesis, as discussed in Chapter One.

The sample of fathers was homogenous; a quality which is advocated for IPA studies (Smith et al. 2009). All of the fathers lived with the child or children who were being discussed in the interview full-time and shared caring responsibilities for the child. The fathers were all white, heterosexual and similar in age (forty two - forty six years). All participants were professionals, educated to Masters level or equivalent and had children who were aged ten and in year five of the English school system.

4.2.2 Data collection

Data collection took the form of minimally structured one to one interviews which took place throughout June and July 2014. The interviews lasted between thirty and seventy two minutes. An indicative interview schedule (Appendix Five) was designed using "blocks", each addressing a different theme within the study's aims (Ingham et al. 1999). However, the schedule served only as a guide in order to privilege the parents' accounts. Questions were adapted to reflect each of the parents' individual contexts and to reflect the issues that arose. Participants were encouraged to take the lead in the interview. Prior to carrying out the interviews I undertook training in interview technique which helped me to clarify the difference between interviewing for research purposes as opposed to the clinical interview (Kvale 1996). This also helped me to develop skills as 'an empathic conversation partner' which are of particular value in sensitive interviewing (Ingham et al. 1999 p156). I also carried out a practice interview with a father of a ten year old to hone these skills further.

Interviews were carried out in the setting that the individual was recruited from, for example school offices and university classrooms or in participants' homes if the participant was recommended by an individual known to the researcher. On one occasion where the recommendation was vague and it was not possible to meet in a public place a member of my family waited outside the participant's house for me in the car. I made the participant aware of the precaution being taken, as recommended by Ingham et al. (1999), and he appeared comfortable with this. I was concerned that this intervention may make me rush the interview and affect rapport, however, my reflections on the interview and a review of the recording suggested that this was not the case. Cardiff University's Lone Worker Policy (Cardiff University 2013) was adhered to throughout the study.

Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder. At the beginning of the recording I briefed the participant that it was their story that I wanted to hear and due to the potential for confusion around terminology highlighted in Chapter One, in the pre-amble to each interview the parent and I clarified the terms that we would use. Each individual had received a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix Six) fourteen days in advance of their interview which aimed to clarify terminology in advance of the interview but in practice a discussion was required, particularly in relation to the meaning of "relationships" in the context of this particular study. Prior to obtaining the individual's written consent to participate in the study (Appendix Seven) I discussed the aims of the study, the interview format, data storage, data handling and dissemination as well as the option to withdraw data after the interview. With

the participants' consent I conducted these discussions whilst the digital voice recorder was recording to give the individual time to become comfortable with the device. After each interview the MP3 file was saved to the Cardiff University server for verbatim transcribing and listening. Field notes were recorded after each interview to reflect on the process, my experiences and anything that needed to be added to the transcripts such as non-verbal behaviours or discomfort with a particular line of questioning.

IPA requires 'a verbatim record of the data collection event' (Smith et al. 2009 p73). To avoid the transcript being 'just talk written down' (Green et al. 1997 p172) pauses, emphasis and additional non-verbal elements of the interview were noted by making a note in square brackets, for example [laughs]. When citing participants' words irrelevancies were removed and replaced with ellipsis marks.

4.2.3 Data analysis

IPA data analysis is committed to an idiographic fine-grained approach. The aim is to go beyond a simple recapitulation of the interviewee's narrative and to engage the double hermeneutic in order to understand, represent and make sense of the individual's lived experience. Thus, there is a balance between the emic phenomenological, insider position and the etic interpretative, outsider stance (Reid et al. 2005).

In order to sustain the quality and detail of analysis that IPA demands, Smith et al.'s (2009) guidelines were adhered to. Analysis was an iterative and inductive process with each interview analysed separately initially. Accounts were initially presented descriptively without interpretation, reflecting both the phenomenological and the idiographic approach to the study. Prior to data analysis I had listened to the interview recording several times and I read and re-read the transcript to immerse myself in the fathers' narratives. I also referred back to my journal entries which detailed my overall impression of the interview. Transcripts were then converted into a table with three columns. The transcript occupied the middle column and was double-line spaced with all lines and pages numbered. Each transcript was analysed line by line and initial descriptive notes were made in the left hand column, in blue, to capture my observations and thoughts arising from the words of the parent. Observations of the language used and semantic content were made on the transcript itself, in purple, and conceptual comments were recorded in the right hand column, in red. For each section of the transcript I considered the linguistic qualities first, I then made descriptive notes and finally, I

developed conceptual comments which, in due course, became themes, as advised by Smith et al. (1999). An example is provided in Appendix Eight. From these notes, which were recorded manually, emerging themes were identified which were felt to best capture the essential qualities of the interview.

Smith et al. (2009) advocate a dynamic and iterative approach to interpretation. In employing the concept of the hermeneutic circle they emphasise the interplay between the parts and the whole and between the interpreter and the research participant(s) and their story. Smith (2004) draws on Ricoeur's (1970) distinction between the hermeneutics of meaning recollection and empathic engagement and the hermeneutics of suspicion and critical engagement. By engaging both modes of hermeneutic engagement, Smith (2004) argues that a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's lived experience can be gained. This study sought to achieve this depth of interpretative analysis by initially prioritising 'hermeneutics centred in empathy and meaning recollection' and then going on to a 'hermeneutics of questioning, of critical engagement' to allow for a 'more complete understanding of the participant's lived experience' (Smith 2004 p46). This process was cyclical in that emerging themes were tested against earlier data and themes were, on occasion, changed to become subordinate or superordinate.

Whilst bracketing can appear paradoxical in IPA, in that Smith et al. (1999) acknowledge that the researcher significantly shapes the research process and co-constructs the findings of the research, I agreed with the position that assumptions may present 'an obstacle to interpretation' (Smith 2007 p6). Throughout the process presuppositions and judgements were, therefore, suspended through a process of reflexivity, as discussed in section 4.4. The aim was to focus on what was present in the data rather than what I assumed to be present (Spinelli 2002). For this reason I did not update my literature review until after having completed data analysis as I was concerned that my anxiety to get the analysis "right" may lead me to "look for" themes that had been identified previously in the literature. Whilst delaying the literature review is not a requirement of IPA, I was aware that prior knowledge may have negatively impacted upon how I approached the data and chose, instead, to gain a naïve interpretation of the parents' narratives.

Throughout the process of data analysis, I was mindful of IPA's philosophical underpinnings and aims. In addition to the idiographic and hermeneutic practices that I brought to the study, the aim was to maintain a phenomenological commitment in illuminating the lifeworlds of the fathers and to explore the relationship between their cognitions, accounts and actions

(Eatough and Smith 2008). Thus, the process was simultaneously inductive and deductive with the hermeneutic circle at the heart of the process, although the application of theory at this stage was suspended in order to present a transparent relationship between the fathers' words and my interpretations (Eatough et al. 2008).

Whilst analysing the language in the fathers' stories I found that binary oppositions repeatedly emerged from my readings, for example controlling behaviours coupled with laissez-faire approaches. I tried initially to adhere to IPA's tradition of presenting overarching unified themes but I found that this approach failed to capture the tensions and conflicts that characterised the fathers' conversations with me. For example, one of the fathers, Angus, was shaking with what appeared to be anxiety as he told me that children need to know about sex from an early age in order to decrease their vulnerability to predators, yet when I asked him about the knowledge levels of his ten year old daughter he explained that he had had no dialogue with her and had no insight into her level of understanding. Thus, a binary opposition emerged in relation to what was said and what was done. Another father, Michael, described his relationship with his ten year old son as very open and 'friend-like' but he repeatedly described employing avoidance behaviours such as throwing a blanket over his son's head or distracting him if sexual content appeared on the television. A tension, therefore, surfaced in that he viewed his son as "same" yet "other" simultaneously.

Thus, it felt necessary to break with tradition by presenting the themes that emerged from the fathers' words in their binary forms when they emerged as such. The text was not fully deconstructed in the form of a Derridean deconstruction since this would be out of keeping with IPA's phenomenological commitment to analysing participants' accounts as they are presented to the interviewer. However, the identification of binary oppositions, where the first word is valorised over the second, was used since this facilitated me in challenging notions of identity, entity, power and opposition because a term will contain both itself and its other (Sampson 1989). Thus, although the binaries may appear to be in opposition they are, indeed, unifying in that they are very closely related.

Themes were, therefore, clustered around their related binary forms, where applicable, and a superordinate category that aimed to capture the essence of the binaries was identified for each cluster. A summary table of themes with supporting reference to the data was developed for each interview, as presented in the idiographic analyses in Chapter Five. This process was repeated for each interview before moving on to the next. However, whilst this description suggests a linear approach, in practice the process was fluid, cyclical and iterative.

Finally, a cross-group comparison was made to identify areas of convergence and divergence between the fathers. To facilitate this process Smith et al.'s (2009) guidance concerning the use of abstraction, subsumption, polarisation, contextualisation, numeration and function was used in order to establish a deeper understanding of the data.

4.3 Ethical issues

The School of Healthcare Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University granted approval for this study in March 2014. Confirmation of approvals is provided in Appendix Two. The study has adhered to the approved proposal throughout.

Participants' autonomy was respected throughout the study by ensuring that prospective participants were able to voluntarily decide whether to take part in the study and that full disclosure regarding the nature of the study and the right to refuse to participate or withdraw was provided in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendices Six and Seven). A stipend was not offered to participants to avoid economically disadvantaged participants feeling coerced into participation. Equally, care was taken to ensure that gatekeepers did not coerce individuals to participate in the study. Beneficence was upheld by ensuring the academic integrity of the research design since this should ensure maximal benefit by producing outputs that are worthy of dissemination. In addition, all participants' names were changed to pseudonyms and direct quotations were anonymised in order to safeguard their confidentiality. Respect for participants' beliefs, attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours was demonstrated through the course of the interviews and the fathers were afforded courteous and sensitive treatment at all times.

It was acknowledged that non-maleficence was potentially problematic for this research study. There was a risk that emotional harm or discomfort would occur if in-depth probing exposed deep-seated emotions related to participants' personal experiences as children in relation to family dynamics and/or early sexual experiences. Since this was anticipated, questions were designed to avoid eliciting such responses, however, it was agreed that if this should occur participants would be listened to and sign-posted as set out by Cardiff University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (Cardiff University 2010a) (Appendix Nine). Cardiff University's Governance and Compliance policies (Cardiff University 2010b) were adhered to throughout all phases of the study; these policies address the Data Protection Act (1998), Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the Human Rights Act (1998).

In practice, the only significant ethical challenge arose from my insider status. As Burns et al. (2012) emphasise, a blurring of boundaries can easily occur in insider research due to role confusion or ambiguity (Toffoli and Rudge 2006, Bonner and Tolhurst 2002, Groenkjaer 2002). Such confusion did occur on the part of a participant who perceived me as a nurse and mother rather than a researcher and asked me for advice. I prevented this from becoming an ethical dilemma by explaining my role as a researcher and sign-posting the individual to agencies that would be able to provide the advice that he was seeking, however, if I had not been prepared for this scenario a blurring and confusion of boundaries could have easily occurred.

4.4 Enhancing the quality of the study through reflexivity

The integrity and trustworthiness of a qualitative study such as this, is underpinned by a reflexive evaluation, on the part of the researcher, as to how intersubjective factors may influence data collection and analysis (Finlay 2002). Throughout the course of the study I engaged in reflexive practice through journaling, supervision, peer discussion and a synthesis of the wider research methods and methodological literature with my reflections. Key areas of my reflexivity are outlined below.

4.4.1 My performance as a novice interviewer

As an inexperienced qualitative researcher using IPA, I identified through my practice interview that I needed to relinquish my desire to have absolute control over data collection and, instead, I needed to encourage the fathers to lead the interviews. Daly (2007 p7) refers to this as the 'paradox of control'. He argues that in order to truly see, strategies that allow for deliberate control and the release of control are vital. Whilst I viewed the interviewees as narrators with a story to tell and a voice of their own I had to work hard to fight my tendency to adhere to my planned interview schedule and go beyond treating the fathers simply as repositories of knowledge as advised by Holstein and Gubrium (1997). In addition, having previously read the work of Oakley (1981) and Allen (2000) I was acutely aware of the power imbalances that can occur in the interview relationship.

In order to address these issues I followed Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) advice to commence the interview process by establishing a rapport with the participant. I achieved this by talking to each of the fathers about their work and families and I shared a little of myself as

a parent as well as a researcher. I found the pre-amble to each interview particularly difficult in terms of my 'identity performance' (Bishop and Shepherd 2011 p1285) and had to take care to not slip in to the more familiar role of friend, nurse or advisor which would have been at odds with my role as researcher (Biggerstaff and Thompson 2008). I also went on to explain to each participant that they were the "expert" and that there were no "wrong" or "right" answers to the questions that I was about to ask. In addition, I explained that the interaction would take the form of a conversation rather than a traditional interview. In practice this worked well and I found each interview progressively easier with each one feeling increasingly relaxed and fruitful, with just one exception that I expand on in section 5.1.8 and below.

Other strategies that I implemented included interviewing each participant individually with no other parties present since co-presence can impact negatively on the authenticity of the account provided by participants in sensitive interviews (Ingham et al. 1999). In addition, I developed probing techniques such as 'tell me a little more about that' or 'how did you feel about that?' in order to facilitate further exploration and to orientate the narrator and myself to the unique and particular nature of their story as recommended by Chase (2005). These probes also facilitated achievement of the double-hermeneutic that characterises IPA (Smith et al. 2009). Prompts were also used to help the parents with recall, where necessary, as memory was important to the interview, an example included 'would your daughter /son have been at school by then?' These skills were largely acquired through reference to the literature and discussion with my peers and supervisors.

A feature of my field notes was a developing theme regarding the embodied experience of the interview for both the participant and me, the interviewer. Prior to the interviews I was aware and sensitive to the fact that I was a lone female researcher discussing sexual topics with men who I did not know. As discussed in section 4.2.2 I was critically aware of the need to ensure my safety, however, I was also aware of the need to minimise risk by pre-empting any potential alternative agendas on the part of the men I was interviewing. Beyond employing Cardiff University's Lone Worker Policy (Cardiff University 2013) I took steps to project a professional non-sexual image by wearing trousers, flat shoes, opaque high neck loose fitting tops and I tied my hair back. Whilst keen to establish a rapport I took care to be personable yet business like and during the interview I very deliberately referred to intimate subjects such as erections, masturbation and coitus in a very matter of fact manner. A feature of the verbal discussions was the innocent versus sexualised body but my sexuality was not directly referred to in any of the interviews and I never felt vulnerable, however, the bodily presence of me as a

female and the participant as a male was significant in adding meaning and context to the discussions and revealing the "more" about the experience (Finlay 2006). For example, seven of the eight men I interviewed found it difficult to make eye contact with me when discussing their aspirations for their children's future sexual relationships and in turn, I found it difficult to maintain eye contact and felt embarrassed throughout my final interview because the father had very direct eye contact and consistently invaded my personal space. I also noted a tendency amongst the men to physically distance themselves from me by leaning back and looking upwards when they struggled to discuss certain issues and at times they used language to assert their heterosexualities, for example when Michael referred to penis size, James spoke about his early sexual experiences and Nigel explained that although he may come across as gay he categorically wasn't. I am certain that my gender impacted on the embodied experience of the interviews for me and, I would argue, my participants.

4.4.2 Insider status

The role duality that characterises insider research, where the insider role and researcher role oscillates and blurs, was a challenge for me throughout the study. Whilst postmodernism rejects the insider/outsider binary I was aware that as an 'indigenous-insider' (Banks 1998) I was a complete member of the community I was researching (Adler and Adler 1987). Like my research participants I too was heterosexual, middle class, white and a parent of a ten year old child living with my child(ren)'s other natural parent and child(ren) full-time in the middle of England. Whilst I was aware of the many advantages of having insider status such as the potential for a more nuanced and meaningful research question (Hayfield and Huxley 2015), enhanced access to and recruitment of participants (Hayfield and Huxley 2015, Kerstetter 2012, LaSala 2003), rapport building (Burns et al. 2012, Santiano et al. 2008, Allen 2004, Kanuha 2000) and the associated potential to facilitate richer and more authentic accounts (Perry et al. 2004, LaSala 2003) I was also aware of the limitations of having a pre-understanding of the field. It is widely argued that insider status brings with it experiential knowledge that can bring about a deeper understanding and authentic interpretation during data collection and analysis to produce deep authentic findings (Hayfield and Huxley 2015, Kerstetter 2012, Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle 2009, Perry et al. 2004, LaSala 2003). However, I was concerned that my familiarity with the field may result in the loss of "analytical perspective" (Adler and Adler 1987) and that it may be difficult to separate my personal experiences from those of the research participants (Kanuha 2000). Whilst acknowledging

Heidegger's (2010) position that every experience requires interpretation and that there can be no Cartesian split between the person and the experience since they are co-constituting (Schmidt 2006) I shared so many characteristics with my research participants that I felt that it was essential to 'critically and reflexively evaluate how these pre-understandings influence[d] the research' (Finlay 2008 p17). Indeed, I was acutely aware of the risk that 'those ordinary, routine, everyday things which are essential to an understanding of the world being researched would remain unnoticed' (Boulton 2000 p90-91).

The 'familiarity problem', first described by Geer (1964), is concerned with the anaesthetizing effect that an acquaintance with the research field can have on each stage of the research process. The problems associated with familiarity have received attention from a number of sociologists and anthropologists throughout the last four decades (Delamont 2005, 2002, 1981, Singleton 1999, Delamont and Atkinson 1995, Lave and Wenger 1991, Spindler and Spindler 1982, Wolcott 1981, Atkinson and Delamont 1980, Young 1971, Becker 1971). Consistently, these authors have drawn attention to the dangers of assuming commonalities, arguing that taken for granted assumptions need to be challenged to allow for the development and the creation of new understandings.

The familiarity problem was particularly pertinent to me as an insider researcher. Methodological and epistemic reflexivity (Johnson and Duberley 2003) was, therefore, essential in allowing me to articulate tacit knowledge and reframe it theoretically (Brannick and Coghlan 2007). 'Methodological self-consciousness' (Finlay and Gough 2003 p4) and an ongoing focus on the 'story behind the story' (de Laine 2000 p212) through reflexivity was pivotal in facilitating a clearer insight into my adaptation and the relationships between me as the insider researcher and the study participants in our co-production of knowledge. An intellectual process of "de-familiarisation" was also required to make the familiar strange (Atkinson et al. 2003). By problematizing the field, as outlined in Chapters One and Three, I was able to identify a foreshadowed problem. Whilst my attempts to study unfamiliar cultures such as the marginalised groups I mention in section 4.2.1 failed I was still able to take the standpoint of the other (Delamont et al. 2010) by exploiting naïve questioning (Tang 2007, Hellawell 2006), by considering gendered experiences and by using unfamiliar spaces when carrying out the interviews, for example in the fathers' own homes or places of work. The latter also helped to address some of the potential power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship outlined above that may have also obscured my ability to truly see.

Delamont et al. (2010 p5) emphasise the need for 'self-conscious strategies' in fighting familiarity. I found that journaling and synthesising my reflections with the methodological literature and the application of the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three also helped me to fight familiarity. I also found that supervision and peer review of my reflections by critical friends from different academic fields enhanced the reflexivity of my work and, hence, helped me to make the familiar strange. By discussing my data collection and data analysis in this way it helped to prevent me from making emerging realities fit with my existing schemes of typification. Additional factors in fighting familiarity concerned my fundamental skills as a researcher for example my listening skills, my understanding of background constructions which participants may have used to explain their stories, my understanding of research methods, my ability to question (Riemann 2005) and the use of IPA in facilitating analysis of the data.

4.4.3 Giving priority 'to the new object'

In keeping with Heidegger's (2010 p195) assertion that 'priority should be given to the new object rather than to one's preconceptions' and Gadamer's contention that pre-understandings or 'prejudices' will be present and changing throughout the interpretative process (Moran 2000) emphasis was also given to reflexivity throughout the data analysis phase of the study. From a hermeneutic perspective a value-free interpretation that brackets the researcher's preconceptions is at odds with the interpretative process since values are viewed as instrumental to the interpretation (Annells 1996). However, because of the issues outlined previously in relation to my insider status I discussed my interpretations in detail with my supervisory team at each stage of the analysis to ensure that my interpretations remained true to the men's words.

I had expected the descriptive phase of data analysis to be an intuitive process but the experience was quite the opposite. With the exception of one of the fathers, Neil, the group's perceptions, experiences and practices did not resonate with me at all. The transcripts were, on the whole, characterised by laudable aspirations coupled with a lack of action. As a parent my approach to educating my children about their bodies and decisions that will impact on their well-being has been consistently matter of fact regardless of the topic. Thus, for me discussing puberty, relationships and reproduction has simply been an integral part of my parenting and I have discussed these issues with my children from a very early age, in the same

way that I have discussed choices in relation to, for example, diet, hand washing and coping with playground politics. The lived experiences of all but one of the fathers I interviewed was, therefore, very difficult for me to relate to. Hence interpretation was a challenging and protracted process. At times I felt frustrated with the men whose words I was analysing as I felt that they were deceiving themselves in that they portrayed open, empathic relationships with their children but the practices they described did not match this ideal. Thus, reflexive practice through journaling, supervision and peer discussion was very important to ensuring that my personal beliefs and values did not obscure the clarity of my reading and interpretation.

4.5 Summary of chapter

A far-reaching recruitment strategy successfully secured a homogenous sample of eight fathers who participated in this IPA study. Data collection took the form of face to face semi-structured interviews which were rewarding and felt reciprocal in that it felt that the double hermeneutic that took place in all of the interviews supported a mutually beneficial exchange. There was no evidence of the power imbalance that I had been concerned about but I was aware that gender impacted upon the interview process with many of the men being reserved and cautious. No ethical issues arose throughout the data collection phase of the study and all of the participants offered further participation if required. Data analysis was iterative and deductive and conformed to the guidance set out by Smith et al. (1999). Throughout the research process reflexive practices were employed in order to enhance the quality of the study.

PART TWO: THE FATHERS' EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER FIVE: IDIOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The following chapter presents the idiographic descriptive analysis of each of the fathers' conversations. Each idiographic account commences with a brief biography of the father which is followed by a table of themes that emerged from the transcript. Where binary oppositions have emerged the superordinate themes include the binaries and are expressed as follows:

> Fatherhood: Aspiring to be involved yet largely detached
> Sexuality: Recognising the need to talk yet continuing the silence
> Childhood: The innocent "other" versus the "adult in the making"

For clarity, the binaries are underlined within the table and the subordinate themes which inform each of these are tabulated below the corresponding binary. It is important to note that each subordinate theme is not necessarily in opposition with the theme presented in the adjacent column since it is the unification of the subordinate themes that form the binary at the superordinate level. For one participant, Neil, no binaries emerged in relation to two of the themes, thus the superordinate theme is worded to demonstrate this.

After the table of themes, a description of the participants' experiences is provided, supported by their words. Within the discussions, where direct quotations are used my words, as the interviewer, are in plain font and the participants' words are in italics. Throughout, pseudonyms have been used and quotations have been anonymised. A table which provides an audit trail for the identification of each subordinate theme is provided at the end of the results for each father. Finally, at the end of the chapter, an analysis at the group level is presented.

5.1 Idiographic data analysis

5.1.1 Michael

Michael was a forty three year old professional, educated to Masters' level. He lived full-time with his wife and son, Henry, who was aged ten and in year five at school. Michael did not work with children professionally but he was a sports coach for a group of ten year old children who he trained weekly on a voluntary basis. Michael responded to an advert placed at a local

sports club. The interview took place in his home and lasted forty nine minutes. A table of themes that emerged from Michael's interview are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Michael's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood:** **<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I want to do a better job than my parents' 'I'm equipped to do it' 'We can talk about anything'	'They'll learn it in the playground' 'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'It's a parental responsibility'	Discomfort Avoidance 'I haven't actually approached it' 'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Censorship 'S/he isn't ready' Surveillance	Heteronormative frames of reference 'He's alright in that department'	Subordinate themes

Michael appeared very confident and articulate prior to the interview but once the interview commenced his linguistic pattern changed significantly to include hesitancies, pauses, repetitions, euphemisms and use of 'you' instead of 'I'. He also appeared uncomfortable and avoided answering several of my questions. For example when describing his own lack of input from his parents into his sexuality education he said:

> *I don't think I would have got a lot at home, on the sexual side I don't think I would have got, got umm anything. I can't remember getting any sort of guidance on relationships in general. We didn't talk like that. Any questions would have been met with, greeted with, you know a silence, ignoring type behaviours ... I think you you probably learnt a little, sort of from, what you see when your mum has gone through four marriages and you think* [eyes raised and a shrug] *"I'm not going to do it like that". But no umm no talking about it, you know that sort of thing. Just watching you know. I think I can do a better job than that.*

Thus Michael's personal experience of family based sexuality communication was characterised by a lack of verbal communication, or in his words *'a silence'*. However, that is not to say that no learning took place, as he said, he learnt a great deal about relationships by observing the world around him.

Michael felt that he had a close relationship with his son and he was confident that his son could talk with him openly:

> *… it's a bit of a, kind of a friend relationship, you know, we're mates.*
> *… he is quite open with us and we are, kind of, you know, quite open with him.*
> *Henry and I have got a good relationship. We talk, you know umm we're open with each other ...*

Michael described feeling equipped to teach his son about puberty, relationships and reproduction and perceived himself as better equipped than other parents:

> *I feel as though I'm reasonably equipped to do it which might be a bit conceited thinking that but I do wonder umm whether other people are or not comfortable or whether they have the skills to do it, but then you know also how do you reach them, but it sounds quite judgmental but uneducated people how are you going to educate them?*

Michael felt that it was a parental responsibility to educate children about puberty, relationships and reproduction, however, he had not engaged in such discussions with Henry:

> *Well without having major thoughts about it I would umm say it's really the parents but then, umm perhaps it's a bit of both, school and home …*
>
> *Umm I think I am aware of helping Henry with relationships. On the sexual side I probably haven't actually approached it in a, as a are you ready for a talk yet? I don't, I don't think I've said if you ever want to talk.*

Michael's transcript appeared to suggest a tension between his perceptions of himself as a father and his actions. Whilst he aspired and felt *'equipped'* to be open with Henry, in practice he was not. He had not had any dialogue with Henry and did not know how much his son knew about puberty, relationships and reproduction. Tensions between Michael's aspirations as a father and his behaviours were captured in the following extract:

> *We sometimes let him stay up a bit late and there are things on the telly and if he realises I'm trying to get his attention and start talking to him when something's happening on the telly or about to happen then he will turn away and look away from the telly. Other times we throw a blanket over his head so he can't see* [laughs]. *He might be grinning but there's an awareness that it's inappropriate for him, which we've said at other times that things are inappropriate for him and he'll have to go to bed or he's got to look away from the telly. He's very happy to not look and I think he's aware that as long as he's looking away and talking to me*

keeping the conversation going, or stays under the blanket, he's quite happy as he won't have to go to bed. So we've got around that.

The extract commenced by hinting at a tension between Michael wanting Henry to see him as a friend, by enjoying a film together, but a friendship was not possible because of inequalities in power in that Michael *'lets'* him stay up late. Michael felt that he had to censor Henry's viewing and determine what was appropriate and inappropriate for him to see. Thus, whilst the extract initially suggested that Michael saw his son as "the same" as him, his practices implied that Henry was also perceived as "other". The relaxed experience of sharing a film was replaced by behaviours that aimed to control what Henry saw and suppressed discussion.

In contrast to the control that Michael appeared to exert in the home in avoiding conversations about sexuality, in practice he adopted a laissez-faire approach to Henry's sexuality education. Whilst acknowledging this as potentially problematic, he suggested that the majority of his son's learning was taking place in the playground: '[he is] *possibly not learning it from the right* [long pause] *either from parents or teachers but maybe from other ten year old kids which might not be the best* [laughs]'.

Michael appeared to lack insight into Henry's stage of development and did not acknowledge that his son was growing up and approaching a period of physical and emotional change:

Interviewer: How about say puberty? At around this age, some boys start to change don't they?

Michael: Umm.

Interviewer: They might grow body hair, have wet dreams and so on? Have you talked about those kinds of changes?

Michael: No I haven't no.

Interviewer: Has it occurred to you?

Michael: No it probably hasn't. I don't think he is close to that stage. I know sometimes in the morning he's woken up and standing proud with a morning glory whatever [tails off].

Interviewer: When do you think children are ready to know about puberty, relationships and reproduction?

Michael: *I don't think Henry is yet … he hasn't shown any interest* [in girls] *yet.*

This last response suggested that whilst I, as the interviewer, was talking about three areas of learning, Michael had aggregated these three aspects to one, interpreting the conversation as being concerned only with (hetero)sexual relationships. Whilst Michael made reference to teaching Henry to wash under his foreskin when he was younger, '*I did make sure that when*

he was cleaning himself in the bathroom that he did pull his foreskin back', the conversation suggested a lack of acknowledgment that Henry had a body that was on the cusp of changing.

Michael did, however, appear to see Henry as gendered and potentially sexual, for example in referring to the size of his son's penis and flirting with girls as detailed below:

> *Henry said "you can do what you want when you are the biggest in your year"* [laughs] *so he thinks he's ok there* [referring to size of son's penis].
>
> *We used to have an older girl next door, and he used to bounce on the trampoline shouting "Chloe", "Chloe"* [implying flirting].

Thus, Michael's main experience in engaging in sex and relationships education with Henry was characterised by avoidance and thus, the same silence that he described in his own experiences of parent-child sexuality communication. This appeared to be at odds with his beliefs that parents had a responsibility to teach their children about these issues and his practices were incongruent with perceptions of himself as a father. Table 5.2 demonstrates the relationship between Michael's words, the identification of subordinate themes and the emergence of superordinate themes.

Table 5.2 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Michael's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1	***Fatherhood:*** ***<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>***				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I want to do a better job than my parents'	*I don't think I would have got a lot at home, on the sexual side I don't think I would have got, got umm anything. I can't remember getting any sort of guidance on relationships in general. We didn't talk like that. Any questions would have been met with, greeted with, you know a silence, ignoring type behaviours. And urrr I urrr I possibly wouldn't have taken advice from those people.* *I think you you probably learnt a little, sort of from, what you see when your mum has gone through four marriages and you think* [eyes raised and a shrug] *"I'm not going to do it like that". But no umm no talking about it, you know that sort of thing. Just watching you know. I think I can do a better job than that.*	1.3-6 1.10-12	**'They'll learn it in the playground'**	Do you think he knows how babies are made? *I would say so but* [long pause], *possibly not learning it from the right* [long pause] *either from parents or teachers but maybe from other ten year old kids which might not be the best* [laughs]. *I think he is learning bits from the kids at school.*	6.66-69 8.109
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I feel as though I'm reasonably equipped to do it which might be a bit conceited thinking that but I do wonder umm whether other people are or not comfortable or whether they have the skills to do it, but then you know also how do you reach them, but it sounds quite judgmental but uneducated people how are you going to educate them?*	10.139-43	**'Truth is I've not really thought about it'**	How about say puberty? At around this age, some boys start to change don't they? *Umm.* They might grow body hair, have wet dreams and so on? Have you talked about those kinds of changes? *No I haven't no.* Has it occurred to you? *No it probably hasn't. I don't think he is close to that stage. I know sometimes in the morning he's woken up and standing proud with a morning glory whatever* [tails off]. *I haven't thought about it before*	8.100-106 7.96

'We can talk about anything'	*… it's a bit of a, kind of a friend relationship, you know, we're mates.* *… he is quite open with us and we are, kind of, you know, quite open with him.* *Henry and I have got a good relationship. We talk, you know umm we're open with each other, you know.*	5.64 5.62 2.27-28			

Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'It's a parental responsibility'	*it's really the parents but then, umm perhaps it's a bit of both*	5.53	**Discomfort**	*a long time ago he asked me sort of about the difference between girls and boys, sort of downstairs and so I told him bits, the basic bits there but not* [tails off]	4.54-57
			Avoidance	*We sometimes let him stay up a bit late and there are things on the telly and if he realises I'm trying to get his attention and start talking to him when something's happening on the telly or about to happen then he will turn away and look away from the telly. Other times we throw a blanket over his head so he can't see* [laughs]. *He might be grinning but there's an awareness that it's inappropriate for him, which we've said at other times that things are inappropriate for him and he'll have to go to bed or he's got to look away from the telly. He's very happy to not look and I think he's aware that as long as he's looking away and talking to me keeping the conversation going, or stays under the blanket, he's quite happy as he won't have to go to bed. So we've got around that.*	3.28-40
			'I haven't actually approached it'	*On the sexual side I probably haven't actually approached it in a, as a are you ready for a talk yet? I don't, I don't think I've said if you ever want to talk.*	2.25-27

			'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Do you think he knows how babies are made? *I would say so*	6.66-67
Superordinate Theme 3			**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
Censorship	*we've said … that things are inappropriate for him and he'll have to go to bed or he's got to look away from the telly.*	3.34-35	**Heteronormative frames of reference**	*I said something sort of silly with him and said 'Henry and ... sitting in a tree, k i s s i n g ...'* *He used to have an older girl next door, and used to bounce on the trampoline shouting "Chloe", "Chloe"* [implying flirting*].* *… he hasn't shown any interest* [in girls] *yet*	3.41-42 4.49-50 6.71
'S/he isn't ready'	When do you think children are ready to know about sex and reproduction? *I don't think Henry is yet …*	6.70	**'He's alright in that department'**	*"you can do what you want when you are the biggest in your year"* [laughs] *so he thinks he's ok there* [referring to size of son's penis].	9.120-121
Surveillance	*I did make sure that when he was cleaning himself in the bathroom that he did pull his foreskin back.*	7.96-97			

5.1.2 Nigel

Nigel was a senior healthcare professional, aged forty three and educated to Masters' level. He lived full-time with his wife and two sons, Jo and Tom, who were aged ten and eleven and in years five and six respectively at primary school. Nigel had professional experience of talking to primary school aged children about puberty, relationships and reproduction.

Nigel had responded to an advert for the study that he had seen at his local university. The interview took place at Nigel's place of work. It was a relaxed interview in which Nigel was keen to tell his story and I felt able to probe. The interview lasted sixty two minutes. A table of themes that emerged from Nigel's interview are presented in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Nigel's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood:** **<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I want to do a better job than my parents' 'I'm equipped to do it'	Gendered division of labour 'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'It's a parental responsibility'	External catalyst required to prompt action Avoidance 'He already knew'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I gave him all he needs to know' 'S/he isn't ready'	Gay is OK for my son Girls need to know earlier Parental openness leads to child's openness Sex is about love	Subordinate themes

Nigel began his interview by describing a lack of parent-child sexuality communication throughout his own childhood: *'I remember going home doing my homework and saying to my mum that we are doing sex education tomorrow so don't bother telling me anymore and they never did. It was never talked about with my parents …'.*

However, Nigel felt strongly that educating children about puberty, relationships and reproduction was '*the parents' responsibility*' and *'you shouldn't shirk it*'. He reflected on his own parents' lack of communication with him about intimate issues and he wanted to be better than them in this regard. He described feeling knowledgeable and confident in undertaking this role because of his professional experience in delivering sexual health promotion sessions in schools coupled with his experience in discussing intimate sexual issues with patients:

> *In my role as* [omitted to safeguard confidentiality]*, three years ago I really had to up my game with sexual health because I was asked to deliver a sexual health session in a school. We went to a school up the road and I was very worried about that as I wanted to get that information right for those children ... I am completely comfortable now doing that on my own because it isn't just about sex, it is about relationships. It was received very well.*

I was interested to explore whether Nigel's professional experience had impacted on his lived experience as a father:

> *No it didn't trigger anything as such. We have a family philosophy that it doesn't matter what they've done, how bad they think it is, but they can always talk to us and we would always listen and we would rather know what's happened than sweep things under the carpet. There are times in the family, where after a meal we'll have a family meeting as either something's not right at school or they aren't tidying up and those sort of things but equally there hasn't been a trigger point at school.*

This response was disjointed and suggested that Nigel wanted to emphasise that open communication was a priority within his family. It also implied that Nigel felt that an external catalyst, such as school, was required to prompt such conversations in the home. Further, it hinted at a disjuncture between Nigel's professional and private lifeworlds. Nigel described having an *'open and honest'* relationship with his children yet he had not discussed any aspect of puberty, sex or relationships with his son Tom, who was ten: '*It needed to be Jo rather than Tom we talked to as he's that bit older'.* In describing why he had decided that it was time to talk to Jo, age eleven, he recalled:

> *The real trigger point for me was at work recently. I saw a twelve year old who came in with testicular pain … it was a complete shock to me, he'd gone through puberty … I came home that night and said 'we need to talk to Jo about this'.*

I felt a bit of an idiot, I didn't see the need with my own child.

Regardless of all of his clinical knowledge Nigel had not recognised that his older son was peri-pubertal and he continued to appear unaware of his ten year old son's development. It was a genuine shock to him that a boy who was less than twelve months older than Jo had pubic hair and developed sex organs. He had not seen his son as he really was chronologically and developmentally. Whilst Nigel had recognised a need to talk to Jo he still did not feel that it was necessary to speak to Tom, thus it appeared that he saw his children as 'other' and a silence around sexuality had prevailed up until this point. However, Nigel was proud of how he had taught his older son, Jo, about these issues:

> *I don't think my dad could have talked to me about it which is why I've gone to the extreme with Jo.*
>
> *… it's better to find out from your parents and to be privileged to have that relationship with your children and I'm lucky to have that and really cherish it.*

However, an analysis of Nigel's words suggested a dissonance between Nigel's perceived behaviour in going *'to the extreme with Jo'* and his actual behaviour:

> *We talked a little bit about hairs but we didn't talk about wet dreams or erections particularly. We talked about relationships and a little about sex but not the full mechanics. It feels a little bit like you don't have to explain it in full.*

Nigel described Jo as reluctant to talk with him initially: '*I don't really want to* [talk] *... I still want to be a boy*'. However, he described the discussion as soon becoming comfortable for Jo and *'he really wanted to talk'* and Jo wanted to continue to talk later that same evening: *'Later on he called me back and said 'can I have a word please', and he said 'actually dad I've got one hair''*. However, his dad did not take the opportunity to continue the conversation and *'just gave him a big hug'* and so the dialogue was brought to an end.

Thus it would appear that going *'to the extreme'* was, in reality, a brief and superficial discussion. Nigel's description suggested that he had avoided talking about issues that were of real relevance to Jo at this stage in his life such as erections and wet dreams and he had not discussed intercourse in any detail. His shift to 'you' rather than 'I' and reference to the euphemisms *'it'* and '*the full mechanics*' suggested a discomfort. When I probed further, Nigel's language again intimated some reluctance to be the open dad that he aspired to be:

> Interviewer: Going back to Jo, he told you he's got a [pubic] hair, when will you talk to him about other things such as wet dreams?
>
> *Nigel: I suppose, I'm going to have to do it in the next two years or even less... sooner rather than later or even before he starts secondary school.*

Although Jo had given him an opening and had been keen to engage in a dialogue, Nigel did not appear to see the need to speak to him more comprehensively. It was likely that Jo had already had wet dreams but there appeared to be no acknowledgement of this. Nigel's language, '*I'm going to have to do it*', implied a reluctance to engage in a discussion with Tom.

It appeared that Nigel wanted to control the conversations with his sons in terms of choosing when and how much dialogue would occur, for example:

> *We haven't spoken about it since, so it feels comfortable … I've left the door open but I don't feel the need to do it now.*

It was unclear as to who *'it feels comfortable'* for. The suggestion was that since the subject had not arisen Jo must feel comfortable with it but a second reading suggested that Nigel was comfortable because he had not had to discuss *'it'* again. The use of the euphemism *'it'* intimated discomfort on Nigel's part and the metaphor *'I've left the door open'* suggested that Nigel assumed that Jo would ask questions as they arose but there was no evidence to suggest that this would be the case. Thus a tension between open/closed was apparent in Nigel's dialogue. Aligned with this, a tension between control/laissez faire approaches to parenting also emerged; whilst Nigel's actions were controlling his lack of action was, at the same time, laissez-faire in that discussions were too late and incomplete. Indeed, the discussion that he had with Jo occurred after Jo had already learnt about sex:

> *Jo, came out with this Collin's book on how to do everything and said 'Dad you should read through this as there is a bit on how to talk to your children about sex'. And I thought 'Oh My God', and he'd read it. He already knew.*

Additional examples of avoidance were present in Nigel's words when he described behaviours that Jo and Tom had engaged in:

> *I remember one of the parents saying 'Jo is saying things to my daughter about "sexing" her and I don't like it'. We definitely had a family meeting that night! … I didn't talk about the act then as I know it just felt very uncomfortable.*
>
> *They put 'naughty girl' into Google, they … got an image of a man with an erect penis and a woman licking it … They were quite happy that it was a woman licking a man's penis, they didn't sexualise it. It didn't seem the horrific image we might think. It may have been brushed under the carpet or we just moved on as tomorrow is another day.*

Nigel used explicit language in relaying the facts of each story but shifted to euphemism and metaphor when describing his responses. His use of the word 'uncomfortable' was amplified by his use of euphemism in referring to *'the act'* and metaphor in describing how the discussion was '*brushed under the carpet*' and how they '*moved on'*. His choice of language

reinforced the suggestion of avoidance behaviours underpinned by discomfort. Thus, again it appeared that a tension existed between Nigel's aspirations as a parent and his actions.

Nigel's words suggested that regardless of the experiences described above concerning *'sexing'* and the *'naughty girl'* images he appeared to perceive his boys as asexual and felt that they were not ready to talk about these issues. However, Jo *'already knew'* and it was likely that Jo would "already know" about wet dreams and erections well before his father felt that the time was right to talk about these things. The same was likely for Tom.

Nigel perceived himself as an *'open and honest'* father. He spoke fluently about his sons and 'their need to know' and he openly discussed his thoughts about Jo's sexuality. He thought that Jo may be gay and he talked about how he wanted Jo to feel comfortable with this:

> *I wonder whether Jo is gay possibly … I am not sure he is gay but if he is I would want him to make sure he's completely comfortable with bringing a boyfriend home.*
>
> *I just want him to know that people who are gay are normal and I don't think I thought like that when they were "bummers" and I didn't know anyone who is gay. We have been much more up front and went to a gay wedding; it is totally normal and it was great.*

However, whilst the family had attended a gay wedding, treatment of the subject was confined to this single experience. Furthermore, these discussions surfaced a very significant binary tension in that a dichotomy emerged within the extract with Nigel ascribing a potential sexual orientation to Jo, although he appeared to perceive him as asexual. Nigel had largely overlooked Jo's development in relation to (hetero)sexuality and appeared to have been oblivious to his boys' physical, cognitive and emotional development in that regard, yet his words suggested that he had given Jo's sexual orientation a level of consideration that was at odds with his overall perception of his children as innocent and, therefore, asexual.

A final point of analysis was concerned with the striking absence of Nigel's wife in the transcript. A gendered division of labour characterised this aspect of Nigel and his wife's parenting: *'I did want to engineer it to be me as he is my son and I wanted to have the father to son talk'*. Nigel went on to say that if he had daughters his wife would have assumed the role of sexuality educator: *'Yes I think it would be more comfortable for a daughter to speak to their mum, as I haven't had a period so what would I really know about it'.* Nigel also suggested that he would expect the conversation to occur earlier with a daughter, at around the age of nine, so that she would be prepared for the onset of menstruation. Thus, whilst going beyond gendered stereotypes in discussing his son's sexuality, Nigel's transcript was still characterised

by gendered assumptions in relation to “girls needing to know earlier” and gendered divisions of labour, although the amount of “labour” invested by Nigel appeared to be minimal.

Thus, Nigel’s transcript suggested a dissonance between his aspirations and actions as a father, a controlling yet laissez-faire approach to this aspect of parenting and an ability to go beyond gendered stereotypes yet conforming to gendered assumptions and actions. Whilst he wanted to be friends with his sons they were very much seen as “other” and although there was an acknowledgement of his children being potentially sexual and he ascribed a particular potential sexual orientation to Jo, he perceived them as asexual. Nigel’s language suggested that he felt uncomfortable in discussing puberty, sex and relationships with his boys and, consequently, avoided discussing these issues openly and frankly. Table 5.4 demonstrates the relationship between Nigel’s words and the identification of subordinate themes and the emergent superordinate themes.

Table 5.4 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Nigel's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1	***Fatherhood:*** ***<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>*** ⇧ ⇧				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I want to do a better job than my parents'	Can you remember how you were taught about puberty, relationships and reproduction? *I was on holiday with a group of children, at a camp. My friend at the time, we were going into year six* [age ten] *at the time. My friend told me that for a couple to have a baby then his dad has to insert his penis into his mum. And I was like oh my god! That was the first I heard about it, that was accepted, we didn't really talk about it anymore until year seven or eight when we did it in science. I remember the teacher said something about doing this, and I remember going home doing my homework and saying to my mum that we are doing sex education tomorrow so don't bother telling me anymore and they never did. It was never talked about with my parents; I told them I knew about it so that was enough for them.*	1.11-19	**Gendered division of labour**	*I did want to engineer it to be me as he is my son and I wanted to have the father to son talk.* Would it be different if you had daughters? *I think my wife would be having the conversation.* *Yes I think it would be more comfortable for a daughter to speak to their mum, as I haven't had a period so what would I really know about it.*	4.115-6 6.169-70 6.178-9
	Has that [no dialogue with parents about 'growing up'] impacted on the way you talk with your children? *Yes it has.*	1.28-29			
	I don't think my dad could have talked to me about it which is why I've gone to the extreme with Jo.	4.116-7			
	… it's better to find out from your parents and to be privileged to have that relationship with your children and I'm lucky to have that and really cherish it.	7.206-5			

'I'm equipped to do it'	*In my role as* [omitted to safeguard confidentiality], *three years ago I really had to up my game with sexual health because I was asked to deliver a sexual health session in a school. We went to a school up the road and I was very worried about that as I wanted to get that information right for those children ... I am completely comfortable now doing that on my own because it isn't just about sex, it is about relationships. It was received very well.* *I really enjoy talking to my patients about sex, I talk to women and men, about erectile dysfunction and we've done a lot of work at work to almost permit patients to talk about it. I really enjoy those types of conversations.* *… We have a family philosophy that it doesn't matter what they've done, how bad they think it is, but they can always talk to us and we would always listen and we would rather know what's happened than sweep things under the carpet. There are times in the family, where after a meal we'll have a family meeting as either something's not right at school or they aren't tidying up and those sort of things but equally there hasn't been a trigger point at school.*	1.29-39 2.48-51 1.41-47	**'Truth is I've not really thought about it'**	*I felt a bit of an idiot, I didn't see the need with my own child.*	4.122

Superordinate Theme 2

Sexuality:
<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>

⇧ ⇧

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'It's a parental responsibility'	*It's the parents' responsibility, you shouldn't shirk it.* *It's better to find out from your parents.*	7.203 7.205	**External catalyst required to prompt action**	*The real trigger point for me was at work recently. I saw a 12 year old who came in with testicular pain … it was a complete shock to me, he'd gone through puberty … I came home that night and said 'we need to talk to Jo about this'.*	2.51-54

				I felt a bit of an idiot, I didn't see the need with my own child. [Regarding ten year old son:] *We'll probably do it around twelve months' time … I don't want him to go to secondary school without knowing.*	4.122 5.137-8
			Avoidance	*I remember one of the parents saying 'Jo is saying things to my daughter about "sexing" her and I don't like it'. We definitely had a family meeting that night! … I didn't talk about the act then as I know it just felt very uncomfortable.* *They put 'naughty girl' into Google, they … got an image of a man with an erect penis and a woman licking it … They were quite happy that it was a woman licking a man's penis, they didn't sexualise it. It didn't seem the horrific image we might think. It may have been brushed under the carpet or we just moved on as tomorrow is another day.* *we haven't spoken about it since, so it feels comfortable … I've left the door open but I don't feel the need to do it now.*	1-2.62-2.70 2.74-86 1.24-26
			'He already knew'	*Jo, came out with this Collin's book on how to do everything and said 'Dad you should read through this as there is a bit on how to talk to your children about sex'. And I thought 'Oh My God', and he'd read it. He already knew.*	4.97-99

Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I gave him all he needs to know'	*We talked a little bit about hairs but we didn't talk about wet dreams or erections particularly. We talked about relationships and a little about sex but not the full mechanics. It feels a little bit like you don't have to explain it in full.*	3.93-96	**Gay is OK for my son**	*we've been open about having gay friends, we went to a gay wedding of one of their primary school teachers and they don't see a problem with it and that's really good.* *I wonder whether Jo is gay possibly.* *I am not sure he is gay but if he is I would want him to make sure he's completely comfortable with bringing a boyfriend home.* *I just want him to know that people who are gay are normal and I don't think I thought like that when they were "bummers" and I didn't know anyone who is gay. We have been much more up front and went to a gay wedding; it is totally normal and it was great.*	4.108-10 7.222 7.224-5 8.232-6
'S/he isn't ready'	*It needed to be Jo rather than Tom* [age ten] *we talked to as he's that bit older.* *They would have been nine and seven then, I didn't talk about the act then.* *Going back to Jo, he told you he's got a hair, when will you talk to him about wet dreams?* *I suppose, I'm going to have to do it in the next two years or even less... sooner rather than later or even before he starts secondary school.* *I don't really want to* [talk] *... I still want to be a boy.*	2.54-55 3.70 6.180-3 3.92	**Girls need to know earlier**	*I think around the age of nine I would do it with a daughter. I would hate to think that if I had a daughter that we hadn't prepared her for periods as it would be awful.*	6.171-3

			Parental openness leads to child's openness	*Then he really wanted to talk.* *Later on he called me back and said 'can I have a word please', and he said 'actually dad I've got one hair'*	4.99 4.112-3
			Sex is about love	*He asked about how old mummy was when he was born, and I said she was thirty. And he said 'well I won't be having sex until I'm thirty' so there is that thought that you only have sex to have children, so I expanded on that saying 'you say that Jo but the reality is probably much different and you might chose to have sex before marriage and much earlier than 30, it's not just about having children, it's about pleasure, to show someone you love them and you are one'.*	4.100-6

5.1.3 Angus

Angus was a forty four year old father of three children; Daisy age ten and in year five of primary school, Rose aged eight and David who was age three. Angus lived with his children and their mother full-time. He was a professional, educated to Masters' level, who had worked with children and young people for two decades. Angus had professional experience of talking with children and young people, particularly vulnerable young people, about puberty, sex and relationships and he also had extensive experience of working with children who had been sexually abused by adults.

Angus had responded to an advert placed at a local University. I interviewed Angus in his own home and the interview lasted sixty five minutes. The interview felt comfortable and Angus was keen to share his opinions and experiences. However, I struggled to understand his position in that he spoke passionately about how knowledge can protect children from emotional and physical harm and visibly shook, seemingly with anxiety, as he spoke about the need for children to understand their bodies, relationships and sex. He also conveyed that it should not be difficult to discuss such issues with children yet his lived experience of discussing sexuality with his own children appeared to be very limited. A summary of the themes that emerged from Angus's interview is presented in table 5.5.

Angus started the interview by reflecting on his personal experiences of learning about sexuality from his parents: *'… There was always stuff around the house, in terms of books and leaflets … In terms of the "birds and the bees" talk that never really happened ... no, never any talk'.* Thus there was an openness about sexuality in relation to the availability of literature yet, simultaneously, an absence of verbal communication.

Angus felt that it was a parental responsibility to teach children about puberty, relationships and reproduction and described feeling equipped to fulfil this role because of his occupational experience:

> *Parents, I know people say it's school, but more parents than school … I'm relatively lucky I've had to do it other times with kids at work and I've had quite a few practice runs at it ... In that sense I feel confident in being able to talk to my own children.*

Table 5.5 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Angus's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood:** **<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I'm equipped to do it' 'We can talk about anything'	Gendered division of labour 'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Knowledge is protective 'It's a parental responsibility'	Discomfort 'I haven't actually approached it' 'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Fear of contamination 'S/he isn't ready'	Objectification of women is wrong Parental openness leads to child's openness Sex is about love	Subordinate themes

Angus felt that teaching children about puberty, sex and relationships played a protective role for children:

> *Knowledge protects them. They need to be aware of everything that is going on for them. As individuals, they need to be aware of what is going on with their bodies, so they aren't worried about it and they need to be aware of relationships and that there are all sorts of people in this world, some of them are good, some of them will try and help you and some will do the opposite and that's how life is.*

In articulating this belief, Angus's language was fluent and confident and his message was passionate. His argument was underpinned by a belief that children required support and protection, which was informed by his work in safeguarding. However, in using 'they' it appeared that Angus was talking about children in general as opposed to Daisy, Rose and Tom specifically. Moving to the specific, Angus supported Daisy and Rose's primary school in commencing their SRE programme early, in year four:

> *I think within today's society with the sexualisation of children and the high awareness of sexuality in the younger age range children need to be aware, not at an early age, but at an age where they can understand what's going on. It's about being prepared for discussions about sexuality in its wider meaning.*

Again, Angus's dialogue was articulate and suggested that he had given some thought to his position on schools' based SRE previously. His response appeared to be underpinned by a belief that knowledge is protective and that children require protection. As detailed in table 5.6, Angus talked in detail about child exploitation and his professional experiences. The transcript suggested that Angus's beliefs and experience would lead to open communication regarding puberty, sex and relationships between him and his children at home. However, when I moved him from the professional to the personal lived experience the change in the linguistic characteristics of his speech were striking:

> *I think it's going to be an honest answer ... I think I will do it exactly the same way, as long as* [pause] *you've got to keep it relatively light hearted so you don't embarrass yourself or them. You will try and keep it a normal discussion and relatively light as possible, it isn't something you talk about every day but it's one of those things.*

The use of *'you'* rather than *'I'*, the hesitations and *'I think'* intimated some discomfort on Angus's part, indeed, Angus made reference to the potential to *'embarrass yourself or them'*. In addition, the use of the future tense indicated a lack of dialogue between Angus and his children about these issues. When I asked about Daisy's knowledge levels, Angus responded:

> *Angus: I don't know it's weird to think about as I've never thought about it.*
>
> Interviewer: Do you plan to check that out?
>
> *Angus: I am not sure I do, I don't know. It's a discussion I'll have with my wife to see where their knowledge is and what they might want to know.*

Angus's earlier position was contrasted in this extract which suggested a passivity that was out of keeping with his beliefs and attitudes. A dissonance appeared to exist between his beliefs which related to the professional domain of his lifeworld and his actions in the private domain. He was aware that Daisy was pubertal and had *'started to grow breasts'* but he had left it to his wife to talk to Daisy. When I asked him about this he replied:

> *… my gender does have an impact … I'm a bloke; I am not going to understand about feelings in relation to periods and that sort of things. That isn't going to happen. It's interesting I suppose thinking about men who are bringing up girls on their own, thinking how you would do that, and I think I would have to put an awful lot more work into it.*

Angus's language was more stereotypically masculine in this extract and he appeared to absolve responsibility for this role with Daisy and Rose because of his gender: '*it's very much been my wife taking the lead'*. The language suggested a divide between the "personal self" and the "professional self" which resonated with the dissonance between Angus's professional

beliefs and personal behaviours discussed above. Unless the children asked him questions directly, Angus did not engage proactively with his children about sexuality. Whilst he gave examples of responding to questions as a result of something that the children had seen on the television and he described his children being open with him, for example *'when she came back from shopping for her crop tops she was very proud and showing me what they had bought. She isn't shy about it and it's something you wouldn't want your kids to be shy about',* Angus's lived experience of discussing puberty, relationships and sex with his own children was very limited. Angus had not proactively raised the issue of puberty, relationships or reproduction with his daughter and his input into her development in this regard was minimal. Thus, he appeared to repeat the patterns of his own experiences of parent-child sexuality communication. Table 5.6 provides an audit trail of the development of themes arising from Angus's transcript.

Table 5.6 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Angus's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1			***Fatherhood:*** ***<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>***		
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I feel confident in being able to talk to my own children.* *I think what has changed the way I would do things is the level of work that I do as part of my role is going into children's homes and talking to them about what they do about teaching the kids about sexual health, puberty and changes. I've got a lot more information now that is available through the inspection process. In that sense I feel confident in being able to talk to my own children.* *… because I've always worked with kids and children and because of the children I've worked with it helps because it's raised an awareness of sex with children / young adults. That has helped develop more openness than my friends who are fathers and an ability to talk about it with kids.* *Do you think parents do it?* *No I don't think they do. They haven't got the skills and the discussions haven't happened with their parents. I think it is difficult at the start, I'm relatively lucky I've had to do it other times with kids at work and I've had quite a few practice runs at it.*	2.52-53 2.30-34 7.218-21 2.44-48	**Gendered division of labour**	*my gender does have an impact … I'm a bloke; I am not going to understand about feelings in relation to periods and that sort of things. That isn't going to happen. It's interesting I suppose thinking about men who are bringing up girls on their own, thinking how you would do that, and I think I would have to put an awful lot more work into it.* *… it's very much been my wife taking the lead…* [re teaching son:] *There will be an increased expectation that he'll come to me, to talk about willies and all that kind of thing.*	2.37-43 2.52-53 5.142-4

'We can talk about anything'	*… when she came back from shopping for her crop tops she was very proud and showing me what they had bought. She isn't shy about it and it's something you wouldn't want your kids to be shy about.*	2.56-58	**'Truth is I've not really thought about it'**	*… it's weird to think about as I've never thought about it.* Do you plan to check that out? *I am not sure I do, I don't know. It's a discussion I'll have with my wife to see where their knowledge is and what they might want to know.*	8.223-26

Superordinate Theme 2

Sexuality:
<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
Knowledge is protective	*It could be worrying if children didn't have the information and they would think they are different and there was something wrong.* *I think within today's society with the sexualisation of children and the high awareness of sexuality in the younger age range children need to be aware, not at an early age, but at an age where they can understand what's going on. It's about being prepared for discussions about sexuality in its wider meaning.* *That's the thing about sex exploitation and children when they are being exploited and abused and the time it takes before anyone takes notice of it or respond to it. Normally when they raise something, you try to respond to it straight away so that they've got as much knowledge as possible.* *Knowledge protects them. They need to be aware of everything that is going on for them. As individuals, they need to be aware of what is going on with their bodies, so they aren't worried about it and they need to be aware of relationships and that there are all sorts of people in this world, some of them are good, some of*	2.59-61 3.86-89 5.128-32 5.135-40	**Discomfort**	… if your wife was out and Daisy started her periods, how do you think that would go? *We'd go ok, we'd manage to stumble through it, and it wouldn't be horrendous. She would be ok to talk to me, we know where the sanitary towels are and it would be embarrassing at the start for both of us but we'd get through it ok.*	6.175-80

	them will try and help you and some will do the opposite and that's how life is. *… If it's discussed naturally it doesn't seem that it is such a big deal. It doesn't put the pressure on to have sex and stops them being pressured into it.* *I've met 100's of children for whom sex has become an important thing in such a destructive way* [pause] *they've been used and abused and sex is such a negative thing in their lives. It shouldn't be that way, it should be that they can enjoy sex when they are ready for it and see it as a natural part of life and that is important.*	7.192-3 6.182-6			
'It's a parental responsibility'	Who do you feel is responsible for teaching children about puberty, relationships and reproduction? *Parents, I know people say it's school, but more parents than school.* *parents have a responsibility*	8.240-5 9.260	**'I haven't actually approached it'**	*I think it's going to be an honest answer ... I think I will do it exactly the same way, as long as* [pause] *you've got to keep it relatively light hearted so you don't embarrass yourself or them. You will try and keep it a normal discussion and relatively light as possible, it isn't something you talk about every day but it's one of those things.*	6.170-73
			'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	How much do you think Daisy actually knows? *I don't know …*	8.222

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
Fear of contamination	*… there is so much within modern day culture that relies on a certain sexual element to it.*	7.198-9	**Objectification of women is wrong**	*… in terms of the sexualisation and objectification of women in music videos … some of the videos do objectify women and do make you think it's an inappropriate way for women to look at themselves and how the videos show women. It does raise a concern but it could be used as a catalyst to discussion.*	7.203-8

'S/he isn't ready'	*we've got Rose who's 8; she won't have talked about or seen anything yet. It's about levels of maturity.* *It's about knowing where your children are and what their awareness is about different types of relationships.* *It's about gauging it right for the understanding of the child.*	3.102 3.108-10 3.118	**Parental openness leads to child's openness**	[with reference to two men with children getting married on TV] *Daisy was more like there are kids there, how does that work?* Did she actually ask you that question? *Yes she did, but it was more about the fact they'd had children before, when they were with their wives.* Did you feel you were able to answer or did you defer to another time? *No it was ok, because I think these things play on children's minds sometimes, it was just watching TV so it was fairly relaxed.*	4.120-5.127
			Sex is about love	… you don't just talk about the physical sex bit, you talk about the relationships around it and hopefully with that the promotion of feelings.	7.190-2

5.1.4 James

James was a forty two year old father of three boys, Rich, Jake and Charlie, who were aged ten, eight and five respectively. The child that James focused on primarily throughout his conversation with me was Rich who was in year five at primary school. James lived with his children and their mother full-time. He was a professional, educated to the equivalent of Masters' level. At the time of the interview James was temporarily unemployed and was the primary carer for his children, with his wife working full-time.

James had responded to an advert that I had placed at a local sports club. I interviewed James in his home. The interview lasted sixty eight minutes and was relaxed with James talking freely. The double hermeneutic was almost tangible in the interview, with James working out how he felt and what he did as the interview progressed and me probing to try to make sense of his personal interpretations. A table of the themes that emerged from James' interview is detailed below in table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from James' interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood:** **<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I want to do a better job than my parents' 'I'm equipped to do it' 'We can talk about anything'	Gendered division of labour 'They'll learn it in the playground' Leave it to school	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Knowledge is protective 'If I could have a manual it would be lovely' 'It's a parental responsibility'	Discomfort Avoidance 'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	The innocent child 'S/he isn't ready' 'S/he will ask when s/he's ready' Fear of contamination Surveillance Censorship	Heteronormative frames of reference Objectification of women is wrong 'He's alright in that department'	Subordinate themes

James commenced the interview by reflecting on his own experiences of learning about sexuality and expressed a wish to be more open with his sons than his father was with him: '*My father had a conversation with me when I was sixteen, and I was getting involved in a relationship with this girl. He tried to have a chat and I said Dad 'it doesn't matter I know everything you're about to say' and we were both embarrassed.'* James went on to talk about his aspirations and practices:

> *I want them to feel they can come to me and ask me about anything. I don't want it to be like my father, I can see it now like he'd be walking in now and we'd both be so embarrassed. I sort of tease around the edge with Rich, he's ten so a bit early, but he's showing an interest in girls now and I don't think he's equipped to deal with that. Also society is so different now to when I was growing up. What is accepted is so different. Also what children are exposed to through the internet is phenomenal and I am terrified that their innocence is going to be taken away. The way Rich talks now, there are things that he may or may not know but I don't want to embarrass him by asking and say come on let's sit down and have a chat.*

James aspired to have an open, supportive relationship with Rich unlike his own relationship with his father in this context. He used the word *'embarrassed'* to describe how he and his father would feel if they tried to talk about sex and relationships. Later in the extract he used the same expression to describe how Rich would feel if he discussed sex and relationships with him, however, his use of metaphor *'I sort of tease around the edge with Rich'* suggested a discomfort on James' part. "Teasing" suggested that James could only raise issues through banter and '*around the edge'* suggested that he did or could not deal with the issues directly. Indeed, James said that he did not know how much Rich knew about these issues; thus the aspiration to be "open" was juxtaposed with practices that appeared "closed". He was reluctant to be "proactive" and appeared instead to be "passive". James outlined a need for discussion with his son in that he felt that Rich was not *'equipped'* to deal with the girls that he was interested in. He also felt knowledge could play a protective role in dealing with societal pressures and threats posed by the internet, however, at the same time he felt that it was too early to have these discussions with his son and he did not know how much Rich understood about puberty, relationships and reproduction:

> *He has got a book called Let's Talk, and I think you give it to children when they are little … and the book is on the shelf so the other children can look at it. It hasn't really promoted questions, I think there is awareness but do they know what their penis is for really other than the toilet? They play with it incessantly but I don't know. Things that he says, he's started to show self-awareness like he says Dad I don't like it when you come in when I go for a wee, whereas all four of us could stand around a toilet before and it wouldn't be a problem. He's obsessed with his hair now … if we sat him here now and asked 'how does it work?' he'd probably give you a reasonable working knowledge but he wouldn't know any of the*

intricacies. He is a data sponge, so he remembers stuff but I don't think he'd know in any detail.

James articulated an awareness of Rich changing in relation to becoming interested in his appearance and wanting privacy in the bathroom but this did not appear to have acted as a catalyst for discussion of issues around sexuality as James felt that Rich was *'not yet'* ready to talk about changes in his body.

A conflict between James' perception of childhood as a time of innocence and the realities of Rich's life emerged from the transcript: '*he's gone out with about ten girls and that doesn't actually mean going out with them but sitting in the bike shed kissing which is very sweet'*. James was describing sexualised behaviour yet he described it as *'very sweet'* which portrayed it as innocent as opposed to tainted or worldly.

Although James described himself as having *'enough knowledge'* to discuss these issues with Rich he was not proactive in discussing puberty, relationships and reproduction with him. Instead he relied upon Rich to ask questions which did not happen. Although he felt that it was a parental responsibility to teach children about sexuality and he believed that knowledge can be protective, he was not proactive in fulfilling his aspirations to be open and supportive of Rich in this regard. He described snippets of dialogue and an openness about seeing each other nude but dialogue appeared limited:

James: The boys have erections frequently; some are more embarrassed about it than others.

Interviewer: Have they asked you about why it happens?

James: We just talk about it, we call them private parts and say keep your private parts private …

Interviewer: Have you talked about things like body hair or wet dreams?

James: Not yet.

Interviewer: How would you approach that?

James: We have a friend who's exactly the same age as Rich whose voice has dropped and we were discussing that over the meal table, all five of us, we were just trying to promote them asking questions as they are incessant on their question asking. It didn't work though. If we'll have the talk, I don't know. I think they are starting to do classes at school, so I wouldn't be surprised if their peers are talking. Is it wrong for them to talk to their peers and work it out for themselves? Perhaps to a degree it's fine as long as there is that card in hand at home. So that's probably how we'll approach it, he's a sensible lad mostly!

This extract suggested that James had decided upon a laissez-faire approach, although this was out of keeping with his aspirations. Early in the interview James described an idyllic relationship that he aspired to, where he hoped that Rich and he would be able to talk openly each evening:

> *I want our relationship to be so he can come to me to talk and if I detect things with him I can talk to him, and we sit down each evening and talk.*

However, even in painting this picture of openness and equality an expectation that Rich would proactively raise issues of concern was suggested. Moreover, an aspiration to sit and talk each evening was replaced by reference to a single isolated 'talk' which James suggested was highly unlikely to happen. James' inability to talk intimately with Rich had led him to *'approach it'* by doing nothing and leaving Rich's education in this domain to chance, relying on his peers, the school and him being *'sensible'*. In contrast to the control that James exerted over censorship of the internet, where no dialogue was required, '*… at 9pm You Tube is blocked … parent controls, being aware and being around when they are browsing',* James behaviour was characterised by a laissez-faire approach to this aspect of parenting.

In making sense of the gulf between James' aspirations and his practices, the following extracts suggested that James simply did not know what to do or how to do it:

> *If I could have a manual it would be lovely but it just isn't like that.*
>
> *… there isn't enough guidance.*

This aspect of parenting was not intuitive for James and he appeared lost in how to meet his aspirations. He was also isolated in his experience:

> *Their mum is terrified she won't know what to do, she's an only child, her first sexual experience was later than mine, and she was very cosseted and went to a private girl's school …she has had no exposure to these sort of things.*

As a couple it appeared that James felt that they had conformed to gendered divisions of labour because James' wife was at a loss with how to communicate about sexuality with their sons. However, in reality whilst James appeared to assume responsibility there was no 'labour' or communication being undertaken by either parent because they were both equally unsure as to how to approach discussing these issues with their children. The themes that emerged from James' transcript and supporting language are detailed in and table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from James' transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1	***Fatherhood:*** ***Aspiring to be involved yet largely detached***				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I want to do a better job than my parents'	*I want them to feel they can come to me and ask me about anything. I don't want it to be like my father, I can see it now like he'd be walking in now and we'd both be so embarrassed.*	3.71-74	**Gendered division of labour**	*I understand the biology but I don't understand the emotional turmoil that goes on, is it important? Yes. Will we ever understand? Probably not.*	8.233-35
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I've got enough knowledge*	8.260	**'They'll learn it in the playground'**	*If we'll have the talk, I don't know. I think they are starting to do classes at school, so I wouldn't be surprised if their peers are talking. Is it wrong for them to talk to their peers and work it out for themselves? Perhaps to a degree it's fine as long as there is that card in hand at home. So that's probably how we'll approach it, he's a sensible lad mostly!*	7.203-8
'We can talk about anything'	*I want our relationship to be so he can come to me to talk and if I detect things with him I can talk to him, and we sit down each evening and talk.*	3.88-90	**Leave it to school**	*if we are talking about teaching them, then its school.* Do you know what they do in school? *I think in year six they start, but I don't know for sure.*	8.267 8.275-76
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **Recognising the need to talk yet continuing the silence**				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
Knowledge is protective	*we want to make sure we can help them along the way.* *I think it's important for the boys to know.* *It's so easy to make a mistake that will impact on you for*	8.229 8.261 7.211-16	**Discomfort**	*I sort of tease around the edge with Rich…* *'private parts'*	3.74 6.181

	the rest of your life… get a girl pregnant or getting some disease that you've got for life, being affected emotionally and when you are younger you're not equipped for that.				
'If I could have a manual it would be lovely'	*If I could have a manual it would be lovely but it just isn't like that.* *Their mum is terrified she won't know what to do, she's an only child, her first sexual experience was later than mine, and she was very cosseted and went to private girl's school …she has had no exposure to these sort of things.* *… there isn't enough guidance.*	5.158 6.160-64 8.258-89	**Avoidance**	*… I don't want to embarrass him by asking and say come on let's sit down and have a chat.*	3.82-83
'It's a parental responsibility'	*it's got to be the parents but you've got to provide the parents the resources to do so.*	8.265-66	**'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'**	*The way Rich talks now, there are things that he may or may not know …* *… if we sat him here now and asked 'how does it work?' he'd probably give you a reasonable working knowledge but he wouldn't know any of the intricacies.* *He has got a book ... It hasn't really promoted questions, I think there is awareness but do they know what their penis is for really other than the toilet?*	3.80-82 4.120-22 4.98-106

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

⇧ ⇧

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
The innocent child	*I am terrified that their innocence is going to be taken away*	3.79	**Heteronormative frames of reference**	*I can see their attention to girls increasing.*	8.261

'S/he isn't ready'	*… he's ten so a bit early …* How about things like body hair or wet dreams? *Not yet*	3.74-75 7.196-97	**Objectification of women is wrong**	*… treating people with the respect they deserve, there is too much in the public eye too much objectification of women.*	7.216-18
'S/he will ask when s/he's ready'	*trying to promote them asking questions*	7.201	**'He's alright in that department'**	*… he's showing an interest in girls now and I don't think he's equipped to deal with that.* *he's gone out with about ten girls and that doesn't actually mean going out with them but sitting in the bike shed kissing which is very sweet.* You think he has really kissed ten girls? *Oh yes he has.* *he's started to show self-awareness like he says 'Dad I don't like it when you come in when I go for a wee', whereas all four of us could stand around a toilet before and it wouldn't be a problem. He's obsessed with his hair now.*	3.75-76 3.91-4.95 4.107-11
Fear of contamination	*… society is so different now to when I was growing up. What is accepted is so different. Also what children are exposed to through the internet is phenomenal…* *The world is so different*	3.76-9 5.134			
Surveillance	*Parent controls, being aware and being around when they are browsing. The guys use their computers mainly for browsing or gaming but occasionally they drift off and do research and stuff turns up but it's so easy if you touch somewhere on a touch screen it will take you off to somewhere else or being aware of what they are doing and being able to talk to you. I am pretty strict in our house, and they will say 'I made a mistake and ended up going here' and we'd be able to discuss that rather than them feeling they can't, it's a fine line as sometimes I'm really grumpy. If I could have a manual it would be lovely but it just isn't like that. Just be watchful and try and be in tune with the children.*	5.149-55			

Censorship	*… controlling, that's probably too strong a word, we don't want to dictate his life but there is some element of control of how they grow up.* *… at 9pm You Tube is blocked, so I know he can't see but it doesn't mean I can stop him at other people's houses and he's maybe getting exposure to stuff I wouldn't feel comfortable with.*	5.141-43 5.134-37			

5.1.5 Steve

Steve responded to an advert that I had mailed to the primary school that he worked in. He was a senior member of staff, educated to Masters' level, who was experienced in working with children. He was age forty six and lived with his wife, Anya, and their two children, Charlie who was age thirteen and Lydia who was age ten and in year five. Lydia was the focus for this interview, however, Steve also reflected upon his experiences with his son. The interview took place at Steve's place of work. This was a very interesting interview for me because Steve reflected on and questioned what he was saying throughout the interview and as we talked I could see and hear Steve interpreting his behaviours as I tried to interpret what he was saying. The interview lasted seventy minutes. A summary of the themes that emerged from Steve's interview is detailed in table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Steve's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood: <u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I want to do a better job than my parents' 'We can talk about anything'	Gendered division of labour 'Truth is I've not really thought about it' Leave it to school	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality: <u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'If I could have a manual it would be lovely' 'It's a parental responsibility'	Discomfort 'I haven't actually approached it'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood: <u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'S/he isn't ready' 'S/he will ask when s/he's ready'	Girls need to know earlier	Subordinate themes

Steve began the interview with the following extract:

> *Since talking to you I've been thinking 'hmmm actually what do I do?' It's nothing very proactive ...*

This reflection was insightful since it illustrated the lack of thought that Steve had given to this aspect of his parenting as well as a lack of proactivity. He went on to explain:

> *Steve: You can see Lydia growing up now, but she – in her outlook and the way she wants to be - she is completely a little girl, drinking her milk out of a baby's cup and playing little girls' games ... So the thought of talking about growing up, sexual relationships and reproduction I just can't see how we will do it, it will come but* [tails off]
>
> Interviewer: When you say you can see her starting to grow up how do [interrupted]
>
> *Steve: Physically she's starting to grow up, just a little bit. I can remember saying to my wife 'I give her a cuddle and she's different' but my wife says 'just be natural'.*

Thus Steve questioned how proactive he was in discussing sexuality issues with Lydia and Charlie. He indicated that he had found it difficult to talk to his son about puberty, relationships and reproduction when he was younger and was continuing to struggle to have an open dialogue with him as an adolescent. He also appeared to be at a loss as to how to talk to Lydia about her changing body, relationships and reproduction because he saw his daughter as *'a little girl'*. However, although she chose to drink milk from a special cup and played young girls' games, acting young and growing up are not mutually exclusive.

As I probed deeper he suddenly said: *'Gosh I really haven't thought this through at all Clare. Bloody hell!'*. Thus, there was a realisation for Steve that there was a gulf between his aspirations as a father and the realities of his practices because he hadn't thought through his role as a father in this regard and the actions that he should take. Despite observing that Lydia had already commenced puberty Steve still saw her as a little girl, thus there was a conflict between Lydia as she really was and his perceptions of her. In other words he saw Lydia as "other" but she was on the cusp of changing to become the "same" in the form of an emerging adult.

When I asked how Steve's wife found talking to Lydia about sexuality related issues, his response suggested that they had not discussed this aspect of their parenting. Furthermore, it suggested that communication about intimate issues between them as a couple was limited and perhaps difficult:

> *I don't know really; we haven't really spoken about it. I think at the moment we are living in a state of not really talking about it. She's even mentioned a few times her shying away from conversations, I am not sure what as we've never gone into detail about it but I don't know really. I don't think Anya would be super-open about it if I'm honest, of what I know of Anya I think she would be, I think there*

> *would be certain things like changes in the body, monthly periods that she wouldn't be comfortable talking about and the sex and relationships bit. I don't know I might but selling her short …*
>
> *… you don't really think about it or talk about it as parents. So the thoughts are not well developed at all because we haven't got any real ideas about it all. We've never had a talk and said we'll have to tell them this at a certain age. All we've really said is that we want to be completely open and for them to say and share whatever they want to share and we'd rather know what they think and what they need to know but maybe that's not really proactive enough in reality.*

Thus there appeared to be a silence between Steve and Anya, a silence between Steve and his daughter and an assumed silence between Anya and Lydia regarding sexuality communication.

Steve's practices were in opposition to how he wanted to be as a father. His own father had been very formal and scientific in his approach to discussing puberty and reproduction with him, it was a single 'talk' with no reference to emotions and relationships. He said: *'subconsciously I thought I'll never be like that with my children'*. As a father Steve aspired *'to be completely open'* but he questioned whether he was being *'proactive enough'*. Steve's words suggested an emerging awareness of the gulf between how he wanted his family to operate and their realities, coupled with an evaluation of how realistic it was to expect his children to be proactive in raising discussions of an intimate nature in the absence of any action on their part to encourage or facilitate this.

Whilst Steve felt that it was a parental responsibility to teach children about sexuality, he felt that it would be best for Lydia to learn through school:

> [it should be] *a collective effort really but the majority of the onus needs to go on parents. Parents are limited, as we've found in my own experience, in what we can say or do, the school as we say can open a can of worms to a certain extent but the onus is for parents to run with it and be open to conversations.*
>
> *… I think we'll probably wait until school deals with it; they'll deal with it in year six*.
>
> *I think school would be a useful way in.*

Thus it would appear that Steve had resolved to relinquish his perceived responsibility to Lydia's school in this regard because he was *'limited'* and he *'just can't see how we will do it'*. His bewilderment seemed to be associated with a lack of thought about these issues. He repeatedly referred to not having *'really thought about it'* and when I probed further, Steve's lack of recognition that Lydia was an emerging adult became more apparent:

> Interviewer: If your wife wasn't at home and Lydia started her periods, how do you think that would go?

> *Steve: I think that would be very tricky, very difficult and something completely new. It would be sad that really, as she'd be really worried about it. She would probably say something and quickly figure out what to do. That would be a very odd situation as it could actually happen as my wife can realistically be away for a week or something. That sort of thing would often happen to girls before they have the lesson at school. Gosh I really haven't thought this through at all Clare. Bloody hell* [laughs]*! I really need to go home tonight and see if my wife's spoken to her at all about that. I'm just sort of assuming that Lydia will have picked up on that already. I'm not sure what she knows but I presume she would have spotted toiletry items and things like that and asked what they are for. I'll find out, I'll make sure she tells her now! We've not though this through at all* [laughs]*!*

However, this extract suggested more than a lack of thought and a lack of action. It portrayed Steve's perceptions of the menarche as *'sad'* and anxiety provoking. Periods appeared to be something that he knew little about and regarded as the domain of women. Although Lydia could have potentially had no input regarding the menarche from school or home, he thought that she would somehow *'quickly figure out what to do'* and that she *'will have picked up on that already'*. Thus, whilst Steve viewed Lydia as a young child who was not ready to talk about these issues, he simultaneously considered her sufficiently sophisticated to have acquired knowledge about the menarche independently.

Steve's dialogue also suggested gendered assumptions. Menarche was the domain of women and it was his wife's job to have this discussion with Lydia: *'I'll make sure she tells her now!'*. This theme also emerged earlier in the transcript with gendered divisions of labour recurring repeatedly:

> *I think that's maybe my wife's thing, not mine.*
>
> *I'd just like her to have an open discussion with her mum where she feels comfortable to ask quite candidly what she needs to know really. And perhaps her mum could do a little steering to what she thinks is important to share with her; that would be my ideal really.*
>
> *I'd be more prone to talk to Charlie ... I think it's far more fitting that my wife speaks to Lydia.*

However, the reality was that Steve had not talked in any detail about puberty, relationships and sex with Charlie. Thus it appeared that gendered divisions of labour were Steve's ideal but when the "labour" was his domain he had not acted upon it. Steve's use of terms such as *'fitting'* and *'candid'* were more formal than the rest of the transcript, perhaps echoing the formality of his father's conversation with him when he was taught about reproduction or perhaps reflecting his discomfort in discussing these issues.

Other gendered assumptions centred on Lydia's vulnerability as a female:

> *For Lydia in particular, it's probably wrong and old fashioned but I see girls as more vulnerable so I feel she needs to know the motivations of other people and the complications, safety, pregnancy and more than anything to develop a sense of, so she can't be pressured into things, so she knows it's her own choice and to develop that kind of healthy attitude that protects her as well.*

However, Steve had no plans as to how he would translate his concerns into action.

Thus, in summary Steve aspired to be an open father but there was incongruity between his cognitions, aspirations and behaviours. This appeared to be due to a lack of thought, a disjuncture between his perceptions of Lydia as a child and her stage of development, discomfort and beliefs around gendered divisions of labour. An audit trail of the development of the themes that emerged from Steve's transcript are summarised in table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Steve's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1			***Fatherhood:*** ***Aspiring to be involved yet largely detached***		
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I want to do a better job than my parents'	*… subconsciously I thought I'll never be like that with my children.*	4.96-97	**Gendered division of labour**	*I think that's maybe my wife's thing, not mine.* *I'd be more prone to talk to Charlie ... I think it's far more fitting that my wife speaks to Lydia.* *I'd just like her to have an open discussion with her mum where she feels comfortable to ask quite candidly what she needs to know really. And perhaps her mum could do a little steering to what she thinks is important to share with her; that would be my ideal really.* *I would tell them to talk about their mum about what it really means.*	3.75 3.77-79 4.100-103 6.161
'We can talk about anything'	*… we want to be completely open and for them to say and share whatever they want to share and we'd rather know what they think and what they need to know but maybe that's not really proactive enough in reality.*	2.61-3.64	**'Truth is I've not really thought about it'**	*we haven't really spoken about it. I think at the moment we are living in a state of not really talking about it. My wife has even mentioned avoiding conversations, I am not sure what as we've never gone into detail about it, I don't know really. I don't think my wife would be super-open about it if I'm honest, of what I know of her I think she would be, I think there would be certain things like changes in the body, monthly periods that she wouldn't be comfortable talking about and the sex and relationships bit. I don't know I might but selling her short …* *I've not really thought about it* *Yeah you don't really think about it or talk about it as parents. So the thoughts are not well developed at all*	2.47-55 2.55 2.58-61

				because we haven't got any real ideas about it all. We've never had a talk and said we'll have to tell them this at a certain age. *Gosh I haven't really thought these things through at all!* If your wife wasn't at home and Lydia started her periods, how do you think that would go? *I think that would be very tricky, very difficult and something completely new. It would be sad that really, as she'd be really worried about it. She would probably say something and quickly figure out what to do. That would be a very odd situation as it could actually happen as my wife can realistically be away for a week or something. That sort of thing would often happen to girls before they have the lesson at school. Gosh I really haven't thought this through at all Clare. Bloody hell* [laughs]*! I really need to go home tonight and see if my wife's spoken to her at all about that. I'm just sort of assuming that Lydia will have picked up on that already. I'm not sure what she knows but I presume she would have spotted toiletry items and things like that and asked what they are for. I'll find out, I'll make sure she tells her now! We've not though this through at all* [laughs]*!*	4.138 6.164-178
			Leave it to school	*I think we'll probably wait until school deals with it; they'll deal with it in year six.* *Parents are limited as we've found in my own experience in what we can say or do, the school as we say, can open a can of worms to a certain extent* *The onus with everything is the parents, and the parents have the most responsibility. School have got to take things in the right direction but it is just a start* *I think school would be a useful way in.*	3.67-8 4.143-4 4.151-53 3.70

Superordinate Theme 2

Sexuality:
<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'If I could have a manual it would be lovely'	*the thought of talking about growing up, sexual relationships and reproduction I just can't see how we will do it, it will come but....*	2.39-41	**Discomfort**	*Physically she's starting to grow up, just a little bit. I can remember saying to my wife 'I give her a cuddle and she's different' but my wife says 'just be natural'.*	2.43-45
'It's a parental responsibility'	*[it should be] a collective effort really but the majority of the onus needs to go on parents. Parents are limited, as we've found in my own experience, in what we can say or do, the school as we say can open a can of worms to a certain extent but the onus is for parents to run with it and be open to conversations.* *… the parents have the most responsibility. School have got to take things in the right direction but it is just a start.*	4.141-45 5.152-3	**'I haven't actually approached it'**	*… since talking to you I've been thinking 'hmmm actually what do I do?' It's nothing very proactive.*	1.5-6

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'S/he isn't ready'	*You can see Lydia growing up now, but she – in her outlook and the way she wants to be - she is completely a little girl, drinking her milk out of a baby's cup and playing little girls' games. She almost gets quite upset if there is any talk of doing anything grown up or if we talk about her doing things as a young adult she gets quite upset. It's not like we talk about anything too grown up,*	2.30-41	**Girls need to know earlier**	*… I see girls as more vulnerable so I feel she needs to know the motivations of other people and the complications, safety, pregnancy and more than anything to develop a sense of ....so she can't be pressured into things, so she knows it's her own choice and to develop that kind of healthy attitude that protects her as well.*	4.106-11

	not like growing up and getting a job, but she doesn't want to know even about people moving out to university. She just doesn't want to know. As far as she's concerned she's going to stay at home, live with us and I know she won't feel like that in a few years but that's just her outlook at the moment. So the thought of talking about growing up, sexual relationships and reproduction I just can't see how we will do it, it will come but [tails off]				
'S/he will ask when s/he's ready'	*… she doesn't bring anything up at all.* *… whether she'll have the nerve to ask I don't know.*	1.9-10 3.74			

5.1.6 Colin

Colin was age forty two and lived with his wife and their two children, Jake age ten and in year five at primary school and Thomas who was aged five. Jake had Asperger's Syndrome and was described by his father as a particularly intelligent child.

Colin was recruited via snowballing techniques. I found this interview the easiest to conduct as Colin appeared to be very relaxed and happy for me to probe. The interview lasted sixty two minutes. Colin worked full-time in a professional role. He had a first class honours degree and professional qualifications at Masters' level. The themes that emerged from Colin's interview are presented in table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Colin's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood: <u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'We can talk about anything' 'I'm equipped to do it'	Gendered division of labour	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality: <u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Knowledge is protective 'If I could have a manual it would be lovely' 'It's a parental responsibility'	External catalyst required to prompt action Avoidance	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood: <u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I gave him all he needs to know' Surveillance 'S/he isn't ready'	Heteronormative frames of reference 'He's alright in that department'	Subordinate themes

Colin commenced the interview by recalling his own sexuality education:

> *Colin: My brother had a book, an Osborne one – "how the body works" ... there was the bit with reproduction and mum sat me and my brother down, we were around eight and ten and it was just explained with the book and she talked us through everything.*

Interviewer: Was that quite a biological discussion? It sounds like it was a simplified biology book.

Colin: Yes.

Interviewer: How about the relationship side of things, did your mum talk about that with you?

Colin: No we didn't discuss that type of thing.

Thus Colin's experience of parent-child sexuality education had an exclusively biological focus yet he referred to being taught *'everything'*. Colin's behaviour as a parent replicated his mother's behaviour in this regard:

Colin: … he asked me a question and we covered it all in fifteen to twenty minutes.

Interviewer: When you say 'covered it all', what did you cover?

Colin: Sexual, erm we did a little, yes we did. Obviously not in graphic detail but how the sperm gets in and penetrates the egg and we did do menstruation as we are an open family. He's asked questions like what's that on the toilet, it's a bit of blood and I have said 'it happens to mum sometimes'.

Although Jake's mother lived in the family home full-time, and was present in the house at the time of the interview, her absence in the transcript was striking. Gendered divisions of labour were apparent with Colin explaining *'I think I find it easier to explain things than my wife because we are both males'*. Paradoxically Jake's mother was, therefore, excluded from conversations about menstruation because of her gender.

Colin asserted that *'it's the parents' responsibility'* to impart sexuality education. He painted a picture of openness early in the interview, for example: '*we are an open family*' and *'I don't think you should make it a taboo'* and he appeared proud in telling me that he had told Jake about reproduction. However, a second reading revealed a tension between "openness" and "control". Whilst Colin felt that he had been open and responsive he had actually addressed very little. His language suggested a superficial approach in that they '*did do menstruation*'; they perhaps "did it" rather than discussed it. Furthermore, the emphasis on "doing menstruation" suggested that they did not do other things such as talk about intercourse and the meaning of puberty or more emotive issues such as relationships.

Although Colin had suggested that he saw his son as mature and ready to learn about his body changing, relationships and reproduction, for example, by describing him as *'a bright spark'* and how he *'just takes it all in his stride'*, the limitations to openness imposed by Colin appeared to link to his perceptions of age appropriateness and how much he felt Jake needed to know:

Colin: If he asks a question, I tell him the truth but I suppose you're economical with it ... He was five when my wife was pregnant with Thomas, and he saw her tummy getting bigger. We'd always talked about him coming out of mummy's tummy and he said 'you know how you said you saw my face before I came out of mummy's tummy' and I said 'yeah', he said 'did you look through mummy's mouth?' I said 'yes', because at five you don't need to know about the birth canal and stuff.

Interviewer: When you've talked about sex have you talked about the relationship side of things?

Colin: No I don't think that's appropriate for his age, and I could gauge from his reaction he would not cope, he would be pulling a face and saying 'Oh no'!

Thus Colin appeared to apply a framework of varying shades of openness to his parenting but he asserted that whilst not giving a full account he would never tell a lie: *'Don't tell them lies'*. However, Colin's argument did not hold up as he had told Jake a falsehood in telling him that he could see his face by looking through his wife's mouth when she was pregnant with him. However, it may be that Colin felt that this was not a real lie, perhaps a minor lie or a white lie. Perhaps of greater relevance was why Colin felt the need to be *'economical with the truth'*. His reluctance to provide frank, or truthful, explanations suggested that he may not have been as comfortable in talking about these issues with Jake as he wished to portray. Coupled with this, or perhaps because of this, beliefs regarding age appropriateness appeared to underpin Colin's practices.

Returning to discomfort, a further tension was apparent in the extracts above. Whilst Colin initially described Jake as being very comfortable with these types of conversations, he *'just takes it all in his stride'*, when I probed about the content of his dialogue with Jake in relation to relationships he said that he felt it would be inappropriate to engage in this aspect of sexuality communication as Jake *'would be pulling a face and saying 'Oh no''*. This suggested a comfort with the discussions at the biological level, *'we've kept it biological'*, but discomfort beyond that level of discussion. What was unclear though was whose discomfort Colin was really talking about, his own or his son's?

In analysing the transcript further it appeared that the discomfort was largely Colin's. Despite apparently being comfortable with discussing biological issues, Colin's explanations were vague and suggested avoidance techniques, for example: *'He's asked questions like what's that on the toilet, it's a bit of blood and I have said 'it happens to mum sometimes''*. In addition, instead of using the term masturbation Colin used euphemism, *'he's always been a grinder … grinding up on his cuddly toys'*, suggesting discomfort. Indeed, although Colin described feeling well equipped to deal with his role as a sexuality educator, '*I did A Level*

biology … so my studies helped' as the interview progressed he described finding the role challenging: *'But it's difficult, isn't it, knowing how to tailor it*'.

Colin believed that it was important to talk to Jake about reproduction:

> *I don't think you should make it a taboo ... We wanted to tell him before someone in the playground or class told him, so he got all the facts right.*

Colin had not yet discussed the emotional aspects of sexuality with Jake although opportunities would have arisen as *'he's had a girlfriend in school for ages'*. This may have been an aspect of sexuality communication that Colin was referring to in saying: *'But it's difficult, isn't it, knowing how to tailor it'.* Although Colin made reference to Jake masturbating and having a girlfriend, his overarching perception of Jake was one of innocence because he was not asking questions beyond the biological level. Discussions around relationships and sexuality were, therefore, perceived by Colin to be superfluous to his needs.

Heteronormative frames of reference also emerged as a feature of Colin's conversation with me:

> *It's very different now we've got gay marriage... it's all out there now. It was in the news about teaching about homosexuality, I'm not saying it's wrong but I don't think it should be forced down their necks. When they are ready they will ask a question and you can tell them the answer. If they are asking the question, they are ready for the answer. Whereas I think, I still struggle with that, I've got one of the lads I work with is gay, I do struggle with that.*

Colin presented the "normalisation" of homosexuality as problematic not only because of his own beliefs but because it had led to greater discussion around sexuality; *'it's all out there now'*. Again, this suggested some discomfort with discussing sexuality in its broadest sense. His words implied that discussing homosexuality in schools was undesirable and he used the metaphor *'forced down their necks'* to suggest that children would be forced to listen to liberal opinions and ideas in an attempt to promote acceptance. It is interesting to note that Colin did not have such fixed ideas about "mainstream" schools based sex education: *'I don't think it hurts that the school gets involved*'.

Colin described using surveillance in relation to Jake's use of the internet yet simultaneously described giving Jake freedoms that appeared to pose some risk:

> *He isn't on Facebook, he's got a few chat things he uses but I'm on them all, which of course he doesn't know about. He's got a Google plus profile, but I'm on that but one of my friends is on that, so I know Pete will tell me.*

They go to the park and get into arguments with the teenagers, as they try to get them to swear and Jake has got a tremendous sense of right and wrong - I've tried to tell him to ignore them and walk away.

Whilst not immediately related to sexuality, these findings are further examples of inconsistencies within Colin's communication style and perceptions of Jake. Although Colin emphasised the importance of open communication throughout the interview, his surveillance of Jake's internet usage was covert and far from openly communicated. Furthermore, in contrast to the measures that Colin described in aiming to ensure Jake's safe usage of the internet and the lack of communication he had engaged in with Jake concerning puberty and relationships because he felt that Jake was too young to deal with this type of information, he appeared to consider Jake mature enough to deal with challenging teenagers in a park without any support or supervision. Thus Colin's transcript was characterised by inconsistencies and tensions between his perception of himself as a father, his attitudes and his behaviours. The themes that emerged from Colin's transcript are captured in table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Colin's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1	***Fatherhood:*** ***<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>*** ⇧ ⇧				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'We can talk about anything'	*… he just takes it all in his stride …*	3.82	**Gendered division of labour**	*I think I find it easier to explain things than my wife because we are both males.*	3.70-71
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I don't think it's anything to be embarrassed about.* *I did A Level biology …*	2.56 5.145			
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>** ⇧ ⇧				
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**	**Subordinate themes**	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
Knowledge is protective	*I don't think you should make it a taboo. The same with alcohol, when I went to Poly there was a group of us that all went to comprehensives. We worked hard and played hard, there was a group that went to single sex public schools and they went absolutely crazy in every way - I think yeah you've had a good education but it's not balanced. I think because we always talked about drugs, and rock and roll I knew how to handle myself - mum and dad were always very supportive.*	3.92-4.98	**External catalyst required to prompt action**	*We wanted to tell him before someone in the playground or class told him, so he got all the facts right.*	4.100-1
'If I could have a manual it would be lovely'	*But it's difficult, isn't it, knowing how to tailor it.*	2.62-63	**Avoidance**	*He's asked questions like what's that on the toilet, it's a bit of blood and I have said 'it happens to mum sometimes'.*	2.37-39

'It's a parental responsibility'	*I don't think it hurts that the school gets involved but they can't tell them everything so you need to be there for them after to ask questions.* *it's the parents' responsibility*	4.112-4 4.111-2			

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'I gave him all he needs to know'	*I told him last year* *… we were talking last year, I think he asked a question, he got himself ready for bed and he asked me a question and we covered it all in fifteen to twenty minutes.* *When you say 'covered it all', what did you cover?* *Sexual, urm we did a little, yes we did. Obviously not in graphic detail but how the sperm gets in and penetrates the egg and we did do menstruation as we are an open family. He's asked questions like what's that on the toilet, it's a bit of blood and I have said 'it happens to mum sometimes'.* When you've talked about sex have you talked about the relationship side of things? *No I don't think that's appropriate for his age, and I could gauge from his reaction he would not cope, he would be pulling a face and saying 'Oh no'!* *Obviously not in graphic detail* *if he asks a question, I tell him the truth but I suppose you're economical with it … He was five when my wife was pregnant with Thomas, and he saw her tummy*	1.26 2.31-37 5.156-60 2.35 2.42-49	**Heteronormative frames of reference**	*It's very different now we've got gay marriage... it's all out there now. It was in the news about teaching about homosexuality, I'm not saying it's wrong but I don't think it should be forced down their necks. When they are ready they will ask a question and you can tell them the answer. If they are asking the question, they are ready for the answer. Whereas I think, I still struggle with that, I've got one of the lads I work with is gay, I do struggle with that.*	6.162-69

	getting bigger. We'd always talked about him coming out of mummy's tummy and he said 'you know how you said you saw my face before I came out of mummy's tummy' and I said 'yeah', he said 'did you look through mummy's mouth?' I said 'yes', because at five you don't need to know about the birth canal and stuff. *I tell you what made me think about how I wanted to bring my kids up, when I was younger at school we read To Kill a Mocking Bird. Scout turns and asked Daddy 'what's rape?' He says 'it's unrequested carnal knowledge' and he doesn't tell her any lies but he doesn't tell her all the details. My English teacher explained it and I thought that's a very good way of doing it. Don't tell them lies.* *… we've kept it biological*	2.52-62 3.82			
Surveillance	*He isn't on Facebook, he's got a few chat things he uses but I'm on them all, which of course he doesn't know about. He's got a Google plus profile, but I'm on that but one of my friends is on that, so I know Pete will tell me.*	4.116-18	**'He's alright in that department'**	*… he's always been a grinder.... grinding up on his cuddly toys.* *… he's had a girlfriend in school for ages.*	3.78-79 5.154
'S/he isn't ready	*… would be pulling a face and saying 'Oh no'.* *I don't think that's appropriate for his age*	3.82 5.157			

5.1.7 Neil

Neil was forty five years old and he had four children, Tony age thirteen, Izi age ten and in year five at primary school, Adam age nine and Phillip age seven and in year two. Izi was the focus of this interview although Neil did also make reference to the other children to illustrate certain points.

Neil was a professional, having worked previously with paedophiles, and educated to the equivalent of Masters' level. He lived with his wife and children full-time. Neil spoke in a frank manner and was happy for me to probe and explore his experiences, beliefs and attitudes. Neil's interview was the longest, lasting seventy two minutes. The themes that emerged from his interview are presented in table 5.13.

Table 5.13 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Neil's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Involved Fatherhood**		
Subordinate themes	'I want to do a better job than my parents' 'I'm equipped to do it'		Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **Recognising the need to talk**		
Subordinate themes	Knowledge is protective 'It's a parental responsibility'		Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	The innocent child Fear of contamination Censorship	Girls need to know earlier Sex is about love Parental openness leads to child's openness	Subordinate themes

Neil's own experiences of learning about sexuality had motivated him to be open with his own children:

> *… I had a chat with my dad I would have been around ten or eleven. My dad is easily embarrassed by such things; it was a very awkward stilted conversation about reproduction and sex in general ...*

> *… I wanted to be much more open with my kids and relaxed. Although we ended up having one conversation to start with it was just the beginning and it was not awkward or embarrassed, it was just a frank discussion.*

In addition to wanting to be more open than his own father was, Neil's personal values, his observations of the world around him and his professional experiences of working with child abusers motivated him to be proactive with his children in this regard:

> *… I think a lot of things you watch, like promiscuous behaviour* [referring to Eastenders]*, almost make it seem like the norm … but I still don't think that the level of promiscuity you see on TV is the norm ... but that doesn't come over and young people can be very impressionable.*
>
> *One of the things that is very concerning is the amount of sexual predators out there … It does worry me with the children ... I was in the air cadets … one of the instructors at the time got a girl drunk and shagged her, which is just horrific ... she was fifteen … You hear those sorts of stories and like Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris and I know it was the 1970s and attitudes toward sex then were very different like one of the lecturers at university thought it was a bonus to shag the students ... if you wanted to get a First you gave him a blow job and it's just horrific …*
>
> *… we restrict the internet and they know what I do for a living and who I've dealt with and who I work with. They've heard me talk about how mistreated people can be ... We talk about how some adults can't be trusted and stranger mentality where you think I don't know this person, I am not going to go off with them ... It's that naivety and gullibility you've got to touch on without removing their innocence and childhood.*

Protective discourses characterised much of Neil's dialogue. He drew upon both his personal and professional experiences and his personal values to create a world view which privileged perceptions of risk and the need to protect children. Risks included normalising messages regarding promiscuity on the television which led Neil to impose restrictions on Izi's exposure to television content. Further risks centred on predators that his children may come in to contact with, either through the internet or through their day to day lives. These risks caused Neil significant anxiety as illustrated by his use of language, for example he used the terms *'it's just horrific'* and *'it does worry me'* several times and he described employing protective behaviours such as discouraging Izi from joining the air cadets and restricting his children's internet usage.

Neil felt that it was a parental responsibility to teach children about sexuality. However, he drew attention to the risk of relying on parents to fulfil this role because of inconsistencies in attitudes and he highlighted the potential role of school based SRE in terms of its potential to ensure equality of access to information for children:

> *I think it's the parent's responsibility, but certainly there is a variation of what you get from different parents. Some will approach it very openly, we've talked about masturbating in the one conversation but there are some mums and dads who wouldn't be comfortable with that conversation and some that would be comfortable and talk freely. I think you need a fall-back with the school too, so it covers all bases.*

Neil's level of engagement with his children shone through throughout the interview, for example through reference to discussions they had had about Eastenders, playing computer games together as well as sharing films. Neil also appeared to play an active role in the children's daily lives for example by having contact with his children's schools and knowing what they did with regards to SRE, his involvement in his son's management of a long term health condition and his general relationship with his children. Neil described feeling equipped for the role of sexuality educator because of his own life experience and he learnt about the menstrual cycle through his relationship with his wife: '*I asked Sara about it. When we were having kids we'd talk about it … and we'd talked about understanding the mechanics'.*

Neil's behaviours were consistent with his aspirations to be open with his children and binary oppositions barely occurred within his transcript. He had thought through what he wanted to discuss with his children, how he intended to do this and he had done it. For example, he described some of the more 'factual' discussions that he had had with his son, Tony, when he was age ten:

> *I said that every twenty eight daysish a girl loses the lining of the womb and it leaks out through her vagina so they need tampons and panty liners to stop it being embarrassing, smelly or staining clothes. We talked about girls getting stressed before or immediately afterwards and that they may be a little more tetchy.*
>
> *We talked about blokes first of all and sex. It was sort of talking slang terms for penis, vagina and sex. We talked about erections, hard-ons.*
>
> *We've talked about masturbating.*

The linguistic qualities of Neil's transcript suggested that he was comfortable and confident in discussing these issues with his son. Metaphor and euphemism were not a feature of his dialogue; his language was factual and unembarrassed. When I asked him about how he felt during these types of conversations he said: '*… it was not awkward or embarrassed it was just a frank discussion'.*

Neil's transcript also suggested an awareness of his personal values and the values that he wished to convey to his children:

I am keen for my kids to have that sort of experience of sex, so that it's not just a meaningless exchange of bodily fluids that it's with someone you really like or love so you get that connection.

… doing it at your own pace and not getting badgered into it – there seems to be a massive amount of pressure for children to have sex.

I would like them to have that degree of confidence to say yeah I'm a virgin and I'm proud and I'll have sex when I am ready.

With regards to Neil's dialogue with his daughter, a gendered division of labour was described:

It's Tony that I spoke to ...

… It seemed to make more sense for Sara to talk to Izi, as she could come from a female's perspective. I suppose it would be embarrassing talking about getting hair on your vagina and growing boobs with your dad.

However, this was not an exclusive relationship that created passivity on Neil's part. He was still very much involved with Izi in this regard and he was fully aware of her level of understanding. Instead, it appeared to be a proactive, thought through, pragmatic decision on the part of Neil and his wife. Neil described open dialogue with his daughter about sexual issues and her changing body and an openness around nudity in the home: *'I can be in the bath and she would quite happily get a shower and go back out and she's very you know* [pauses] *she'll come and use the toilet whilst you're in the bath'.*

However, Neil recognised that gender very much informed his actions and his concerns as a father, describing his perception of Izi being exposed to more pressure than her brother to conform to sexualised behaviours at a young age: *I am not as concerned for Tony, as I don't think there is the same kind of pressure on him as Izi. It's terribly sexist to say but I don't think there is the same pressure for boys*.

Thus Neil's transcript was characterised by a connection with his children and open communication about sexuality in its broadest sense. Very few binary oppositions emerged from his transcript and congruency between his cognitions and behaviours was evident throughout the interview. Table 5.14 outlines how the emerging themes from Neil's transcript were generated.

Table 5.14 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Neil's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Involved Fatherhood** ⇧	
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
'I want to do a better job than my parents'	*… I was keen to not come across that way to my kids.* *… although she's got three kids you'd have thought she had never had sex the way she carries on, and wouldn't talk about it.* *I remember thinking I could have never have talked to my dad about that, because my Dad would have been fingers in ears and eyes shut as that would have horrified him. So I was quite pleased with that.*	1.18 1.24-25 2.42-45
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I said that every twenty eight daysish a girl loses the lining of the womb and it leaks out through her vagina so they need tampons and panty liners to stop it being embarrassing, smelly or staining clothes. We talked about girls getting stressed before or immediately afterwards and that they may be a little more tetchy.* *We talked about blokes first of all and sex. It was sort of talking slang terms for penis, vagina and sex. We talked about erections, hard-ons.* *We've talked about masturbating.* *it was not awkward or embarrassed it was just a frank discussion* *I didn't feel awkward talking to him and I didn't feel he felt awkward talking to me.*	2.34-38 2.40-42 8.230-1 1.14-15 2.48-49
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **Recognising the need to talk** ⇧	
Subordinate themes	**Quotes**	**Page and line number**
Knowledge is protective	*… it's giving them that knowledge that what they see isn't necessarily what happens in reality and these types of sexual expectations aren't to be forced upon them at a young age.* *… it's something that I'd like to try equip them with, how to say 'no I'm not happy with this, I don't want to go ahead', and have the confidence to say 'no I don't want you to touch me like this'.* *We talk about how some adults can't be trusted and stranger mentality where you think 'I don't know this person, I am not going to go off with them'* *… doing it at your own pace and not getting badgered into it – there seems to be a massive amount of pressure for children to have sex.* *I would like them to have that degree of confidence to say yeah I'm a virgin and I'm proud and I'll have sex when I am ready.* *I said that every 28 daysish a girl loses the lining of the womb and it leaks out through her vagina so they need tampons and panty liners to stop it being embarrassing, smelly or staining clothes. We talked about girls getting stressed before or immediately afterwards and that they may be a*	4.111-13 7.196-98 7.207-8 3.78-80 3.84-86 2.34-38

	little more tetchy. *We talked about blokes first of all and sex. It was sort of talking slang terms for penis, vagina and sex. We talked about erections, hard-ons …*	2.40-42
'It's a parental responsibility'	*… it's the parent's responsibility …* *I think it's about confidence and part of it is that openness and willingness* [on the part of parents] *to talk about sex and reproduction.* *you need a fall-back with the school too, so its covers all bases* *One of the school governors said they are thinking of not doing it next year, as it such a minefield*	8.229 4.99-100 8.233 8.247-9

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
The innocent child	*It's that naivety and gullibility you've got to touch on without removing their innocence and childhood.*	7.211-213	**Girls need to know earlier**	*I am not as concerned for Tony, as I don't think there is the same kind of pressure on him as Izi. It's terribly sexist to say but I don't think there is the same pressure for boys.*	5.142-45
Fear of contamination	*One of the things that is very concerning is the amount of sexual predators out there …* *… predatory paedophiles … It does worry me with the children … it does worry me for the children* *I think a lot of things you watch, like promiscuous behaviour, almost make it seem like the norm, and for a number of people who I work with it is, but I still don't think that the level of promiscuity you see on TV is the norm. I think people are still a bit more picky but that doesn't come over and young people can be very impressionable.*	5.157-8 6.168-170 4.124-127	**Sex is about love**	*I am keen for my kids to have that sort of experience of sex, so that it's not just a meaningless exchange of bodily fluids that it's with someone you really like or love so you get that connection.* *… doing it at your own pace and not getting badgered into it – there seems to be a massive amount of pressure for children to have sex.* *I would like them to have that degree of confidence to say yeah I'm a virgin and I'm proud and I'll have sex when I am ready.*	4.95-97 3.78-80 3.84-86
Censorship	*… we restrict the internet …* *… Izi is quite intrigued by the idea of Eastenders because of a lot of her friends watch it. She would ask 'shall we watch it' and I'd say 'good grief no, I'd rather have my eyes pulled out through my nose' and we talked about why.*	7.203 4.121-24	**Parental openness leads to child's openness**	*I can be in the bath and she would quite happily get a shower and go back out and she's very you know [pauses] she'll come and use the toilet whilst you're in the bath.* *… we watched Jumper at the weekend, it's a pre-watershed film that was on about tea time and the one character that can teleport has gone to Italy with his*	2.55-57 4.102-109

				girlfriend and it doesn't get to the point where they have sex but they undress each other and have a kiss and cuddle on the bed. I remember that sort of thing when I was home with my mum and dad and I would be like 'ooh no'! But my kids just watched it and they weren't embarrassed at all. Izi even said 'oh right, are they likely to have sex?' I said possibly but they really like each other and have been friends since junior school.	
				… we'll just chat …	5.151
				… I was on Clash of the Clans with the kids on the IPad …	5.158-9
				… on Newsround when it is about a child that has gone missing I'll say 'it's awful something really bad will have happened to that boy or little girl'	7.205-7
				Tony didn't seem embarrassed; he was chatting away to me about puberty. He would have been eleven then, in year six at primary.	1.27-28
				… if he felt there was something he wasn't happy about or unsure of going on I am fairly confident he'd still talk to me about it.	5.155-56
				We talked about erections, hard-ons and he said 'yeah that has happened to me'.	2.41-42
				… it was not awkward or embarrassed it was just a frank discussion.	1.14-15
				I didn't feel awkward talking to him and I didn't feel he felt awkward talking to me.	2.48-49
				I think it's about confidence and part of it is that openness and willingness [on the part of parents] *to talk about sex and reproduction.*	4.99-100

5.1.8 Andy

I recruited Andy through snowballing techniques. He was age forty two and was a professional educated to Masters' level. He had one child, Charlotte, who was age ten and in year five at primary school. Andy lived with Charlotte and her mother full-time.

Andy's interview felt uncomfortable. He said that he had volunteered to participate because he felt that it was an important discussion to have but he appeared to have given very little thought to his interactions with Charlotte regarding her learning about her changing body, relationships and reproduction. It was a struggle to draw out his experiences, beliefs and attitudes as he had very little experience to share with me. He appeared uncomfortable and I found it difficult to probe effectively. Although this was my last interview I found it the most difficult. It was also the shortest, lasting only thirty minutes. However, although the themes that emerged were not as broad in scope as those from other interviews several important themes emerged as demonstrated in table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Emerging superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes from Andy's interview.

Superordinate Theme 1	**Fatherhood:** **<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'I'm equipped to do it'	Gendered division of labour 'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 2	**Sexuality:** **<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>**		
Subordinate themes	Knowledge is protective 'It's a parental responsibility'	Discomfort Avoidance External catalyst required to prompt action 'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Subordinate themes
Superordinate Theme 3	**Childhood:** **<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>**		
Subordinate themes	'S/he isn't ready'	Girls need to know earlier	Subordinate themes

Andy commenced the interview by recalling how he learnt about puberty, relationships and reproduction in the playground with no discussion having taken place within the family unit.

When asked, Andy did not articulate a wish to give his daughter a better grounding in learning about sexuality than he had experienced himself, instead it genuinely appeared that he had given the issue very little thought:

> *Truth is I've not really thought about it. If she'd have been a boy it would have been more my role to do stuff whereas my wife thinks it's more her role because she is a girl.*

Indeed, on six occasions Andy explained that that he had not thought through the issues we were discussing:

> *Truth is I've not really thought about it*
> *… umm, we've not really thought about that*
> *I don't know*
> *I don't know actually*
> *I haven't really thought about it.*
> *I don't think we do. I haven't really thought about it.*

Andy appeared to have felt excluded from Charlotte's sexuality education because this was "women's business" and he had assumed a passive position. Even when he suggested that he did not feel that all of the responsibility should rest with his wife, his position was passive in that Charlotte would need to proactively raise the issue with him: '*I don't think it's my wife's sole responsibility - if Charlotte asked me questions, I'm more than happy to answer'.* Given Charlotte's apparent discomfort, as described below, this was highly unlikely to happen and in reality Andy had had no meaningful dialogue with his daughter and was unaware of her knowledge levels:

> *… she knows something but I don't know how much.*
> *I don't know if she'd know* [about menstruation].

Andy's non-verbal communication suggested a deep discomfort with discussing puberty, sex and relationships with me. He blushed and avoided eye contact throughout the various discussions and his responses were short and silted. Furthermore, his accounts suggested discomfort and avoidance of discussions with Charlotte:

> *When we've talked we've always said to her if you don't want to talk to us, there are friends who have got children, you can always ask them and your older friends, don't bottle it up, just ask Aunty Lesley* [an older girl friend's mum].

Andy lacked any accurate insight in to Charlotte's level of understanding regarding sexuality:

> *She'll giggle if things are said, so she knows something but I don't know how much. They've watched videos at school, there was a newsletter they sent out in year five and they did up to a certain level and gave us the option to watch the video and then in year six they go a bit further.*

> *… you can tell she's embarrassed about it as she either giggles or disappears. I suppose we leave it because she gets uncomfortable.*

Charlotte's apparent discomfort seemed to be used as a prompt by Andy and his wife to *'leave it'* as opposed to "attend to it". The process of referring Charlotte on to '*Aunty Lesley'*, friends and relatives implied a discomfort and passivity on Andy's behalf. This approach also appeared to serve as a strategy to impede open dialogue between Charlotte and her parents. Whilst it is unlikely that this was intentional, by suggesting to Charlotte that she may not want to talk with them, a lack of communication was normalised. Furthermore, the message in the metaphor *'don't bottle it up'* suggested an assumption that questions around puberty, relationships and sex would be concerning and anxiety-provoking for Charlotte. Later in the transcript similar language was used which would support this interpretation, for example *'if … she can cope with it'* and *'if she's confident to ask questions or won't get too upset'* as outlined in this extract:

> Interviewer: Do you have any opinions on the age that children should find out about sex and relationships?
>
> *Andy: The thinking is that girls mature quicker than boys do. I reckon if Charlotte knows more about sex earlier it's a good thing as she will be more street wise. But that's if you think she can cope with it. It depends on the child, if you think they are fairly immature then you don't want to be telling them too much at that time. It's making sure you give them enough information that they can cope with at that time and give them bits to go away with and come back at a later point to go through further. I think if she's confident to ask questions or won't get too upset then I think ten, eleven, and twelve, after that it's a bit late.*

However, there was no evidence that these issues would be distressing for Charlotte as Andy had never talked with her about her body, sex and relationships. Thus Andy's nervousness may have played a protective role for him; by assuming that Charlotte would not be comfortable in talking with him he could avoid these types of conversations with his daughter.

The extract above also suggests that age appropriateness and levels of maturity were important to Andy in relation to determining when sexuality should be discussed with children. The age range that he mentioned, age ten to twelve, included Charlotte's age, however, he did not appear to connect this statement to Charlotte's needs. Similarly, he did not seem to link his statement about the potentially protective role of knowledge to Charlotte at this stage in her life, instead his focus appeared to be on a notional future. Furthermore, although earlier in the interview Andy had asserted that *'parents have a responsibility'* and he indicated that he felt that he would be capable of undertaking the role of sexuality educator if he had to, '*I'd probably go on the internet. The resources are there ... I can muddle through, I'm sure',* his

practices as a sexuality educator were characterised by a complete absence of meaningful dialogue.

Thus, although Andy felt that girls need to know about sexuality related issues at an early age because they *'mature quicker than boys'* and he felt that it was advantageous for them to learn about relationships and sex at an early age, he was completely unaware of Charlotte's level of understanding. Whilst he reported feeling equipped to undertake this role and considered it a parental responsibility there was significant dissonance between these assertions and his behaviours. The themes that emerged from Andy's interviews are presented in table 5.16.

Table 5.16 Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from Andy's transcript with supporting quotations.

Superordinate Theme 1

Fatherhood:
<u>Aspiring to be involved</u> yet <u>largely detached</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'I'm equipped to do it'	*I think that if you want to make a good job of it, yes there is because you'll go and find it. If your child is ill, you suddenly become an expert in that illness. If you want to find out about it, there are loads of resources out there.*	5.155-58	**Gendered division of labour**	*Truth is I've not really thought about it. If she'd have been a boy it would have been more my role to do stuff whereas my wife thinks it's more her role because she is a girl.* *If Charlotte was a boy I think it would be my responsibility.* *I don't think it's my wife's sole responsibility - if Charlotte asked me questions, I'm more than happy to answer.*	1.24-25 4.108 4.108-9
			'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	*Truth is I've not really thought about it.* *… umm, we've not really thought about that* *I don't know* *I don't know actually* *How do you enforce that? That confidence, knowing what you want and what you don't want?* *I am trying to think if there are any ways in which we can or do do this.* [teach daughter about self-respect and boundaries that are acceptable to her] *I don't think we do. I haven't really thought about it.*	1.24 2.56-57 3.73 3.77 3.93-94 5.139-40

Superordinate Theme 2

Sexuality:
<u>Recognising the need to talk</u> yet <u>continuing the silence</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
Knowledge is protective	*I reckon if Charlotte knows more about sex earlier it's a good thing as she will be more street wise.*	4.118-20	**Discomfort**	*… you can tell she's embarrassed about it as she either giggles or disappears. I suppose we leave it because she gets uncomfortable.*	2.51-53

'It's a parental responsibility'	*parents have a responsibility*	4.112	**Avoidance**	*When we've talked we've always said to her if you don't want to talk to us, there are friends who have got children, you can always ask them and your older friends, don't bottle it up, just ask Aunty Lesley* [an older girl friend's mum]. *When we got the letter we talked about if you can't talk to us, talk to Lesley or an older girl friend.* *I'd have thought she'd go to my wife or she's got a really good relationship with my wife's mum so maybe she'd say something then.* *…* [we] *said to her 'you can read that if you want to', I think she's read some of it but not said anything since.*	1.26-29 2.40-41 2.57-59 2.47-48
			External catalyst required to prompt action	*When we got the letter we talked about …* *The school can help and might be the catalyst to get you talking about it.*	2.40 4.114-5
			'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	*… she knows something but I don't know how much.* *I don't know if she'd know* [about menstruation]	2.31-32 5.134

Superordinate Theme 3

Childhood:
<u>The innocent "other"</u> versus <u>the "adult in the making"</u>

Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number	Subordinate themes	Quotes	Page and line number
'S/he isn't ready'	*… if you think she can cope with it. It depends on the child, if you think they are fairly immature then you don't want to be telling them too much at that time. It's making sure you give them enough information that they can cope with at that time and give them bits to go away with and come back at a later point to go through further. I think if she's confident to ask questions or won't get too upset then I think ten, eleven, and twelve - after that it's a bit late.*	4.120-127	**Girls need to know earlier**	*… girls mature quicker than boys do.*	4.118

5.2 Analysis at the group level

Analysis at the group level revealed a significant number of shared subordinate themes as demonstrated in table 5.17. All of the fathers agreed that discussing sex, relationships and puberty with their children was a parental responsibility and the majority felt that knowledge about these issues would protect their children emotionally and physically. All but one of the fathers described themselves as equipped for the role, yet only Neil had addressed sexuality in its broadest sense with his children.

Gendered divisions of labour appeared to shape the experiences of the fathers in this domain, with fathers being assumed to take on the role of sexuality educator for their sons and mothers reportedly taking responsibility for their daughters' knowledge and understanding. However, with the exception of Neil, the fathers appeared passive and disengaged from their children in this regard. Whilst aspiring to be better than their own parents, the majority replicated their parents' behaviours, with a lack of thought and discomfort characterising this aspect of fatherhood.

The children that were discussed in these interviews were aged ten and were, therefore, likely to be peri-pubertal or pubertal. However, all of the fathers apart from Neil considered their children to be too young to require information about puberty, relationships and reproduction. They appeared to perceive sexuality related conversations as irrelevant to their children's lives and they seemed to be out of touch with their children's social realities. With the exception of Neil, the fathers gave the impression that they were somewhat detached from their children's day to day lives, for example they were vague when discussing their children's relationships at school, they appeared to have little insight into the kinds of conversations they engaged in and they lacked knowledge of their children's school curricula. Thus it appeared that the lack of experience on the part of the majority of the fathers regarding their role as sexuality educators was intertwined with their broader lived experience of fatherhood. In addition, the fathers' shared perception of their children as innocent and/or "not ready" appeared to provide a rationale for their lack of engagement in sexuality communication with their children. Furthermore, a general discomfort in discussing sexuality on the part of all of the fathers but Neil appeared to contribute to the fathers' reluctance to proactively discuss sexuality related issues with their ten year olds.

As outlined in the idiographic analyses and summarised in table 5.17, the subordinate themes for each father led to the identification of superordinate themes which were clustered in their

binary forms where appropriate. For seven of the fathers the superordinate theme "Fatherhood: Aspiring to be involved yet largely detached" emerged and the superordinate theme "Involved Fatherhood" emerged for Neil. "Sexuality: Recognising the need to talk yet continuing the silence" was relevant to seven of the fathers and "Sexuality: Recognising the need to talk" emerged for Neil. A third superordinate theme, "Childhood: The innocent other" versus the "adult in the making" emerged for all of the fathers.

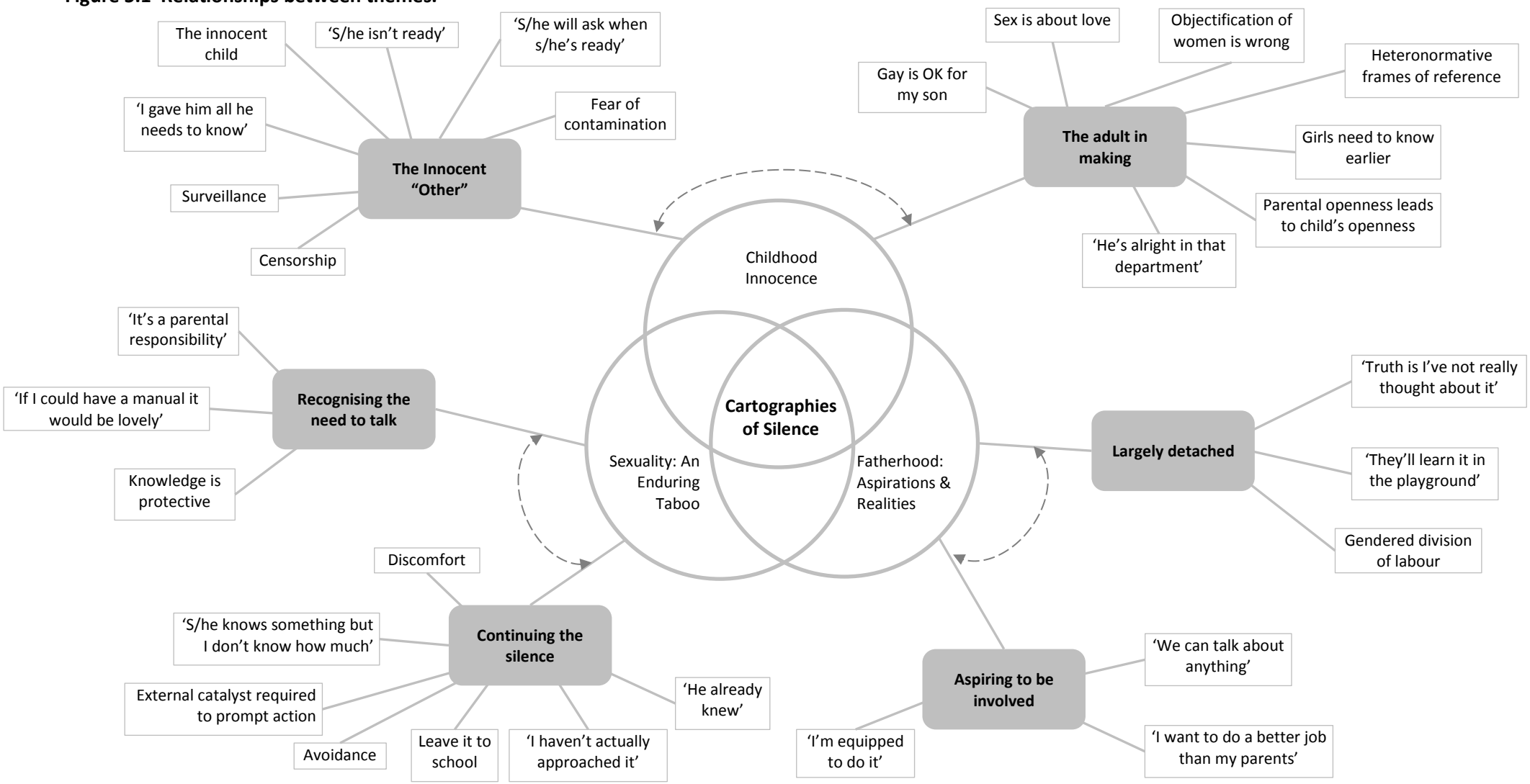
Further analysis of the superordinate themes through the use of abstraction, subsumption, polarisation, contextualisation and function (Smith et al. 2009) identified three inter-related higher order themes which captured the fathers' experiences of talking about puberty, relationships and reproduction with their ten year old children, namely: "Childhood Innocence", "Fatherhood: Aspirations and Realities" and "Sexuality: An Enduring Taboo". Each of these themes was connected by, and contained within, one overarching theme "Cartographies of Silence" as illustrated in figure 5.1 and expanded upon in Chapter Six.

In addition to demonstrating the relationship between the higher order themes and the overarching theme of cartographies of silence, figure 5.1 illustrates how these themes were developed by evidencing the link between the original subordinate themes, the corresponding superordinate themes and, in turn, the development of the group level higher order themes. The binary tensions contained within the superordinate themes is also depicted within the figure.

Table 5.17 Summary table of superordinate and subordinate themes emerging across the group.

Superordinate Themes		Subordinate Theme	Michael	Nigel	Angus	James	Steve	Colin	Neil	Andy	Total 'Yes'
	Aspiring to be involved	'I'm equipped to do it'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
		'I want to do a better job than my parents'	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	5
		'We can talk about anything'	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	5
	Largely detached	'Truth is I've not really thought about it'	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	5
		'They'll learn it in the playground'	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	2
		Gendered division of labour	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
	Recognising the need to talk	'It's a parental responsibility'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8
		'If I could have a manual it would be lovely'	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	3
		Knowledge is protective	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	5
	Continuing the silence	Discomfort	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	5
		'S/he knows something but I don't know how much'	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	4
		Avoidance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	5
		External catalyst required to prompt action	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	3
		Leave it to school	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	2
		'I haven't actually approached it'	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	3
		'He already knew'	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
	The innocent "other"	Censorship	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	2
		Surveillance	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	3
		'I gave him all he needs to know'	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	2
		The innocent child	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	3
		'S/he isn't ready'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	7
		'S/he will ask when s/he's ready'	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	4
		Fear of contamination	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	3
	The "adult in the making"	Gay is OK for my son	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
		Sex is about love	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	3
		Objectification of women is wrong	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	2
		Heteronormative frames of reference	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	3
		Girls need to know earlier	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	4
		Parental openness leads to child's openness	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	3
		'He's alright in that department'	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	3

Figure 5.1 Relationships between themes.



5.3 Summary

This chapter sought to examine the fathers' conversations at the descriptive level and to develop themes that represented their stories and the language that they used. By providing a postmodern critique the identification of binaries revealed significant tensions within the discursive practices of the fathers. With the exception of Neil, there was significant dissonance between the fathers' aspirations, their perceptions of themselves as fathers, their cognitions and their practices. For example, Nigel's transcript revealed a very significant tension in that he perceived his sons as asexual yet he had given significant consideration to Jo's potential sexual orientation. Angus firmly believed that sexuality related knowledge can protect children yet he was unaware of his daughter's level of understanding and had no plans to explore this with her. Thus binaries emerged regarding the fathers' perceptions and practices of fatherhood, their understandings of sexuality and their interpretations of childhood. The fathers aspired to be involved with their children yet they remained largely detached; they voiced a need for open communication about sexuality but largely continued the silence that characterised their own experiences of parent-child sexuality communication as children and their perceptions of childhood oscillated between the child as the innocent "other" and the emerging adult. Their practices were characterised by a lack of thought, passivity and varying degrees of silence. The next chapter will examine the themes that have emerged at the descriptive level from an interpretive, lifeworld perspective through the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and biopower.

PART THREE: LOCATING THE THESIS IN THE WIDER CONTEXT

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 Cartographies of silence by Adrienne Rich (1975 p139-40)

The technology of silence
the rituals, etiquette

the blurring of terms
... words or music or even
raw sounds

Silence can be a plan
rigorously executed

the blueprint of a life

It is a presence
it has history a form

Do not confuse it
with any kind of absence.

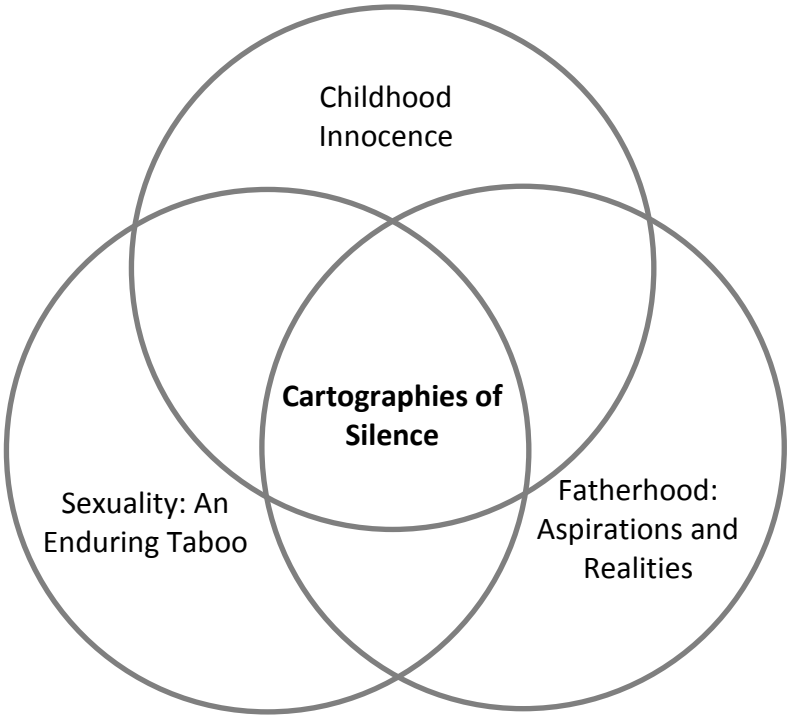
Chapter Five illustrated how different forms of silence characterised all but one of the fathers' transcripts in relation to their management of sexuality communication with their children. In researching "silence" I discovered Rich's poem which significantly advanced my interpretation of this shared lived experience. It drew my attention to the many "terrains" of silence; from the "untruths" articulated by Colin to the diversions employed by Michael, the unspoken silence of Steve, Andy and Angus and the controlling silence of Nigel. At face value the "silence" appeared to be underpinned by both a lack of thought and a deep discomfort. However, silence can be a deliberate strategy to divert, control and suppress; as Rich suggests it is not an 'absence'. In maintaining a silence a clear message was being conveyed by the fathers to their children. Sexuality was private, complex and difficult. It was, therefore, separate to the "ordinariness" of everyday life.

The metaphor of "cartography" was also helpful to me in drawing attention to the fathers' uncertainty in this unchartered territory. They were all designing their own maps, or plans, concerning where they were as fathers, the type of fathers they wished to be and the type of father they were going to be in the future. This highlighted the relationship between the

findings presented in Chapter Five and temporality. Time and biography were central to the lived experiences of all of the fathers. Their children were on the cusp of making the transition from childhood to adolescence which would, inevitably, impact on the biographies of the fathers.

Whilst silence is changeable and takes different forms, as illustrated by the fathers in this study, its various meanings should not be conflated. The following discussions seek to illustrate application of the double hermeneutic in interpreting the silence that characterised all but Neil's transcripts. In order to achieve this, the three overarching group-level superordinate themes identified in Chapter Five have been used to structure the ensuing interpretative analyses. The interrelationship between each of the themes is depicted in figure 6.1 with the term "Cartographies of Silence" placed at the centre of the Venn diagram to demonstrate how the three themes impacted upon the practices of the majority of the fathers. For me, this diagram mirrored the hermeneutic circle in that it demonstrated the dynamic relationship between the various "parts" of the analysis and the "whole". That is, to understand the "whole" an understanding of the constituent "parts" was necessary and, equally, to understand any of the "parts" an understanding of the "whole" was required (Smith et al. 2009). Throughout the discussions, the three themes are examined from an interpretative, lifeworld perspective and through critical application of Foucault's governmentality and biopower.

Figure 6.1 The relationship between the emergent group level superordinate themes.



6. 2 Fatherhood: aspirations and realities

In an age that is characterised by neoliberal values, contradictory and competing discourses operate about fatherhood and the construction of the family. As a technology of government, neoliberalism constitutes the ideal citizen as self-managing, entrepreneurial, productive and committed to the project of advancement. The father, is therefore, positioned as both a consumer of and contributor to neoliberal policies and practices. His identity is, subsequently, not fixed or stable, but it is instead dynamic, contradictory, shifting and constructed. Lupton and Barclay (1997 p16) assert that fatherhood is a 'continually changing ontological state, a site of competing discourses and desires that can never be fully and neatly shaped into a single ''identity'' and that involves oscillation back and forth between various modes of subject positions even within the context of a single day'. In the current study, tensions and contradictions characterised the fathers' accounts of their lived experiences. As outlined in Chapter Five, a chasm existed between the majority of the fathers' aspirations and the realities of their practices in that their reports fluctuated between being "as one" with their children and being in control of them. They desired an open, democratic relationship yet, in practice, this was unrealistic since the distributions of power within the relationships prevented this. The fathers controlled the quantity and quality of communication about bodies, sex and relationships and used quiet coercions (Foucault 1977) to assert their authority over sexuality related communication by choosing to ignore or respond to cues and suppressing or opening up communication on their terms.

In contemporary Western society, fatherhood is widely believed to have evolved to become more nurturing and involved over recent years (Finn and Henwood 2009, Lewis and Lamb 2007, Dermott 2003). Changes in family structures and maternal employment have impacted significantly on parenting roles (O'Brien and Shemilt 2003) with fathers being expected to play an active and supportive role in their children's lives. An emotionally supportive role in both the discourses of fathers and children is evident in the literature (Dermott 2008, Craig 2006, O'Brien and Shemilt 2003, Lupton and Barclay 1997) and was apparent in the language used by the fathers that participated in the current study. The cultural imperative for father-child emotional closeness which exists in modern Western fatherhood (Johansson and Klinth 2008) is not necessarily new (King 2012, La Rossa 1997) and it is acknowledged that some of the earlier fatherhood literature was problematic methodologically (Marsiglio et al. 2000) and almost exclusively focused on white middle class men (Finn and Henwood 2009). However, the studies which have drawn attention to the disparity between cultural expectations and the

actual conduct of fathering (Gray 2006, Reeves 2005, Brannen et al. 2000) are pertinent to both the findings of the current study and previous research in the field which has highlighted a gulf between fathers' intentions and their practices in discussing sexuality with their children (Wilson and Koo 2010, Wilson et al. 2010, Lamb 2004, Walsh et al. 1999).

Whilst fathers are expected to adopt a nurturing role in the family, the concept of 'main breadwinner' remains central to men's identities (Lewis 2000). In keeping with neoliberalism, fathers value emotional closeness with their children as much as their role as breadwinner (Hauari and Hollingworth 2009, Townsend 2002). In relation to the current study all of the fathers made reference to their professional roles and appeared to be defined by their occupations as much as, if not more than, their role as nurturing father. Although James' identity as the primary breadwinner had been ruptured by a period of unemployment he continued to make reference to his professional role in making sense of his lived experience, which Shirani et al. (2012a) suggest is frequently the case because breadwinner and involved carer positions are so closely intertwined within fatherhood identities. Several researchers have suggested that men who perceive their identity as a father as central to their overall sense of self are more likely to enact behaviours associated with father involvement (Dyer et al. 2012, Adamsons 2010, Townsend 2002). Issues around fatherhood identity are, therefore, helpful in making sense of the fathers' lived experiences as sexuality educators since all of the fathers apart from Neil privileged their identity as a professional over their fatherhood identities.

The fathers who participated in this study clearly cared "about" their children but their engagement in caring "for" them with regards to educating their sons and daughters about their bodies, relationships and reproduction was, on the whole, minimal. The gendered divisions of labour that emerged within the transcripts suggested that care was a deeply gendered concept for the fathers and that despite their aspirations for an intimate relationship with their children, gendered norms for motherhood and fatherhood prevailed (McDowell et al. 2005, Tronto 1994). The 'biologico-moral responsibility' for the welfare of children, which Foucault (1978) asserts has been seen as a maternal responsibility since industrialisation from the early 1800s onwards, appeared to continue within the families of the men who participated in this study. These findings are congruent with Wilson and Koo's (2010) research which demonstrated that gendered norms were adhered to in their study of parent-child sexuality communication, with fathers of ten to twelve year old children providing less sexuality education than their female partners. Indeed, a burgeoning body of research

indicates that although the gap between the time spent by mothers and fathers in caring for their children has narrowed over recent years, mothers largely remain the primary carer and spend significantly more time undertaking childcare responsibilities than fathers (Hauari and Hollingworth 2009, Lader et al. 2006, O'Brien 2005, Gauthier et al. 2004). As Foucault (1978) asserts the role of fathers in relation to biopower has decreased historically and mothers exercise the greatest power over children through their role as primary care givers. Furthermore, it would appear that maternal attitudes to the fathers' involvement in discussing sexuality with their children may have been an additional mediating factor since McBride et al. (2005) found that mothers' beliefs regarding fathering roles impacted upon fathers' perceptions of the importance of their role and their degree of engagement with their children.

Spending time with children is seen as important to the development of intimate relationships between parents and children (Murcott 2003), however, it would appear that time alone was inadequate in facilitating the development of an intimate relationship between the fathers of the current study and their children. Pleck (2010) identifies three components of father involvement: 'positive engagement activities', 'warmth and responsiveness' and 'control'. The fathers in the current study described their involvement in positive engagement activities through shared interests and hobbies as well as spending time together most evenings, weekends and holidays. However, warmth and responsiveness appeared to be lacking in relation to sexuality dialogue with the exception of Neil and control appeared to dominate for the other seven fathers which negated the impact of their shared time together in facilitating conversations of this kind. Other studies such as Walsh et al.'s (1999) have found that a lack of closeness was perceived by fathers as the greatest barrier to their involvement in their children's sexuality education.

Cabrera et al. (2000) emphasise that responsibility is an additional important aspect of father-child involvement for example, financial support and participation in managing childcare. My conversations with the fathers in this study suggested that, with the exception of Neil, the managerial aspects of parental responsibilities were beyond the fathers' gendered jurisdictions. This, according to Cabrera et al. (2000), may also help to interpret the lack of input from the majority of the fathers into their children's learning about sexuality.

A paradox exists in the relationship between the state and family in the context of neoliberalism since neoliberalism is committed to limiting the role of the state and respecting the autonomy and privacy of families and individuals but it is simultaneously concerned with

influencing and regulating social and economic life in order to bring about the desired values of the family institution in relation to securing the wealth and health of the family and, ultimately, the nation. Each of the fathers' discourses resonated with neoliberal values in that they all spoke at the individual as opposed to the societal level and their focus was on individual responsibility and self-management. Their lack of reference to social norms, state involvement and expectations was conspicuous in its absence. Instead, the fathers' practices appeared highly individualized and independent of any forms of governance with minimal reference to schools based SRE, despite the ongoing national furore over what should be included in primary school SRE which was taking place at the time of data collection. The fathers appeared to feel that external issues did not appear to infiltrate their private worlds and thus another chasm emerged between public concerns and private family practices. A simple and recurring interpretation was that there was no perceived 'top-down exercise of power over conduct … with a subjectivity constituted in a sense of personal responsibility, rights, freedoms and dependencies' (Fox 1993 p32-33) in this domain of the fathers' parenting. However, with its focus on managing risk and individual responsibility, neoliberalism can provide a compelling yet subtle form of governmentality (De Benedictis 2012). Hoffman (2010) argues that parents are increasingly held responsible for cultivating their children in such a way that risk is minimised and social ills are avoided. For parents, personal responsibility for economic risks and rewards translate into ensuring a stable, united, functioning family. The fathers who participated in this study, with the exception of Neil, managed the "risks" posed by their children's sexualities by avoiding discussing them. As Robinson (2008 p116) asserts 'any challenge to the sacrosanct concept of childhood innocence generally leads to a heightened level of concern in society'; the fathers avoided creating concern by avoiding such challenges to the innocence ideal. The notion of childhood innocence coupled with the concept of risk appeared to act synergistically to motivate the fathers to safeguard their children's wellbeing by employing various silencing strategies. Their practices thus reflected a hegemonic discourse that supports biopower with prescriptions for the protection of children's welfare linking private acts to the "public good".

The 'individualisation thesis' that underpins neoliberalism asserts that intimacy is central to detraditionalised life (Beck-Gernsheim 1998, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995), however, it is argued that the demands of intimate relationships are a significant challenge since rules and rituals which have historically bound families together have been replaced by contemporary family relationships (Beck-Gernsheim 1998). Thus, it could be argued that the position of the fathers in this study was paradoxical in that love and intimacy are becoming increasingly

central as an ideal yet they are simultaneously increasingly difficult to secure and maintain. However, although it has been argued that a lack of intimacy characterised all but Neil's father-child relationships, a continuation of the traditional rules and rituals that bind families together, as described by Beck-Gernsheim (1998), were present in the fathers' interviews in relation to their adherence to the white, middle-class heteronormative nuclear family and gendered norms. In a comprehensive review of the literature, Jamieson (1998) found little support for individualisation as an emerging feature of contemporary relationships. Instead, she highlighted how intimacy can be much broader and variable than Giddens' (1999, 1992) ideal of the 'pure relationship' which is based on equality and negotiation and underpinned by an intimacy based on mutual knowledge, disclosure and understanding. Similarly, Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards (2002) purported that the pure relationship cannot be applied to intergenerational relationships and such theorizing has little relevance to the lived experience of parents and children in contemporary western societies. Jamieson (1998) further asserts that Giddens' analyses overlook the complexity of individuals' lived private lives. This position is supported by a number of empirical studies that have highlighted the enduring attachment to the traditional ideals of the family (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards 2002, Weeks et al. 2001, Jordan et al. 1994) which were also a feature in this study. Further limitations of Beck-Gernsheim's (1998) and Giddens' (1999, 1992) theories relate to their lack of regard for the enduring nature of social bonds, the impact of socio-economic factors on individuals' relationship choices and their ethnocentric focus on Western societies (Rahman and Jackson 2010).

Henwood et al. (2010) assert that intensive parenting ideology is entwined with neoliberalism in that both assume a relationship between planning, control and future success. However, Lee et al. (2010) assert that the culture of intensive parenting promotes the use of expert guidance since parents are perceived as inadequate managers of risk which can undermine parental confidence (Shirani et al. 2012b). As Rose (1999 p208) observes 'the family is simultaneously allotted its responsibilities, assured of its natural capacities, and educated in the fact that it needs to be educated by experts in order to have confidence in its own capacities. Parents are bound into the language and evaluations of expertise at the very moment they are assured of their freedom and autonomy'. Although Dermott (2008) argues that intensive parenting is gendered in that fathering is more concerned with intimacy than intensity, Henwood et al. (2010) and Shirani et al. (2012b) have observed that men are exposed to intensification. Thus, neoliberalism and intensive parenting may have impacted on the men's lived experiences by calling into question their ability to teach their children about

their bodies, relationships and reproduction resulting in a reliance on “experts” such as school teachers.

Returning to the plurality of masculinities, the passivity that was described by the majority of the fathers, in their role as sexuality educators, is not a traditional masculine script. Whilst the fathers’ aspirations were laudable, in reality the majority were leaving their children’s learning about puberty, relationships and reproduction to chance and they thus appeared to lack agency. Furthermore, those who said they would abdicate the role to their children’s schools had very limited insight in to the timing and nature of schools-based sex education.

Contemporary fatherhood reflects changes in contemporary masculinities (Finn and Henwood 2009) which are concerned with the assimilation and demonstration of sociocultural norms and scripts regarding “manliness” such as physicality, aggression and tight emotional control (Thompson and Bennett 2015, Frosh et al. 2005). Masculinities, as social constructs, are culturally bound (Thompson and Bennett 2015, Lamb 2010) and in relation to fatherhood may, therefore, extend to the role of family protector and main breadwinner (Hauari and Hollingworth 2009) with broader masculine ideals of emotional control and suppression becoming less salient (Xu and O'Brien 2014). Gender ideology appeared to be central to the fathers in this study with regards to their construction of fatherhood and was likely to have significantly influenced their practices as fathers. Traditional masculine values emerged within the data, for example, the fathers saw themselves as playing an important role in protecting their children from a number of perceived threats with many employing interventional measures and a panoptic gaze, for example by monitoring their children’s internet activity. However, the fathers did not adhere to hegemonic norms of masculinity but instead appeared to identify with multiple and, sometimes, contradictory masculinities. For example, all of the fathers apart from Nigel conformed to hegemonic masculinity ideals surrounding heterosexuality. By adhering to gendered divisions of labour it could be argued that the fathers avoided feminine behaviours yet they resisted stereotypical behaviours by their very participation in this study. This finding is in keeping with a large body of literature which demonstrates that concepts of masculinity are dynamic and characterized by plurality and, at times, contradiction (Connell 2005, Henwood and Procter 2003, Kirkman et al. 2001). However, it is also acknowledged that the interview context most likely elicited responses that gave an insight into the men’s private masculinities around fathering as opposed to their public masculinities (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2007).

Gender constructs are entwined with masculine identities. Whilst dated, Parsons and Bales' (1955) three categories of gender constructs are still used today. The three categories are: traditional, non-traditional and composite. Composite styles were identified as the most commonly occurring pattern in a study of twenty nine fathers by Hauari and Hollingworth (2009). Likewise, the fathers in the current study exhibited a mixture of traditional and non-traditional attitudes and behaviours which were mirrored in their constructs of masculinities. For example, whilst the fathers adhered to gendered divisions of labour and some used macho language, such as Angus and Colin, they also spoke about messages that they wished to convey to both their sons and daughters regarding the objectification of women in relation to the messages such images convey about women's roles in society. Gender also appeared to affect emotional attachment and the formation of intimate relationships in the current study, as observed in the international literature (Craig 2006, Doucet 2006, Brannen et al. 1994).

Henwood et al. (date not supplied) identified that men's own relationships with their fathers shaped their parenting practices. Those who had enjoyed positive paternal experiences wished to emulate their father's behaviours and those who had negative memories feared that they would replicate these experiences and wished to be better than their own fathers were. They also found that learnt beliefs and attitudes acquired through primary socialisation around masculinity were enduring and tended to draw men back to traditional models of fathering. Featherstone (2009) and Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) also identified these patterns in their research. As Coltart and Henwood (2012) identified, men's fathering practices are characterized by tensions between new subjectivities and the pull of traditional discourses. In relation to the specific remit of this study, several papers have drawn attention to a conflict between parents' aspirations to provide better sexuality education for their children than their own parents provided for them and the realities of their practices (Geasler et al. 1995). Stone et al. (2013) identified that parents were unable to utilise positive learning of their own with regards to sexuality education and had to navigate their way through the challenges that they were exposed to through their own experiences of sexuality socialisation. The literature indicates that these issues relate to parental primary socialisation in that it has been demonstrated that parents are more likely to discuss sex-related issues with their children if they were taught by their own parents (Dyson and Smith 2012, Byers et al. 2008, Kniveton and Day 1999). These findings apply to the current study in that the men aspired to new subjectivities but, in practice, all but Neil unwittingly adhered to traditional scripts and replicated their own parents' behaviours despite their best intentions.

Additional factors that Lamb (2004) identified as key determinants of father involvement in their children's sexuality education that apply to this study include motivation, self-confidence, social support, institutional practices and cultural ecology. The fathers' motivation to act as early sexuality educators appeared to be high since they all felt that such knowledge would be protective yet their self-efficacy was low. In addition, social support in relation to positive reinforcement from other fathers appeared to be lacking, institutional practices such as limited opportunities for flexible working hours to enable greater involvement in the everyday ordinariness of their children's lives and a subcultural context which continues to promote mothers as the primary carer may have presented further obstacles.

From a phenomenological perspective, central to the fathers' collective life world was the project of the family. Each of the fathers cared about their children and aspired to be involved fathers, however, the degree to which fatherhood and adopting the role of sexuality educator had affected their lives differed significantly across the group. Fatherhood was fundamental to Neil's identity and his prime focus was his family's current and future welfare with his children's learning about sexuality being central to this. He talked about playing with his children, talking with them and being involved with their school lives. He also discussed his relationship with his wife at an intimate level, for example by making reference to irregularities in her menstrual cycle. This level of involvement and comfort with intimacy meant that talking to his children about puberty, relationships and reproduction was an integral part of Neil's parenting. Whilst the other fathers were equally earnest in their aspirations, the significance of their identities as fathers was less central to their lives. They had given very little thought to their position and approach to their children's sexuality education and subsequently had had minimal involvement. It thus appeared that this aspect of their fathering role had had negligible impact on their day to day lived experiences of fatherhood.

6. 3 Childhood innocence

Whilst the fathers' lived experiences of fatherhood and masculinities were central to interpreting the findings of this study their practices were contingent on wider issues concerning regimes of truth and social norms. In the context of the current study, interpretations of childhood and sexuality were key to their life worlds as explored in the following discussions.

6.3.1 The social construction of childhood

One of the greatest tensions around sexuality over the last two decades has been related to the condition and status of childhood. Jackson and Scott (2010) describe sexuality as being seen by many as 'inimical to childhood itself' (p101) and 'antithetical to the well-being of children' (p103) since it is widely regarded as a threat to the childhood innocence ideal. The findings of this study were in keeping with those of Robinson (2013), Egan (2013) and Goldman and Goldman (1982) in that the fathers perceived their children as asexual in their thoughts and behaviours and they were viewed as innocent and unaffected by sex. These perceptions were in keeping with notions of the Romantic child which dates back to the late eighteenth century. Children were portrayed as asexual, pure and innocent and thus, the innocent child ideal emerged which led to the normalisation of practices that aimed to shield children from an awareness of sex and sexuality. Childhood, therefore, became a site of public and private surveillance (Egan and Hawkes 2008a) and as Foucault (1978) notes, in his first volume on the history of sexuality in Western Europe, childhood sexuality became the object of intense scrutiny which was pivotal in deploying a shift in disciplinary apparatus, most notably through the family, which foregrounded the project of normalisation and surveillance in the late nineteenth century. This project strengthened further in the first two decades of the twentieth century with the emergence of psychoanalysis and sexology which identified the potential for children to be sexual.

Several studies have identified that parents' concerns to protect their children's innocence can act as a barrier to parent-child sexuality communication (Stone et al. 2015a, Stone et al. 2015b, Stone et al. 2013, Dyson and Smith 2012) and, specifically, father-son communication (Walsh et al. 1999). McGinn et al. (2013) found that although there is some ambiguity on the part of parents in defining childhood innocence, definitions generally centre on two key areas: the non-sexuality of children and their lack of sexual knowledge. These definitions applied to the present study with the fathers assuming that their children lacked knowledge about sexuality, sexual practice and their own bodies and were, therefore, innocent. However, the fathers' assumptions were based on their lack of dialogue with their children about sexuality and appeared to overlook spatiality, in that they underestimated the learning that their children were likely to have acquired through their exterior worlds such as school friends, friends' families and observing people's bodies and relationship behaviours in public spaces. Whilst some reference was made to playground learning by Michael and James, and Andy made reference to Charlotte having support through the extended family and friends, the fathers

largely appeared to overlook the impact of the children's inner worlds on their learning, for example their interactions with books, television, films, art and social media all of which portray different aspects of sexuality. Furthermore, despite the lack of explicit dialogue within the children's interiorities, that is their homes, the children were very likely to have learnt about relationships, intimate expression, social norms and bodies by observing their families. The fathers appeared to have a very narrow view of their children's learning and, with the exception of social media and television, appeared to have little insight into the various spaces through which their children's sexuality education would have already occurred beyond dialogue within the immediate family.

Relationality or the "otherness of the other" is at the heart of social constructions of childhood. This was evident in the fathers' transcripts as demonstrated in the initial, descriptive analyses which led to the identification of "the innocent other" versus the "adult in the making" as emergent themes. The children were described as being too young to cope with learning about sexuality by all of the fathers apart from Neil and developmental perspectives were clearly evident in the fathers' perceptions of childhood. Stone et al. (2015a, 2015b) also identified that this was a concern for the 110 parents that participated in their research with sexuality related knowledge perceived as a threat to childhood innocence. Nguyen and Rosengran (2004) also identified that this was the case in their study with parents believing that issues of a sexual nature should be discussed later than other biological concepts.

However, relationality is not concerned only with the "other" it is also concerned with how the self is experienced in relation to others in the context of the phenomenon studied. The alterity of the children diminished when the parents described shared interests such as sport or when the child was the expert. For example Andy's daughter, Charlotte, was an elite athlete at the time of the interview and when he spoke of her in this context the dynamic changed to daughter as knowledgeable and father as unknowing. Likewise, when Colin spoke of Rich's aptitude with electronics he assumed the position of the subordinate in relation to his son's knowledge and understanding. However, in relation to issues around sex and sexuality the fathers consistently privileged themselves as the experts and the children were positioned as lacking knowledge and, therefore, innocent. Indeed, Nigel, James and Neil made direct reference to the childhood innocence ideal and the threat that "too much" knowledge may pose.

Thus, boundaries and barriers were applied by the fathers which privileged the "knowledgeable" adult over the "naïve" or "ignorant" other. The children were assumed incompetent because they were not yet adults. This position applied equally to Neil who also made reference to the age appropriateness of sexual information. However, with no clear demarcation between what constitutes adulthood and, therefore, childhood, definitions of age or stage appropriateness are problematic. The notion of a threshold between child and adulthood was hinted at by the fathers and appeared to include several reference points: the development of competence, the loss of innocence and physiological sexual development. Alanen and Mayall (2001) emphasize the social construction of age, time and temporality of childhood and Lee (2002) furthers the debate by challenging notions of competency, emphasizing that competency is context dependent which means that both adults and children can be simultaneously competent and incompetent depending upon what is being demanded of the individual, as illustrated in the examples above. However, Robinson (2008) and Jackson and Scott (2010) argue that the defining boundary between adulthood and childhood is childhood innocence and hegemonic discourses of sexuality suggest that physiological sexual maturity is a signifier of adulthood (Robinson 2008). As Foucault (1978) notes, in modernity, the child's sexuality was conceptualized as physiologically present, in that the vast majority of the population are born with sex organs, but experienced as subjectively and phenomenologically absent until puberty. Thus the fathers' discourses were congruent with the dominant discourse that children are, therefore, non-sexual. By perceiving their children as innocent, childhood could be prolonged by the fathers and time was temporarily suspended in that roles were unchallenged and remained unchanged.

In relation to temporality all of the fathers, apart from Neil, appeared to experience a tension between objective time, that is their children's chronological age and stage of development, and their subjective, lived time whereby the children appeared to be perceived by their fathers as being much younger physically and less knowledgeable than they were in reality. For example, the girls that were referred to by their fathers were either peri-pubertal or pubertal and Nigel's son, Jo, had already learnt about reproduction before his father broached the issue with him, yet the fathers continued to perceive the children as "not yet ready" to talk about sexuality. Temporality discourses surrounding "being" and "becoming" (James 1998) were, therefore, also of relevance to interpreting the findings of this study. The "being"' child is regarded as exercising agency in constructing their personal childhood whereas the "becoming" child is perceived as an "adult in the making" and lacks the essential skills and competencies of the adult that they will become (James and James 2004). Neil's discussions

were very much focused on preparing his children to become the competent, confident adults that he hoped they would be, whereas the other fathers appeared unable to think beyond the present and did not perceive their children as emerging adults. James and Prout (1997) assert that the dominant framework is the "becoming" child, however, the findings of this study question this position.

Time, in the "being" discourse is external to the child as childhood is a marker of time throughout the life course; this was apparent in the fathers' interviews in that time was conspicuously absent in their discussions. In contrast, Neil's discourse of the "becoming" child was cognisant of the passage of time and time was seen as an intrinsic feature of the child. However, the findings of this study challenge some of the assumptions that underpin the "being" and "becoming" discourses since the claim that children are seen as having agency in the "being" discourse was paradoxical for the fathers involved in this study with regards to their perceptions of their children as sexually innocent, which implies a lack of knowledge, passivity and dependence (Jackson and Scott 2010). It would, therefore, appear that interpretations of "being" and "becoming" are context dependent.

A further finding of this study that relates to both constructions of childhood and temporality concerned the age of the children that were the focus of the interviews. Many of the findings of the current study resonate with Stone et al.'s (2015a, 2015b, 2013), Davies and Robinson's (2010) and Walsh et al.'s (1999) in that the parents who participated in all of these studies felt that discussing bodies, relationships and reproduction with young children was unnecessary and may pose a threat to childhood innocence. However, an important difference between the studies cited above and the current study concerned the age of the children under discussion; the children in all of the studies cited were aged three to six years, whereas the parents in the current study were reflecting on the needs of their ten year olds. Thus it appeared that the image of the sexually innocent child extended well beyond the early years for the fathers in this study. With the exception of Neil, the fathers' lived experiences were embedded in a protracted sense of time in relation to their biographies as fathers of young children and the duration of early childhood.

6.3.2 Protective discourses

Discourses are historically and culturally developed practices through which knowledge, power and subjectivity can be understood (Foucault 1972). A protective discourse characterised

much of the fathers' collective narrative with the assertion that knowledge about sex and relationships could protect their children from predators. The children were perceived as emotionally and cognitively immature by their fathers and, therefore, vulnerable. Such concerns are representative of the wider literature such as Stone et al.'s (2015a, 2015b, 2013) and Dyson and Smith's (2012) research. In addition, the fathers' anxieties were representative of the prevailing media discourse at the time of their interviews concerning ongoing revelations about the perpetration of sexual abuse by several high profile media personalities which had significantly exacerbated public anxiety about "the paedophile" as a threat to children's safety.

Jackson and Scott (2010) suggest that such anxieties are associated with changes in the social world which is becoming less stable and predictable. Thus, protective discourses have endured and grown with risk anxieties superimposed on to a normalised set of risk assumptions about childhood and sexuality. Consequently, a preoccupation with prevention against any potential threats to the wellbeing of children with regards to sexual knowledge has emerged both within the private domain of parenting and health promotion discourses (Jackson and Scott 2010). Harden (1998) posits that such discourses present contemporary examples of biopower with prescriptions for the protection of children's welfare linking private acts to the "public good". A cultural perception of the childhood innocence ideal coupled with the concept of risk are argued to act together to galvanise parents to pursue the safeguarding of their children's wellbeing as a goal, although keeping children in ignorance does not necessarily protect them effectively and may, paradoxically increase their vulnerability (Jackson and Scott 2015). As Robinson (2013) argues, by shielding children from knowledge to preserve their innocence an unintended consequence is that children are made more vulnerable. Indeed, Foucault (1978) asserts that the repressive discourses of the Victorian era surrounding sexuality intensified the focus on the sexual. In taking up this position Kincaid (1992 p4) posits that by 'insisting so loudly on the innocence, purity and asexuality of the child, we have created a subversive echo: experience, corruption, eroticism.' Further, Robinson (2008 p117) argues that the fear of the "other" in the form of sexual predators has also served to 'render invisible the practices of real sexual predators, that is, the 'ordinary' man or woman living in the sacrosanct heterosexual nuclear family'.

Chenier (2012) argues that the social construction of the sexual predator serves to support the ideological function of the white, middle-class, gendered, hierarchical, heterosexual family and, thus, "stranger-danger" discourses maintain the 'natural order of disorder' (Foucault 1978

p44). As Foucault asserts in The History of Sexuality (Foucault 1978 p44) aberrant sexualities are not suppressed, they are, instead, subject to analytical scrutiny and 'made into a principle of classification and intelligibility' in order to maintain societal order. By externalising threats to childhood innocence through the predator discourse, which places the gaze to the stranger and distracts from the family, the fictional ideal of the family as safe and nurturing is maintained (Chenier 2012). Thus, the sexual deviant is both an effect of and a strategy of power in that the paedophile has been seen by many as defining sexual innocence (Chenier 2012).

Concerns regarding the premature sexualisation of children was described by all of the fathers apart from Michael. There is a lack a consensus in the literature, regarding a definition for sexualisation (Wyness 2015), however, the fathers spoke of it in the context of their children being exposed to sexual imagery at an age when they were not equipped to cope with it. In recent years there has been much media, policy and academic debate about the sexualisation of children globally. The representation of the innocent child drives much of the political protective discourse around children with risk discourse providing a potent justification to stigmatise specific social groups, in this case parents who do not exert control over their children's sexuality learning, under the auspices of health promotion or public health (De Benedictis 2012, Irvine 2002).

The sexualisation debate is characterised by a shock-horror style of media reportage which emphasises the sexualisation of children who "ought" to be innocent (Jackson and Scott 2015). Recently the British government commissioned two reviews on sexualisation, one was for the Home Office, focusing on young people and written by a celebrity psychologist (Papadopoulos 2010) and the other, which focused on children, was for the Department for Education and authored by the Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union (Bailey 2011). Both reports called for greater protection of children and young people from sexualisation and constructed sexualisation as a threat to "healthy" sexual development and to the very essence of childhood. Robinson (2008 p114) argues that moral panics such as these are used strategically by governments to maintain 'the hegemony of the nuclear family, the sanctity of heterosexual relationships and the heteronormative social order'. As Foucault argues, '"Truth" is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it' (Foucault 1984 p133). Discourses are particularly powerful in embedding regimes of truth when presented by privileged and authoritative social institutions such as celebrity "experts", figures of perceived authority, the

mass media and public health, all of which applied to the publication of these two reports as well as the accompanying pronouncements of support by successive prime ministers of the time. As demonstrated in the sexualisation debate, discourses both reflect and reproduce power relations, while power produces discourses. The Foucauldian understanding of power relations in the context of neoliberal governmentality is that central discourses invite and persuade individuals to conform to norms and expectations rather than directly coercing them by appealing to people's desires and wishes. As a technology of governmentality, the publication of these two reports, in addition to the associated media uproar, appeared to have been effective in influencing the lived experiences of the fathers who participated in this study. Indeed, the messages conveyed in these reports and accompanying sound bites were echoed by the fathers in the current study in that they felt that 'these days children are under pressure to grow up too quickly' (Bailey 2011 p6). However, as Bragg et al. (2011) and Smith and Attwood (2011) argue the noise surrounding the sexualisation debate is underpinned by very little sound empirical research. It is also typified by a lack of consensus regarding the meaning of 'sexualisation' (Bragg et al. 2011) and the conflation of sexualisation and commercialisation (Wyness 2015). Furthermore, the evidence of harm is inconclusive (Bailey 2011, Smith and Attwood 2011).

However, for the fathers in the current study there was a real sense of anxiety that their children were being exposed to too much sexualised imagery and this could be harmful to them emotionally. A fear around potential physical harm was also described in relation to predators. Martin and Torres (2014) propose that such concerns reflect the traditional assumption that children are passive in their sexual socialisation. However, childhood sociologists such as James and Prout (1997) and Corsaro (1992) and the developmental theorist Vygotsky (1978) argue that children are far from passive in that they interpret, engage and interact with the world around them to evaluate and make sense of their sexual socialisation. Indeed, Buckingham and Bragg's (2004) analysis of interview and diary data of 120 nine to seventeen year olds demonstrated that children and young people assert agency in interpreting and assimilating sexual messages that they are exposed to through adult and youth media. Rysst (2010) and Pilcher (2010) have also demonstrated how adult interpretations of girls' fashion are frequently at odds with adult interpretations in that adults assume that girls want to look "sexy" and provocative whereas the girls talk about wishing to look "grown up" and "cool". Thus, children appear to assert agency and interpret "adult" materials in more complex and nuanced ways than adults frequently assume (Renold 2013, Wyness 2015). Thus, Foucault's (1978) assertion that sexuality must be understood through

the politics of talk and that sexuality is organised spatially and materially is of relevance here in that these studies demonstrate that children themselves question the politics that sustain the dichotomy between child and adult sexuality.

The types of surveillance, or panoptic gaze, that featured in the current study centred on internet and television usage, with music videos and social media featuring as particular areas of concern. Censorship was also exercised in these domains of family life as was sexuality orientated communication in the majority of families. The fathers felt that exposure to such material and conversations were inappropriate for children and a threat to their children's innocence. Normalising judgements, coupled with the panoptic gaze are central to the apparatus of social control which is characteristic of biopower. Indeed, Jackson and Scott (2010) posit that the surveillance of children's sexual lives has historically been underpinned by an additional motivation to prolong childhood. Sexualisation and predator discourses offer another contemporary example of biopower. They have led to heightened surveillance of children because of their perceived vulnerability to sexual danger and such surveillance is assumed to protect both the individual and wider society. According to Foucault (1977) control is internalized and exercised through universal surveillance rather than force. Indeed Robinson (2008 p116) asserts that 'Children today have become the most 'watched' of all generations, their lives increasingly regulated by adults'.

Egan and Hawkes (2008b) assert that the sexualisation debate centres on girls. Whilst the fathers in this study appeared to be equally concerned about the sexualisation of children, regardless of their gender, girls were constructed as more vulnerable than boys and they were, therefore, perceived as needing to know about sex and relationships earlier. The fathers also stated that because girls begin puberty earlier than boys they need to understand about physical development at an earlier stage. However, this did not impact on their practices in that they gave their sons and daughters a lack of information in equal measure. Martin and Luke (2010) argue that since boys' and girls' bodies are very similar during early childhood and engagement in sexual behaviours are not on the horizon this may lead to ungendered messages being conveyed by parents to their young children. Although the children discussed in this study were peri-pubertal, their fathers' lack of engagement with their corporeality may mean that this interpretation was applicable to them although Martin and Luke's discussion pertained to much younger children, aged three to six years.

A conspicuous absence in the fathers' discussions and in the literature relates to the child's right to learn about sexuality. Power, according to Foucault (1982) is an action that requires

two consenting parties and a possibility of choice. In the current discourses children are disempowered because they have no choice and the normative framework is to refuse children such information. Not only does this mean that they are at greater risk from a safeguarding perspective they are also unlikely to be prepared for the onset of puberty given the earlier physical maturation of boys and girls (Goldman 2008).

It could also be argued that the fathers who participated in this study were disempowered because they were seemingly unaware of how their practices were influenced by the subtle coercions of governmentality. Warnings regarding the perils of childhood sexualisation implicitly advise that the good family will discourage sexuality-orientated discussions with their children; thus expert discourses rendered the fathers as self-policing subjects. Their lack of resistance led to the production of a 'docile body' (Foucault 1977 p136) that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. With the exception of Neil, the fathers chose to align their practices with "expert" recommendations. Rather than challenging the centrality of expertise and, indeed, the legitimacy of such experts, they endorsed disciplinary technologies. As seen in this study, such technologies employ powerful discourses that shape regimes of truth and incorporate 'normalising judgement(s)' (Foucault 1977 p177) which qualify or disqualify individuals as 'fit and proper members of the social order' (Danaher et al. 2000 p61). Individual behaviour is, therefore, constrained through 'a set of standards and values associated with normality which are set into play by a network of ostensibly beneficent … forms of knowledge' (McNay 1994 p94). Thus, the childhood sexualisation discourse reinforces the notion that childhood sexuality is an expert realm in which only experts can legitimately advise on how the subject should be tackled. Amongst the fathers, only Neil successfully resisted and asserted a counter-discourse. However, as Foucault asserts, even counter-discourses are constrained by the social and cultural context in which they are operating; indeed it is notable that Neil's resistance was expressed in terms of his reference to his children's needs rather than his own preferences.

Thus, a significant tension exists within the governmentality of children's sexuality related knowledge. As outlined in the first part of this thesis, teenage pregnancy and STIs are widely problematized at the macro, meso and micro levels in the UK and considerable state resources have been invested in order to delay sexual debut, with the aim of reducing the incidence of STIs and unintended pregnancy amongst young people. However, many of these investments have had little impact, yet it would appear that additional or alternative strategies which encourage greater parent-child openness regarding sexuality have been largely over-looked as

a means of governmentality despite a significant body of literature which has demonstrated that open parent-child communication can be effective in delaying sexual debut. In relation to parent-child communication during the primary school years, the analysis set out in Chapter Three demonstrates that governmental messages about early sexuality education have, at best, been equivocal. In order to achieve parent-adolescent openness, open communication needs to be established at an early age so that it becomes established as a family norm (Stone 2013). However, the childhood innocence ideal is held to be of such significance to social relations and systems of regulation that political institutions, the media, religious authorities and others use the sexualisation agenda as a quiet coercion (Foucault 1977) in order to produce and reproduce social and political norms that suppress open dialogue. Such knowledge is, therefore, difficult and subjugated and normative behaviours have been reported with parents describing their concern that they will be judged negatively by other parents if their children are knowledgeable about sexuality (Stone 2015). As Foucault argues, the most powerful effect of the panoptic gaze is the attitude of self-policing that it engenders in its subjects; 'he becomes the principle of his own subjection' (Foucault 1977 p209). Thus biopower operates through these technologies of normalisation and the panoptic gaze, through a 'subtle, calculated technology of subjection' (Foucault 1977 p227), to produce self-regulating subjects which conform to societal norms to keep children in ignorance regarding sexuality.

6.4 Sexuality: an enduring taboo

The men that volunteered to participate in this study were likely to be more willing than others to discuss sexuality. However, the findings of this thesis suggest that they found it extremely difficult, just as their own parents did. Given the age of the fathers, their formative years would have coincided with an era of changing beliefs about the nature of sexuality where essentialist beliefs were giving way to constructionist approaches. Foucault (1980) argues that sexuality is historically and discursively constructed and no essence exists which requires repression or liberation. Through his understanding of power as productive Foucault (1980 p105) asserts that: 'Sexuality must not be thought of as a natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct'. However, the fathers who participated in this study grew up in an era where a tension characterised beliefs about sexuality in that

constructionist perspectives were gaining popularity yet their own parents' beliefs were likely to have been underpinned by essentialist beliefs. The fathers' conversations suggested that they did not sign-up to the essentialist beliefs around sex since they shared a common desire for their children to enjoy happy and fulfilling sexual relationships when they were emotionally ready. However, sexuality discourses are situated in a broad socio-historical context, as emphasised by Foucault (1980), and some of the fathers' discomfort in discussing sexuality may have related to their socialisation, as explored below.

6.4.1 Bracketing sexuality

Each of the fathers described sexuality related conversations as removed from other aspects of day-to-day parenting which echoed the persuasive messages of the state through which normalising judgements about appropriate paternal behaviours are communicated and reinforced. The "specialness" of sexuality is highly debated with authors such as Jackson and Scott (2010) challenging the way in which it is set apart from the mundane and the routine. A paradox existed between the men's perceptions of how openly they communicated with their children and the virtual silence that defined their communication about sexuality with their sons and daughters. This finding is consistent with Kirkman et al.'s (2005) study 'Being open with your mouth shut: the meaning of "openness" in family communication' which identified a range of meanings encompassed by openness and highlighted a mismatch between parents' perceptions of their relationships with their children and their children's perceptions. The specialness of sexuality communication for the fathers mirrored the paradoxical nature of state intervention regarding child health, which is concerned with the productive potential of the population. For example, other areas of concern, such as infant nutrition, have been addressed through a comprehensive state-sponsored apparatus commencing in the ante natal period and continuing through to the post-natal period, yet messages regarding children's sexuality education, which also has the potential to impact on the productive potential of the population, have been characterised by an overarching silence.

Repeatedly it has been identified that parents find it difficult to provide their children with sexuality education that is sensitive to their needs (Stone et al. 2015a, Stone et al. 2013, Lefkowitz 2002). Feldman and Rosenthal (2000) found that adolescents' evaluations of their fathers as sex educators reflected their fathers' general communication skills. Similarly, Nielsen et al. (2013) identified that good paternal educators were direct communicators and

were perceived as being emotionally close to their children and honest, open and sensitive during sexual conversations. In contrast, poor paternal educators were perceived as not having a close parent-child relationship and not talking regularly in general. In addition, they were uncomfortable when discussing sex, used humour to avoid serious conversations and avoided conversations of a sexual nature.

In the current study the difficulties that the fathers had in discussing sex-related issues with their children appeared to extend to general father-child communication as discussed in section 6.2 in relation to intimacy. In addition, however, it appeared that all of the fathers apart from Neil were deeply uncomfortable with discussing sex related issues. Indeed, societies globally are reluctant to openly discuss issues of sexuality (Wilson and Koo 2010, Walsh et al. 1999). The fathers were uncomfortable in discussing these issues with me, their children and, it would appear, their partners. This led to avoidance behaviours, for example Michael would throw a blanket over Henry's head if anything of a sexual nature came on the television and Andy normalised a lack of communication by suggesting to his daughter that such issues may be difficult and distressing for her to discuss with him and his wife. As Walker (2004) asserts, sex education can be very challenging for parents since it demands cognitive, affective and conative processes and, as Foucault (1980 p104) highlighted in drawing attention to the 'pedagogization of children's sex', children's sexuality education is frequently perceived as being fraught with danger: 'parents, families, educators . . . would have to take charge . . . of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential'. Indeed, the fathers that participated in this study were exposed to the neoliberal economic policies and moral conservatism of the 1980s that saw the implementation of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, which prohibited local authorities from 'promoting' homosexuality and 'pretended family relationships'. Their experiences of the discourses around SRE at that time may, therefore, have enhanced their perception of the "perilous" nature of sexuality communication with children.

Downing et al. (2011), Levin and Currie (2010) and Feldman and Rosenthal (2000) assert that for parents to become better sex educators their general communication skills require improvement. Turnbull et al.'s (2008) review of the literature identified that receptive parents who spend time with their children are more likely to be able to communicate openly with their adolescents about sensitive issues such as sexuality. Levin and Currie's (2010) findings also support this assertion. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a paucity of research which has examined this relationship in the pre-adolescent period, it is likely that the findings can be

applied to younger children's relationships with their parents and the subsequent quality of communication in this domain (Stone et al. 2013). However, the findings of the current study also suggest that communication could have been enhanced if the fathers had had a broader understanding of sexuality. Puberty, relationships and reproduction were subsumed as relating to heterosexual relationships by several of the participants. For example, Michael asserted that since his son was not yet interested in girls he was not yet ready to discuss any of these issues. Goldman (2008) and Goldman and Goldman (1982) also found in their research that terms such as sex, sexual and sexuality were frequently associated with coitus. Similarly, Stone et al. (2013) also identified a tendency towards a biologically orientated approach to sexuality amongst parents with issues such as body comfort, gender perceptions and self-confidence frequently being overlooked.

Foucault (1977) asserts that the modern family, or the biopolitical family cell, is a panoptic, normalising entity and parents act as the instruments of doctors, therapists and biopolitical state interests. Parent-child relationships are characterised for Foucault by parental monitoring of children's sexuality and the maintenance of 'a sexually aseptic family space' (Foucault 2004 p245). However, this power, Foucault argues 'must model its forms, criteria, interventions and decisions on medical reasons and knowledge' and parents must, therefore, be 'diagnosticians, therapists and agents of health' (Foucault 2004 p249-50). However, the role of medicine in promoting the health and consequently the utility of the population was absent from the fathers' discourses. Whilst other areas of children's health, such as their Body Mass Index and compliance with vaccinations, have become the object of medical surveillance, analysis and intervention, in this particular respect the family has failed to become a site of medicalisation. However, the deployment of alternative technologies of power such as the media, a celebrity psychologist and other figures of authority have enabled liberal governments to continue to "govern at a distance". In this way, the formal freedom of the individual is maintained but the individual is moulded into performing desirable behaviours.

Beyond semantic misunderstandings, heteronormative frames of reference were apparent in six out of the eight fathers' transcripts. All of the fathers constructed their own identities as masculine and heterosexual and all but Nigel's conversations suggested an assumption that their sons and daughters would be heterosexual. The limited literature that has examined parental perspectives regarding their children's sexual orientation demonstrates the prominent role of heteronormativity. For example, Martin's (2009) study of mothers of three to six year olds identified that the majority of mothers assumed that their children were

heterosexual and those that felt that their boys were not adhering to this normative behaviour were concerned and attempted to teach their sons that homosexuality was wrong. For the majority of fathers in this study it appeared that sexuality was confined to heterosexual intercourse, which is widely regarded as a normative form of sexuality discourse (Jackson and Scott 2010).

Repeated readings of the transcripts, my reflexive notes and the literature suggested that the fathers' avoidance behaviours may have also been associated with low perceived self-efficacy (Bandura 1997a, 1997b). The fathers who participated in this study felt that they either had adequate biological knowledge or access to such knowledge to enable them to talk to their children about puberty, relationships and reproduction. However, knowledge alone was insufficient to galvanise the fathers into talking to their children about these issues. The lack of thought that all of the fathers apart from Neil had given to this aspect of their children's development meant that the initial driver for the behaviour was lacking. Compounding this, the environmental and situational factors outlined in relation to fatherhood and masculinities in section 6.2 were unlikely to positively influence the fathers in taking on this role. Furthermore, the fathers' outcome expectations in relation to protective discourses appeared to lack prior thought which also diminished their impact on influencing the fathers' behaviours. Thus, the lack of forethought meant that there was a lack of personal goal setting amongst the fathers with the exception of Neil, which again meant that any drive to engage in sexuality education was negligible. Furthermore, the four antecedents of self-efficacy appeared to be lacking for all of the fathers but Neil; they had no previous performance accomplishments or similar experiences that they could generalise from to reinforce their belief that they would be effective in discussing these issues with their children, they lacked vicarious experiences since they appeared to lack peers that they could look to as an example, there was a lack of verbal persuasion from significant others and the fathers appeared to anticipate negative physical feedback in response to discussing these issues with their children.

Support for these interpretations is present in the literature. Morawska et al. (2015) surveyed 557 parents of three to ten year olds to identify the best predictors of parental self-efficacy in communicating with their children about sexuality. They found that the best predictors were parental knowledge, comfort and use of positive parenting strategies. However, as was the case in the current study, they identified that although the parents described feeling confident in discussing these issues with their children and they felt that it was an important parenting role, they did not proactively engage their children in these types of dialogues because self-

efficacy was generally low. Wilson and Koo (2010) found that fathers had lower self-efficacy and lower expectations of the benefits of discussing sexuality with their children than mothers and in father-adolescent son dyads DiIorio et al. (2006) found that self-efficacy and outcome expectations played a significant role in increasing sex-related communication. However, self-efficacy alone, as a meta narrative, would appear insufficient in fully interpreting the fathers' lived experiences and their general lack of communication with their children about sexuality.

6.4.2 Body awareness / body blindness

Unlike the parents in Stone et al.'s (2015a, 2015b) study, the fathers did not feel that their children were more likely to engage in sexual experimentation or become sexualised if they engaged in sex-related conversations. Instead, it seemed that discussing these issues posed a threat to the fathers' perceptions of their children as young, innocent and untainted by the world. Their reluctance to accept their children as emerging adults was striking and their lack of meaningful reference to embodiment more so. Steve talked about his daughter "feeling" different when he cuddled her which made him feel awkward and he suggested that the menarche would be sad and anxiety provoking for his daughter. Michael made reference to the size of Henry's penis and his erections, Angus and Neil mentioned their daughters' breast development, James commented on Rich wanting more privacy in the bathroom and becoming more aware of his appearance and Colin referred to his son masturbating. However, all references to the corporeality of the children's developing bodies were fleeting and embarrassed and there was a sense that "growing-up" was something that should be delayed as far as possible since this represented a threat and perhaps an end to childhood innocence. The children's bodies appeared to be largely unacknowledged by the fathers and were passed over, largely, in silence. The fathers did not make any mention of their own bodies and only Neil referred to his partner's body. The conversations felt "disembodied" although, paradoxically, the foci were puberty, relationships and reproduction. The fathers' lack of acknowledgement of their own bodies, their partners' and their children's suggested a deep discomfort and a denial of their own physicality and that of their children's. This may have contributed to the overall silence around sexuality in the home.

The fathers appeared to be disengaged from their children in relation to their physicality and they appeared to find it difficult to acknowledge the needs of their children in this regard. Butler (1990 p130) asserts that for Foucault 'cultural values emerge as a result of an inscription

on the body', with the body understood as a blank page, 'a materiality prior to signification and form'. Butler suggests that the body is made up of a set of flexible 'boundaries, individual and social, politically maintained and signified' (p33) and Foucault could have radicalized his theory further by a 'critical inquiry that traces the regulatory practices within which bodily contours are constructed' (p133) to provide a critical geneology of how bodies are 'made'. The fathers' perceptions of their children's asexuality appeared to be supported by a lack of reference to their children's bodily contours. Several of the fathers, particularly the fathers who had boys, appeared to be unaware that their children were likely to be peri-pubertal. Equally though, when fathers did acknowledge physical changes in their children, such as Steve and Angus commenting on their daughters' breast development, they did not appear to align their observations with the reality of their child's physical, psychological and social stage of development. Whilst the children were seen as gendered and potentially sexual, with the exception of Neil, the fathers perceived their children as asexual in the same way that parents of younger children frequently describe their children (Egan and Hawkes 2010). It appeared that the fathers saw their children as social constructions and discursive representations rather than a biological entity.

6.5 Summary

Normative childhoods in Western Society are shaped by hegemonic discourses of sexual innocence, framed by debates about what is in the best interests of the child. The role of the father, as part of the heteronormative family, is widely perceived to be concerned with safeguarding the child's entitlement to a childhood that is free from concerns and, in particular, concerns about sexuality. Whilst all of the fathers who participated in this study suggested a counter-discourse in arguing that they believed that knowledge could be protective, application of Foucault's concepts of governmentality and biopower have revealed that the fathers almost universally reflected normative bio-political values. Furthermore, whilst the findings of this study resonate with others in the field, by examining the fathers' reports phenomenologically and through a Foucauldian lens, tensions and contradictions have been surfaced and a critical understanding has been developed regarding the fathers' aspirations and the realities of their practices, the social construction of childhood, protective discourses and the enduring taboo that characterises sexuality, and children's sexuality in particular.

PART FOUR: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter sets out a summary of the research and situates it in relation to its original contribution to the field and its implications for practice. The quality of the study is evaluated and limitations are outlined. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice and areas of future research.

7.1 Summary of the study

This study employed IPA, as both a methodology and a method, to explore fathers' perceptions and practices in talking to their ten year old children about puberty, relationships and reproduction. Eight fathers, four of whom had ten year old daughters and four of whom had ten year old sons, were interviewed individually in their own homes or places of employment throughout June and July 2014. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed in keeping with IPA guidance.

The use of IPA illuminated a disjuncture between the fathers' cognitions, accounts and practices, which is one of the aims of IPA. However, the tensions could only be fully captured by exploring the binary oppositions that emerged within the transcripts. Initially the fathers' reports were described idiographically and subsequently they were analysed at the group level. The aim was to open up meaning rather than making any fixed claims, thus the fathers' experiences were interpreted by synthesising their findings with the wider literature and critically applying a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower. The fathers' practices in engaging in sexuality communication with their children were, largely, characterised by avoidance behaviours and silence, although they perceived their relationships with their children as open and they viewed themselves as equipped and willing to take on the role of sexuality educator in the home. Similarly, the fathers revealed positive attitudes towards children's sexuality education yet their practices were incongruent with their positions.

The combination of IPA and the application of a Foucauldian lens was powerful in surfacing the contradictions and tensions between the majority of the fathers' aspirations and the compelling nature of the childhood innocence discourse as a technology of governmentality. Sexuality does not have an essence in itself but, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, it is used in different discourses to deploy different effects. Whilst all of the fathers felt that it was in their

children's best interests to learn about sexuality, all but one adhered to hegemonic protective discourses and unquestioningly integrated their normalising effects into their fathering practices. In keeping with neoliberalist values the fathers wished to minimise risk which led, paradoxically, to a silence regarding sexuality on the part of the majority of the fathers and, in some cases, to deference to teachers who were perceived as "experts". A contradiction between cultural expectations and the actual conduct of fathering also emerged for seven of the eight fathers which appeared to be associated with masculinities and gender ideologies as well as continuities associated with their experiences of socialisation. A further interpretation related to temporality in that the majority of the fathers who participated in the study appeared to perceive their children as developmentally younger than they were in reality.

Thus, the study illuminated silencing practices on the part of the majority of the fathers which were likely to be underpinned by a belief that maintaining the childhood innocence ideal would play a protective role for their children. However, simultaneously, the fathers unanimously agreed that sexuality education could be protective for their children. Indeed, as argued in Chapter Six, keeping children in ignorance does not necessarily protect them and may, paradoxically, increase their vulnerability (Jackson and Scott 2015, Robinson 2013).

The interpretations set out in this thesis are, however, only one interpretation. As I outline below I have endeavoured to ensure the integrity of the study by attending to Yardley's (2000) dimensions of quality. However, it is acknowledged that a different context and historical moment may have surfaced a different set of binaries and interpretations.

7.2 Dimensions of quality

In order to appraise the value of this study Smith et al (2009) advocate the use of Yardley's (2000) criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research and in particular IPA research. Yardley's four criteria are, therefore, applied below.

7.2.1 Sensitivity to context

This study demonstrated sensitivity to context through reference to conversations with parents at the beginning of the study when the question was being designed, through reference to the literature and by employing Foucault's concepts of governmentality and biopower as a theoretical lens since Foucault emphasises the relevance of context. Consistent with IPA, the study also privileged the personal, idiographic experience of each father. In addition, the focus on the linguistic qualities of the accounts drew attention to the specific contexts of the men and enabled a more nuanced interpretation and understanding.

7.2.2 Commitment and rigour

As a novice qualitative researcher the clear guidance provided by Smith et al. (2009) ensured that the study was conducted systematically and with rigour. The study's rigour is evidenced by the thorough and thoughtful approach to the interviews and the systematic descriptive, linguistic and conceptual analyses described in Chapter Four. It is also evidenced through the commitment to reflexivity and supervision which is apparent throughout this thesis.

My commitment was apparent in the lengths that I went to in order to recruit participants, the care I took to maintain ethical standards and my treatment of participants and their data. The use of open-ended questions and a minimally structured interview allowed the fathers to express "their" story and showed them respect. The men's willingness to participate and to answer such personal questions, with several of the men extending their discussions to focus on intimate issues, demonstrates my commitment and sensitivity as a researcher.

7.2.3 Transparency and coherence

A commitment to transparency and coherence is demonstrated through the audit trails regarding the development of subordinate and superordinate themes outlined in Chapter Five. Furthermore, the interconnection between the research question and its associated aims and objectives, the research undertaken, the principles of IPA and the theoretical lens demonstrate coherence and congruence throughout the study. Secondly consistency between the arguments presented based on the themes identified, the interpretations and the writing up of the thesis was a feature of the study.

7.2.4 Impact and importance

Since the above three criteria have been met it is envisaged that the importance of this study will be recognised and that it will, therefore, have impact. The study's conclusions and recommendations have the potential to enhance father-child sexuality communication which could potentially impact on bio-psycho-social outcomes for young people.

7.3 The emergence of new understandings

Other researchers, albeit a small number, have examined father-child sexuality communication. However, these studies have addressed the research question from positivist perspectives or from a broadly qualitative position that is unclear in its epistemological and ontological foundations. Until now this terrain has not been explored by postmodern researchers. That is not to privilege the findings of this study over others; however, a postmodern perspective has challenged and disrupted prior understandings and discursive practices surrounding childhood sexuality. By acknowledging the existence of multiple truths this thesis has provided a space to critically challenge hegemonic discourses which impact on father-child sexuality communication.

By using IPA and a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower this study has gone beyond the general acceptance of fathers' lack of involvement in the sexuality education of their children to interpret their perceptions and practices in the context of the multifaceted actualities of the fathers' everyday lived experiences of fatherhood. As Jackson and Scott (2010) argue, by looking at an issue from one particular perspective another can be obscured; by interpreting the findings of this study from multiple perspectives a deeper, more informed perspective has been secured. By challenging totalising categories and overarching accounts and, instead, providing local, contextualised analyses, original interpretations, possibilities and understandings have been unveiled. In addition, by specifically focusing on the lived experiences of fathers of ten year old children living in England, a novel contribution to the field has been made since up until now there has been a complete absence of research pertaining to this population in relation to father-child sexuality communication.

In relation to informing practice, the contribution of this research centres on the significant tensions that have been surfaced regarding the governmentality of children's sexuality related knowledge. As outlined in the first part of this thesis, teenage pregnancy and STIs are widely problematized at the macro, meso and micro levels in the UK however, little prominence has been given to the significant body of literature which suggests that open parent-child communication can be effective in delaying sexual debut and minimising sexual risk taking. The fathers who participated in this study appeared unaware of any governmental messages regarding the protective role that open sexuality dialogue can play, yet they intuitively voiced this position. However, with the exception of Neil, their clarity appeared to have been obscured by the competing discourses surrounding the childhood innocence ideal and the role of the father. It would, therefore, appear that in order to encourage open father-child sexuality communication the subtle coercions of governmentality and the childhood innocence ideal need to be challenged and fathers need to be supported in communicating with their children about sexuality, as outlined in section 7.5.

7.4 Limitations

Whilst the current study has made an original and significant contribution to the field it is certainly not without its limitations, as explored below.

7.4.1 Balancing teacups

The most significant limitations of this study centre on my lack of experience as a novice researcher and hence, my limited ability to "balance teacups". As Hunter (2007 p77) outlines, the requirements of the qualitative researcher include needing to: 'balance a teacup, make field notes, keep an eye on your interview schedule and observe body language at the same time, and to still appear relatively 'normal''. My reflexive notes suggest that at times rather than "letting the teacup drop" I let my lack of experience detract from the quality of the data that I collected. I found the demands of the interviews so overwhelming that at times I found it difficult to "think on my feet" and challenge the participants. This was particularly the case in my first interview, which was with Michael, and my last interview which was with Andy. In Michael's interview I felt consumed by shyness and an anxiety to not upset Michael by questioning his practices as he was clearly uncomfortable in discussing sexuality with me. In

Andy's interview, when I look back I recognise that I felt intimidated by him, which made it difficult for me to probe and challenge. A limitation of the study, therefore, relates to the quality of the data collected in two of the eight interviews.

The need for a balancing act continued in to the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study in that I needed to put aside my presuppositions yet provide a meaningful interpretation of the data. Finlay (2009) also describes the tension between bracketing pre-understandings and exploiting them to aid interpretation. Indeed Smith et al. (2009) acknowledge that the researcher significantly shapes the research process and co-constructs the findings of the research but he warns that presuppositions may present 'an obstacle to interpretation' (Smith 2007 p6). Throughout the process of data collection and analysis presuppositions and judgements were, therefore, suspended through a process of reflexivity, as discussed in section 4.4. The aim was to focus on what was present in the data rather than what I assumed to be present (Spinelli 2002). However, in keeping with Smith (2008) I found that my interpretations were, inevitably, shaped by my values as a researcher and my choice of theoretical lens. Although, this was valuable in supporting the reciprocal interpretive activity required in order to make sense of the fathers' worlds and I believe that I remained open to the other, whilst recognising biases throughout the research process (Gadamer 1997), subjectivity is an inevitable feature of this study.

The final balancing act relates to the demands of the thesis. I have endeavoured to fully expound each aspect of the research journey and each point of analysis and interpretation. However, the participants' accounts were so rich that the word constraints of the thesis meant that I had to analyse the mothers' data outside of this study. Thus, the opportunity to draw comparisons and develop the interpretations was not exploited. However, the women's findings will be written up separately and disseminated to inform practice.

7.4.2 Methodological issues

The role of language can be problematic in IPA. Social constructionists argue that language constructs rather than describes reality. It could be argued, therefore, that the interview transcripts in this study told more about the way in which the fathers talked about their experiences than the experience itself (Willig 2001). Indeed, Michael, Angus and Andy appeared unable to fully communicate the fullness of their experience successfully and they seemed to lack the interpretative ability that the double hermeneutic requires. As Willig

(2001) points out, individuals may struggle to use language in a way that accurately conveys the subtleties and nuances of their experience (Willig 2001) and as an inexperienced researcher I may not have been sufficiently skilled to help draw out the men's experiences and to help them in developing their personal interpretations.

The small sample size that is required of IPA studies is a further limitation to this study. Whilst the need for homogeneity is understood, a small sample size coupled with the tremendous homogeneity of this particular sample makes it difficult to live up to Smith et al.'s (2009) challenge that IPA studies should be judged by the light they shed in a broader context. In addition, due to the self-selected nature of the fathers who participated in the study, the findings and interpretations need to be placed in context since the sample may over represent fathers who are more favourable towards discussing sexuality with their children than other fathers. Further studies that select from different groups and draw comparisons across groups would address this limitation.

Timing was a further constraint of this study which requires consideration. The responses of the fathers were embedded in a particular temporal moment and did not give any insight into how they would have reacted to the discourse of fatherhood and their children's discourses at other points in their life course. If time had allowed interpretations may have been enhanced if I had interviewed the fathers twelve months later to review their practices and perceptions as their children approached the transition to secondary school. This reflection informs the recommendations outlined in section 7.5. In addition, the temporal nature of the insights gained through this study must also be borne in mind from my position as the researcher. The findings of this study are inevitably a product of my own values, experiences and interpretations at this point in time and, as such, require deconstruction.

The final limitation of this study returns to concerns regarding language, but in this case my choice of language as a researcher. As I analysed the fathers' transcripts I realised that I had unwittingly adopted a heteronormative position in the wording of the research question since it implies a coalescence between relationships and reproduction. As Butler (2004 p41) posits 'Norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce'. This oversight may have inadvertently contributed to the heteronormative "feel" of the interviews and may have influenced the fathers' reports.

7.5 Recommendations

Whilst cognisant of the limitations of this study, there are several recommendations that have emerged from the data and its analysis which aim to challenge and address the 'cartographies silence' that were illuminated. In relation to practice, it has been established that open parent-child sexuality communication can be protective for children and young adults. However, this study has identified a number of barriers that appear to stymie fathers' attempts to engage in such dialogue with their ten year old children, indeed as James said: *'if I could have a manual it would be lovely'*.

The most significant barriers appear to be structural. It is, therefore, recommended that governmental messages regarding SRE for primary school aged children are supportive of open dialogue and the potential protective benefits of sexuality communication should be disseminated and privileged over the sexualisation debate. In addition, SRE in primary schools should be strengthened and fathers should be involved so that they can access both professional and peer support to inform this aspect of their parenting. Clarity regarding the potential benefits of open sexuality communication would give fathers permission to address this issue with their children, it would normalise these discussions and it may act as a driver for open dialogue. In addition, school based SRE would ensure an equality of access to information for children.

However, the challenges involved in sexuality communication should not be underestimated, as illustrated in this study. Support should, therefore, be made available for fathers in communicating with their children about sexuality and their role in this domain should be promoted from the antenatal period onwards, in the same way that other health promoting messages are conveyed, for example in relation to infant nutrition. By establishing open dialogue from an early age, it is more likely that communication will remain open as the child matures (Stone and Ingham 2002) and it is envisaged that fathers will be more cognisant of their children's corporealities.

These recommendations for practice have focused solely on father-child sexuality communication because this is the focus of the current study. However, it is acknowledged that a wide reaching, multi-faceted approach is necessary in order to support children and the young people they will become in promoting their sexual health.

In order to address the limitations of this study and to explore more fully the implications presented by this thesis for practice it is recommended that further research should be undertaken that explores the practices and perceptions of fathers in their role as sexuality educators for their ten year old children. It is recommended that the design of the current study is replicated with other groups of fathers encompassing young fathers aged 25 and under, non-professional groups, fathers of BME origin and fathers in same sex relationships, in order to generalise the findings to a broader context.

In addition, it is recommended that the data concerning the practices and perceptions of mothers as sexuality educators for their ten year old children should be analysed and written up, with comparisons drawn across the male and female samples at the group level and between couples so that the impact of gender can be explored more fully. In addition, the fathers in the current study should be followed up to ascertain whether their sexuality communication has changed with the advancement of their children's age.

Finally, in keeping with a postmodern perspective, it is acknowledged that this study offers only a single reading of the fathers' words and my voice will have given a particular perspective on the fathers' stories. The interpretations that have been surfaced are, therefore, open to further interpretations and deconstructions which should be explored; the circle never ends….

EPILOGUE

> "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (Rich 1995 p35).

In writing the last sentences of this thesis I am struck by how undertaking this Professional Doctorate has enabled me to address my personal 'technology of silence' (Rich 1975 p139). In undertaking this project I have gone beyond the silencing technologies of my own private normalising governmentalities – male dominance, gender expectations, class boundaries and religious authority – and I have found a voice. It may still be a slightly faltering voice, but nevertheless it is my voice; a voice that I have struggled to articulate for many years and a voice that will put an end to the 'self-destructiveness' of suppression.

When I look back at "pre-doctorate me" I barely recognise myself. The limited resemblance is not simply due to the passage of time, it relates more to a significant shift in how I think and view the world, coupled with a much greater self-awareness. I began my Professional Doctorate thinking that I would discover a single, universal truth that would explain the lack of father-child sexuality communication that I had both observed and read about. However, with guidance and reading, I became aware that meta-narratives could not possibly capture the realities of fathers in discussing sexuality with their children. When I look back at what I have learnt, more than anything else, I have learnt to think critically. I have learnt to go beyond general observation and unifying theories and I have learnt to question, which has allowed me to offer up possibilities, open up interpretations and consider how widely held positions come to be accepted as truths. Moreover, I have learnt that life is not quite as simple as it first appears and the factors that influence our lived worlds are complex, multi-faceted and often invisible.

In drawing to a close, I return to Adrienne Rich's (1975) Cartographies of Silence and Brown's (2012) extension of the cartography metaphor to consider what a map of silence may look like. Brown (2012) suggests that it might resemble the tracing of a coastline because silence is frequently contrasted with something it is not, such as sound or language, in the same way

that the line on a map between land and water will change with tides and time. Although each forms the outline of the other, both constitute a changing environment where their existence is co-dependent. This metaphor is powerful in the context of the current study since it highlights the temporal, mutually dependent yet fluid nature of the father-child relationship and the potential impacts of normalising governmental messages which have changed historically over time. Furthermore, it challenges the "nothingness" of silence and serves to emphasise that silence can be strong, dynamic and active, conveying different meanings depending upon context and the lived world.

Brown's (2012) interpretation of Rich's (1975) cartography metaphor is also salient to my growth as a researcher. When I commenced my doctoral journey I viewed research as something that was "done to" individuals in an objective and repeatable fashion and ontologically I believed that there was one single truth to be found. However, as I grew and surrendered myself to viewing the world from a constructionist and postmodern perspective I gradually became comfortable with the way in which my conversations with participants changed with "tides and time". The dynamic environment and the co-dependent relationship between the cartography of land and sea resonate with my experience of carrying out this study. By becoming fluid and at one with the men's words and language and by allowing my interpretations to ebb and flow with my changing environment I have been able to provide original and meaningful interpretations. In the same way that the findings of this study have shed light on the temporal, mutually dependent, fluid nature of the father-child relationship, for me, these are all characteristics of this thesis. This study is a product of time and space and therefore reflects my personal history and social context at this point in time. The dichotomies and dualisms that I have surfaced today may well be different if I undertook the study again in the near future. However, the interpretations have opened up new possibilities for fathers and children and have emphasised that the overarching 'silence' that largely characterises children's sexuality education should not be confused 'with any kind of absence' (Rich 1975).

By recognising and questioning my personal technologies of silence I have gained agency. By challenging the silence that largely characterises father-child sexuality, I very much hope that, in turn, both fathers and children will be able to exercise agency in this aspect of their lives since:

> 'In a world where language and naming are power, silence is oppression…' (Rich 1995 p204).

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APPENDIX ONE

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An exploration of mothers' attitudes towards their daughters' menarche

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Menarche is a significant milestone for young women, representing an important juncture between girlhood and maturation. The limited literature that exists suggests that a mother's reaction to her daughter's first periods can shape her experiences and perceptions of menstruation which, in turn, may impact on her self-image and, consequently, sexual risk taking. However, very little is known about UK mothers' attitudes towards their daughters' menarche. This paper aims to add to the body of knowledge by applying a postmodern critique, a Derridian deconstructive analysis, to a discussion thread found on mumsnet.com – a UK parenting website. The thread is concerned with a mother's response to her daughter's menarche to which other mothers respond. The deconstruction revealed a number of meta-narratives and themes within the text: secrecy, sorrow, a lack of competency and knowledge, power, gender and motherhood. Unwittingly, the women appear to be socialising their daughters to comply with and perpetuate the menstrual taboo that they endured themselves, thus repeating the cycles of shame associated with menstruation. The findings of this critique suggest that menstrual education is an area that requires more attention, particularly in the context of perceived menstrual shame and its impact on sexual decision-making.

Keywords: menarche; menstruation; mothers; attitudes; UK; deconstruction

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Introduction

There is an increasing body of sexual health literature which suggests a protective relationship between parental openness and young people's sexual decision-making (Campero et al. 2011; Huebner and Howell 2003; Lehr et al. 2000; Miller et al. 2001; Nagamatsu et al. 2008; Ogle et al. 2008; Somers and Paulson 2000; Widman et al. 2006). However, in the UK there is a significant paucity of research examining how parents and children discuss sexual development, particularly in relation to menarche.

The analysis offered here forms part of a preliminary enquiry for a doctoral thesis. It aims to provide a conceptual exploration of a key construct as part of a wider research problem pertaining to parent–child communication regarding physical maturation, reproduction and relationships. The exploration takes the form of a Derridian deconstructive analysis of a discussion thread found on a British parent-focused website called Mumsnet (http://www.mumsnet.com). The thread is concerned with a mother's response to her daughter's menarche to which other mothers respond. The aim of the paper is to illuminate the attitudes of mothers regarding their daughters' menarche. At present little is known about the attitudes of families in discussing menarche and menstruation;

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this paper seeks to address this deficit with a view to advancing evidence-based practice within the sphere of young people's sexual health promotion.

Background and rationale

Menarche is a significant milestone for young women representing, for many, an important juncture between girlhood and maturation (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996). With it comes a number of consequences that may impact on the individual socially, physically and emotionally (Chang et al. 2010). Internationally, studies suggest that many girls and young women struggle with the transition (Beausang and Razor 2000; Marván et al. 2002; Uskul 2004), with many being unprepared for the onset of menstruation (Chrisler and Zittel 1998; Costos et al. 2002; Kalman 2003a, 2003b; Cooper and Koch 2007). At present there is a paucity of literature which explores the role of significant others' responses to menarche. However, the empirical studies that do exist (Uskul 2004; Lee 2008) suggest that a mother's reaction is perceived as very significant in the eyes of her daughter (Chang et al. 2010). Furthermore, structural equation modelling suggests that women who perceive menstruation positively feel more confident about their bodies, are more sexually assertive and take fewer sexual risks (Schooler et al. 2005).

Whilst it is acknowledged that the literature in the field is limited, the protective relationship between positive perceptions of menstruation and sexual health suggested by Schooler et al.'s (2005) work highlights a need for further enquiry in the field.

Aims

In view of the paucity of literature in the field, the aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of the attitudes of British mothers regarding their daughters' menarche. More specific objectives were to (1) apply a Derridean deconstruction to a contemporary text, a discussion thread, in which mothers share their feelings and reflect on their attitudes towards their daughters' menarche, (2) analyse the themes that emerge from the text and (3) relate emerging themes to their implications for sexual health promotion among young people.

Ethics

The analysis takes the form of a deconstruction of written material already in the public domain. It does not therefore require approval by a research ethics committee. However, as a matter of good practice, the confidentiality of each contributor has been maintained by replacing user identification names with numbers in the order that they appeared within the thread, and all posts have been represented honestly in that they have been transcribed exactly as they were written in the thread.

Methods

Deconstruction

This paper applies a postmodern critique using Derridian deconstructive analysis to an on-line discussion thread. Postmodernism as a term is used in a range of disciplines and spheres including music, art, architecture, literary criticism and sociology, but for this paper's authors the attraction lay in its approach to language and discourse. These, along with the categories of deconstruction and *différance*, were to form the foundation for the reading of the discussion thread. This approach to language can be more accurately

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described as 'poststructuralism', which refers to the theory and work of Derrida (1972, 1976). His perspective suggested that language users do not use words randomly when trying to convey meaning by fitting them to the objects or feelings being conveyed. Instead, the meanings of words are largely embedded in language use itself; for example how we talk, write and read largely determines what we say. In effect, poststructuralism reconstructs the process of meaning in a way that gives fuller weight to the pre-given meanings embedded not only in particular words but also in the relationships of words with each other. As a result, Derrida argues that meaning is forever elusive and incomplete in the sense that language can never perfectly convey what is meant by the language user.

Postmodernism (which we argue embraces poststructuralism) is a theory of cultural, intellectual and societal discontinuity that tends to reject Enlightenment notions of linear progress (Agger 1991). History is no longer conceived as going somewhere, from prehistory to the end of history. The present is no longer to be experienced as a stopping point en route to something higher or better.

The technique of deconstruction can be applied to all texts that represent the social world. Derrida proposes that all texts are *undecidable* in that they conceal tensions between the text and the sub-text. What the text appears to 'say' on the surface can only be understood through reference to the hidden assumptions and contextualisations that position it (Agger 1991). Deconstruction aims to analyse the use of language to, 'take apart and expose the underlying meaning, biases, and preconceptions that structure the way a text conceptualises its relation to what it describes' (Denzin 1994, 185). It therefore proposes that any text has numerous possible legitimate interpretations and meanings and these will be contingent upon other discourses such as the social, political and historical. A basic tenet of postmodernist thought is the 'problem' of meaning. For not only is it impossible to ascribe explanations and 'metanarratives' to events, it is also impossible to ascribe meaning to what people say (or write). There are several issues here: that meaning is what is intended by the speaker/writer, that meaning is created by and contained in the language/text itself and that meaning is created by the listener/reader. Deconstruction is seen as a method of stripping away presupposed meaning. It was chosen as an approach to this topic because of its capacity to go beyond superficial meanings and its potential to offer an insight into mothers' attitudes regarding their daughters' menarche.

It is argued that deconstruction is an epistemology rather than a method (Cheek 2000). There is no formulaic approach to deconstruction as this would be in conflict with the central tenets of postmodernism, which reject grand narratives and instead embrace juxtaposition, disjunction and multiple perspectives. However, the literature does suggest some strategies, which will be employed throughout the ensuing discussions.

Derrida refers to a metaphysics of presence; this idea of being (or presence) is central to all systems of Western philosophy. Presence is part of the binary opposition, presence/absence, in which presence is always favoured over absence. Speech is associated with presence, and both are favoured over writing and absence; this privileging of speech and presence is what Derrida calls logocentrism. What Derrida does is to look at how a binary opposition cannot exist without reference to the other; light (as presence) is defined as the absence of darkness, goodness the absence of evil and so on. Deconstruction is not about reversing these hierarchies. Rather, it seeks to erase the boundaries between the oppositions. In doing so, it will show that the values and order implied by the opposition are not rigid or given.

The text from the discussion thread was deconstructed in this way. Meaning is always open to challenge and redefinition with shifts in its discursive context. Deconstruction theorises the discursive context of written texts. By this we mean that how the mothers lived

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their lives as conscious, thinking subjects, and how they gave meaning to the experiences of their daughters' menarche, depended on the range and power of existing discourses, their access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent. Deconstructive analysis of the text involved searching for apparently oppositional terms within the thread. In what Derrida termed *différance* (a pun based on difference and deference), he refers to the differing and deferring of signs from what they mean, and what they do not. These two notions refer to a separation of identity (difference) and a separation of time (deference). If meaning has spatial and temporal aspects, then it can never be in the same place as itself but is always 'just along the line' (Derrida 1976, 219).

The text

The text for this deconstruction arises from a postmodern community, in the form of a website created by two UK mothers to give advice on parenting and family issues. The discussion thread, titled 'My daughter has started her periods today', commences with the post in Figure 1. Parents from all over the world can post questions to other parents to seek their advice and opinion. However, the profile of members suggests that the women engaging in the discussion thread are likely to be largely British. The discussion involved 22 mothers, with 43 postings over a 20-day period throughout January 2012. All posts were included in the analysis.[1]

The rise of the Internet increasingly offers texts that represent the social world (Seale et al. 2010) and are therefore appropriate for deconstruction (Denzin 1994; Rolfe 2005). A postmodern approach insists on multi-vocality, in that the many and varied voices that can be heard should be heard and that all participants should be able to present their own reality (Daly 2007). The use of an on-line discussion thread allows several different stories to be heard that reflect differing perspectives and experiences (Mitchell et al. 2007; Seale et al. 2010). The website described above reflects McLuhan's (1962) notion of the global village in which people from all over the world can, given the necessary resource, engage in a dialogue that is of mutual interest. Although McLuhan was writing 50 years ago, before the Internet existed, his concept which describes how the globe has been contracted by technology and how technology allows information to move rapidly across distances can be readily applied to the Internet age, moving from the modern to the postmodern.

Critique

Reading

Derrida (1988, 35) refers to reading as 'a first task, the most elementary of tasks'. The initial reading for this deconstruction was concerned with the website itself and the notion

> Hi, I feel so strange about this.....she was quite shocked and cried bless her. She is 14 at the end of the month. She came and told me immediately which is lovely, because when I started mine I never ever told my mum, I had 4 brothers and they all laughed at such things. It was a horrible time in my life and I was determined that if ever I had a daughter she would not have to go through what I did. My periods stopped in June 98 at he ripe old age of 46, 6 months after my triplets were born.I am not sure as to whether or not I should tell her brothers? I don`t want them making fun so I think I won`t for now. Any advice would be welcome as its a long time ago I went through this myself. At what stage did you let your dd use tampons? She is already worrying about swimming etc. Thank you.

Figure 1. Discussion thread extract.

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of 'presence'. The women 'speak' to each other via the discussion thread with the same kind of intimacy and sharing that would be expected of close friends meeting together. They discuss sensitive issues such as the dynamics they had with their mothers at their menarche, for example:

> I remember being on holiday and my Mum put me a sanitary towel on as though she was changing a babies nappy she was really kind and washed me and everything… through my sobbing!!! It was so scary – the one piece of advice she gave me was… 'Now you must keep away from boys.' (Contributor 9)

> I never told my mum either when I started my periods as we were on holiday with friends and I just knew she would tell them and I would have died of embarrassment. Then it never seemed the right time to tell her after that. (Contributor 14)

However, the women are likely to be unknown to each other and geographically dispersed. Deconstruction questions assumptions regarding presence in relation to metaphysics. Denzin (1994) argues that deconstruction questions the belief that 'truth' can be found if the individual is fully present in the production of the text. This particular text supports this assertion in that the women are extremely open with each other, yet they are never fully present in that the discussion is spread out over a number of weeks.

As outlined previously, one method of deconstruction is through the identification of binary oppositions in which the first word is valorised and the second is in opposition. Derrida seeks to discover within a single term its presumed opposite, thus challenging notions of identity, entity and opposition because a term will contain both itself and its other (Sampson 1989). In applying binary logic 'presence' is privileged over 'absence', yet McLuhan's (1962) global village raises questions regarding 'presence' in that the use of technology means that people can be both 'present' and 'absent' at the same time, as evidenced in this particular discussion thread. Indeed, the concept of the global village is something that challenges the traditional valorisation of being 'present' over 'absent', with remote communication becoming increasingly valued.

Derrida goes beyond binary oppositions in deconstructing the text by applying supplementary logic. Meanings are sought by considering contrasts, uses and argumentative effects (Hepburn 2000). A reading of the text suggests that contributors view themselves and others as fully present in the text whilst they write, but Internet etiquette allows for people to be 'absent' when they are not contributing. Deconstruction seeks to question the apparent linear progression of text, where the metaphysics of presence assumes no gaps in time (Denzin 1994). This text, on initial reading, would appear due to its very nature to make no assumptions with regard to the linear progression of the dialogue. Indeed, the discussion took place over a 20-day period. Thus, again, the text appears to challenge the privileging of 'presence' over 'absence'. However, the undecidability of the text is illustrated through a contradiction with regard to the valorisation of these binary opposites. Derrida (1981) asserts that speakers and writers are never fully present because they are constantly reaching back and forth in their memories to capture a thought, which, Rolfe (2005) asserts, leads to assumptions regarding identity (logocentrism). Logocentrism is particularly evident in the discussion thread; the majority of contributors switch between reflecting on their personal histories to their concerns for the future in terms of how they plan to respond to their daughters' menarche, for example: 'I only hope to handle it properly/better than my own mother when my time comes' (Contributor 6). Consequently, very few of the contributors are fully present in the text, resulting in questionable assumptions regarding self-identity and the identity of others as explored later in the paper in relation to notions of motherhood.

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In addition to the issue of presence/absence, a first reading of the text suggests two additional dominant themes: 'private' and 'sorrow' and therefore their binary opposites 'public' and 'joy'. With regard to 'private', the mother who posted the original message stated 'I never even told my mum', to which Contributor 14 responds 'I never told my mum either....' Indeed, neither of these mothers 'ever' discussed their menarche with their respective mothers. The notion of privacy and secrecy develops further and with greater vigour with regard to whether brothers should be told about their sister's menarche. The first mother asks '...should I tell her brothers?' The responses are almost unanimous in saying 'no', for example: 'It is private information' (Contributor 2), 'I ... have 3 brothers and definitely made sure they weren't aware otherwise I would have ended up punching them' (Contributor 3) and 'I wouldn't tell the brothers unless they mention it tbh [to be honest], not any of their concern really' (Contributor 4). Throughout the thread, powerful language and statements are used such as 'private', 'definitely not', 'this is a girl thing' and 'she is terrified that her brothers will find out'.

Deconstruction identifies the ideological assumptions of authors and depicts imbalances in power (Martin 1990). The language that the women use suggests that they fear that if 'the brothers' knew they would make their sisters victims of teasing and cruelty. The binary opposite brother/sister appears to take on a polarised perspective, with sisters being valorised over brothers because brothers are assumed to be ignorant, immature and cruel. Boys, however, appear to hold a greater power base in that they have the potential to victimise their sisters, for example Contributor 11 states:

> This is a girl thing TBH [to be honest] i wouldnt tell her brothers intentionally why make a hooha of it and they might tease her about it, some things dont need to be shared, periods arnt shameful but sometimes boys dont need to know.

The relationship between privacy and shame is explored later in this paper.

One contributor does question why brothers, and therefore men, should not be involved in the conversation: 'Why shouldn't her brothers know? ... I found out DD2 [darling daughter two] (just 11) had started her periods via a text from her brother ... The girls ... even ask their dad to get supplies ...' (Contributor 10). However, this opinion is not responded to. Although the women are anxious to be supportive to their daughters, by shrouding menses in secrecy, cultural taboos around menstruation will continue to be maintained. Kalman's (2003a) study describes 'clueless' fathers who are perceived to be of no support to their daughters regarding menstruation and who would prefer their daughters discuss menarche with their mothers even when the mother does not live with the girl. It could be argued that this cycle will continue if boys are prevented from understanding about menstruation.

The absence of response may also imply that the first mother wishes to ignore the suggestion, or it may be related to *différance* as an attitude that allows for both unity and difference; it allows for the acceptance of conflicting discourses, yet prevents one becoming drawn into the argument and transcends polar opposites. There is a real sense of unity within the discussion community, created through shared experiences and with abbreviations being used such as dd (dear daughter), ds (dear son), dh (dear husband), amongst others, which suggests a shared identity and a sense of membership. Whilst the mothers' experiences and opinions have commonalities, a number of polarised perspectives are presented throughout the thread, suggesting that Derrida's notion of *différance* may underpin the discussions. In addition, the altered perspective of 'presence' outlined previously may impact on the usual expectations of the text with regard to

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structure and centrality in that the discussion thread appears to acknowledge that a central position does not truly exist (Derrida 1972).

The text suggests contradictions for maintaining the menstruation taboo. Although several women state that menstruation is not 'shameful' (for example, Contributor 11 above), they are adamant that it should not be seen, discussed or, as far as possible acknowledged with anybody outside of close female circles. There is clearly a sense of fear surrounding the sharing of this knowledge for all but 3 of the 22 participants. The empirical literature suggests that feelings of shame, embarrassment or ambivalence have characterised the experiences of young women with regard to their menarche throughout history (Whisnant and Zegans 1975; Weideger 1976; Koff, Rierdan, and Jacobson 1981; Martin 1987; Woods, Dery, and Most 1983; Jackson 1992; Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996). The emphasis on 'private' in the text suggests that these feelings characterise the attitudes of the mothers who contribute to the discussion thread, although they live in a very different historical, political and sociocultural context to many of the participants in these studies. The language of the women in this discussion thread suggests that the cycle of shame continues today.

Womanhood, in a patriarchal society, is characterised by limited power, autonomy and imposed norms surrounding sexuality (Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer 1990; Brown and Gilligan 1992; Lees 1993). The pervasive secrecy in the discussion thread sends out a message that menstruation should be hidden and that it is acceptable for gender to constrain girls both psychologically and physically. The women are perpetuating this cycle through self-surveillance and self-correction in that the text suggests an ever-present panoptic gaze which 'envelopes, caresses, details, [and] atomizes the most individual flesh' (Foucault 1975, 171).

Conversely, however, this sense of secrecy and the 'private' could indicate that the women are asserting ownership of this area of 'special knowledge' and using this as a method of manipulating power bases. Through excluding men and boys from the discussions, a special relationship, based on this exclusive knowledge, is formed. This presents an interesting paradox in that menstruation is frequently associated with women being devalued because their bodies have not been tamed and are closely associated with earth and nature (Dinnerstein 1976; Martin 1987, 1990). However, they may be exercising agency and resistance through their secrecy, for example Lee and Sasser-Coen's (1996) study identified that some women enjoy using periods as an excuse to avoid activities that they do not like. They also found that some women use menstruation in order to identify with and bond with other women and that it creates a sense of solidarity. Indeed, this may explain the very 'presence' of the discussion thread.

An additional contradiction that the text reveals with regard to the 'private' is the very public way in which the mothers share intimate details, frequently naming their children and breaching their confidentiality on a forum that is available via the Internet to anybody, including the 'feared brothers'. The mothers are comfortable with using the faceless anonymity of Internet communication as is often the case in the context of sensitive topics such as sexual health (Seale et al. 2010), but appear less comfortable to discuss these issues in real life. This dichotomy may link to the presence/absence binary. The discussions appear to replace the kind of intimate conversation a woman would privately have with a best friend, sister or mother. Internet-based relationships may offer a substitute for the nuclear family and close friends in a world where relationships are increasingly compromised by geography. The language that is used by contributors such as 'have a hug', 'thinking of you my friend xxxx' and the sending of pictures of gifts such as flowers suggest that the forum allows the women to engage in a meaningful relationship with other

women, which studies suggest many women highly prize (Rich 2007). Furthermore, the facelessness of the computer may play an important role in allowing the women to articulate their feelings about a discussion point that is widely held as illegitimate or misappropriated. In their own way they are addressing the silence that surrounds menarche.

The third, equally dominant theme is one of sorrow and therefore its binary opposite 'joy'. The first mother starts her dialogue with '... I feel so strange about this....' She goes on to talk about her daughter: '...she...cried bless her' and continues to reflect on her own experiences of the menarche, stating '...it was a horrible time in my life....' Other mothers echo this sense of sorrow by using figuration, for example 'bittersweet', 'milestone', 'bless her', 'young lady', 'big day' and 'buy her some chocolates'. The general tone is one of compassion and sympathy with a complete absence of joy, and the use of figuration suggests that the women are unable to express the real source of their sorrow and absence of joy.

The lack of joy surrounding this rite of passage appears to be explained more by what is not written than the text itself. Transference was present in all but one of the contributions to the discussion thread. In the opening dialogue, the first mother referred to 'self' 16 times and to the binary opposite 'other' (her daughter) 6 times. This pattern continued throughout the discussions with all of the mothers apart from one reflecting on 'when I started mine...'. The lack of joy appears to relate to issues that the mothers have themselves regarding menstruation. The majority of the women's reflections were negative with words such as 'horrible', 'upset', 'hate' and 'painful' being used. Lee and Sasser-Coen's (1996) study found that the word 'curse' was used by many participants to describe menstruation. This study focused upon 'older' women's experiences of menarche, but they seem to resonate closely with these 'younger' women's perceptions.

The discussions also use language associated with loss in a number of different contexts. The binary opposite of loss is gain. Presuppositions with regard to this theme could be that the sense of loss would be associated with menarche being perceived as a sign of growing up and that the mothers' sadness was associated with the perceived loss of their little girls. However, closer examination of the words used in text suggests that this was not the case. Instead, several mothers referred to their 'menopause', which is the binary opposite of 'menarche', focusing on this as a personal loss. The daughter's years of fertility were 'beginning' whereas the mother's years of fertility were 'ending'. The women describe their daughters as 'young' which makes them seem 'old'. Their daughters' experiences are in the 'present' whereas the mothers' experiences of the menarche are distant and in the 'past'. Contributor 6 challenges the general tone of the discussion by bringing the focus back to the daughter, writing, 'this is...the next chapter – not the epilogue. It's the start of a slightly different take on your relationship with your daughter', that is to say that the binary opposite of 'loss', 'gain', was introduced. However, no response was made to this comment.

Double reading

Critchley (1992) asserts that deconstruction is distinguished as a textual practice by its 'double reading'. That is, reading that attends to two layers of the text by first repeating the dominant interpretation and second by using the repetition to rupture the text to identify blind spots and ellipses that are present within the dominant interpretation. Through double reading, several little narratives emerge within the text: a lack of competency, power and gender.

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The first mother appears to lack the necessary knowledge to guide her daughter in how to manage her periods. It appears that the onset of menstruation was not expected by the girl or her mother, even though the girl is almost 14 years of age. The binary opposite of 'unexpected' is 'expected'; the binary opposite of 'knowledge' is 'ignorance'. Several studies suggest that girls do not receive adequate accurate or positive education regarding menstruation, meaning that many feel unprepared for menarche (Chrisler and Zittel 1998; Costos et al. 2002; Kalman 2003a, 2003b; Cooper and Koch 2007). The language of the text, 'shocked' and 'cried', suggests that this is the case in the discussion thread. Indeed, the very existence of the discussion thread suggests this. For many women, their mother is the primary source of information regarding menarche preparation, but studies suggest that mothers unevenly balance the conversation towards the shame surrounding menstruation at the expense of equipping girls with the necessary knowledge to prepare them for their menarche (Costos et al. 2002; Lee 2008). This may explain the lack of knowledge on the part of the mother who began the thread. As Lee and Sasser-Coen (1996) assert, because menarche has been shrouded in secrecy and silence historically, it will, by extension, also be shrouded in ignorance.

An additional little narrative associated with the discourse concerning sanitary wear is permission and power. The women's language surrounding these discussions suggested a certain power relationship in terms of granting permission: 'At what stage did you let your dd use tampons?' (Contributor 1). Responses echoed this power relationship, for example: 'I'd let her use tampons...' (Contributor 2). The binary opposite of 'permit' is 'forbid'. The literature suggests that parents view their daughters' menarche and hence, emerging sexuality as problematic and respond by imposing constraints on their daughters' behaviour (Hill and Lynch 1983; Hill and Holmbeck 1987; Ussher 1989; Fine 1988, 1992). Activities surrounding water such as showering, bathing and swimming appear in the text, for example Contributor 1 writes: 'She is already worrying about swimming, etc.'and 'She wanted a shower tonight and was worried what would happen!' which have parallels with restrictions described by the elderly women who experienced menarche between 1900 and 1934 in Lee and Sasser-Coen's (1996) US study. It is remarkable that such taboos still exist, in some cases, 100 years later.

One of the blind spots of the discussion thread was around gender expectations. Aside from the expectation that male siblings should not be allowed to know about their sister's menarche because their responses would be predictably cruel, the issue of gender was, in the text, overlooked. However, the gaps in the text regarding gender expectations are powerful; for example, out of 4226 words of text, only one reference was made to a father and this was only in relation to his role in purchasing sanitary products for his daughter. No reference was made to men and their role in supporting their daughters at this stage in their lives. Fathers are completely absent from the text and are actively excluded, whereas their binary opposite, 'mothers', are focused upon exclusively. Menarche is viewed as the exclusive domain of mothers and daughters.

An additional blind spot is concerned with the meaning of menarche. At a physiological level, the text suggests that the women have a sense of disembodiment with regard to menstruation. Throughout the discussion no reference is made to the reproductive system. The language suggests that menstruation is an independent event that has no relationship with a physiological purpose. The language of the text also suggests that menarche is not linked to sexuality and sexual maturity. Only one reference is made to sexual maturation and this is through figuration; 'the birds and the bees', to which none of the other 21 women respond. There is an absolute silence regarding the physiological meaning of menarche. The binary opposite of 'sexual' is 'asexual' which reveals a tension

within the text. The mothers sign up strongly to gender identity and are discussing menarche, which is concerned with adult female sexualisation (Young 1991; Lees 1993; Lee 1994), yet their silence suggests that they do not wish to acknowledge this. The 'sexual/asexual' binary suggests that the women may wish to cling on to the prepubescent, arguably asexual bodies that their pre-menarcheal girls possess. Their silence, which was not obvious in the first reading of the text, may help to explain the mothers' sense of sorrow in that they appear to want to 'hold on' to their 'asexual' little girls rather than 'let go' and welcome their 'sexual' development.

'Is'

Deconstruction is also concerned with: 'deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjointing, putting "out of joint" the authority of the "is"' (Derrida 1995, 25). In other words, deconstruction does not accept at face-value statements which assert that 'A is B', for example 'menarche is problematic for girls'. It strikes out the 'is', presenting it as ~~is~~, thus questioning its authority. The first mother states: 'she came and told me immediately which is lovely'. The 'lovely' is contrasted with the 'horrible' experience she had with her own mother. However, one could question was it lovely for the girl? Sharing this information with her mother resulted in the mother feeling like a good mother, but for the daughter it may not have been 'lovely' at all, it may too have been 'horrible' because she was not prepared for the menarche and was *shocked*. The mother goes on to say: 'she is already worrying about swimming, etc.' Given the issues explored earlier regarding competence, it is questionable as to who is 'anxious' regarding swimming, the mother or the daughter? There is no reference to any dialogue between the mother and her daughter in the text which also makes the 'is' questionable. The binary opposite of 'anxious' is 'relaxed'. The demeanour of the mother will significantly influence a girl's perceptions and experiences of menarche (Chang et al. 2010). In this situation, the mother's projected anxiety may have elicited this response. Later in the thread the same mother says, 'She is terrified her brothers are going to find out'. Again, a question could be asked as to who is terrified?

Limitations

Neil (2005) argues that deconstruction is not without its critics, with words such as 'pessimistic', 'esoteric', 'nihilistic' and 'elitist' being attached to it. It has also been condemned as presenting a male-dominated perspective that excludes women (Morris 1988). The authors' position as women deconstructing the text of women addresses the latter point in relation to this particular paper. With regard to the former, it has not been our intention to be any of these things. Indeed, by presenting a detailed exploration, we have started to demystify the topic, introducing plurality and multi-vocality from an informed perspective in order to advance evidence-based sexual health promotion practice. Rather than offering a pessimistic account, the tone has been one of optimism as the paper makes an interventionist contribution to the field by revealing the structural preconceptions that are present in the discussion thread and exposing the freedoms that they suppress.

However, it is acknowledged that the multi-vocality of this particular discourse will inevitably be compromised by inequalities in access to the Internet (Goldfarb and Prince 2008). A further limitation of the data source is that deconstruction requires some understanding of the ideological, cultural and historical contexts that situate the author (Sparks 2000); a discussion thread does not allow this. It is also acknowledged that this

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deconstruction offers only a single 'reading' of the discussion thread and the authors' voices will give a particular perspective on the story (Denzin 1994). It is, therefore, in itself open to further interpretations and deconstructions (Rolfe 2002).

Conclusions

An understanding of young women's experiences of menarche is important in understanding their sexual lives (Deutsch 1944; Brooks-Gunn and Ruble 1983; Golub 1983) and hence, advancing evidence-based sexual health promotion practice. Strong cultural interpretations of menarche exist, all of which have implications for the individual in terms of their sense of self and self-worth (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996) and, therefore, their sexual decision-making (Schooler et al. 2005). As seen in this deconstruction, such interpretations are passed on from generation to generation.

By taking apart the text and applying binary and supplementary logic and identifying blind spots, this deconstruction has facilitated an insight into mothers' attitudes towards menarche and menstruation. Their attitudes can be summed up by a significant cultural negativity. Unwittingly, the women appear to be socialising their daughters to comply with and perpetuate the menstrual taboo that they endured themselves, thus repeating the cycles of shame and consequent gendered sexual identity associated with menarche and menstruation. The attitudes of the mothers in this discussion thread resonate closely with the perceptions reported in studies of women who experienced their menarche over 100 years ago (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996). In illuminating that these cycles of shame persist today, this deconstruction can offer a positive contribution to evidence-based practice in the sphere of adolescent sexual health. The findings of this critique suggest that menstrual education for girls, boys, women and men is an area that requires more attention both locally and internationally, particularly in the context of perceived menstrual shame and its impact on sexual decision-making (Schooler et al. 2005).

Note

1. The entire thread can be found at: http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/teenagers/a1378853-my-daughter-has-started-her-periods-today

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APPENDIX TWO

School of Health Care Sciences
Head of School and Dean Professor Sheila Hunt

Ysgol Gwyddorau Gofal Iechyd
Pennaeth yr Ysgol a Deon Yr Athrawes Sheila Hunt

31 March 2014

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Prifysgol Caerdydd
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Clare Bennett

Dear Clare

Educating Children about Physical Maturation, Reproduction and Relationships: An Exploration of Factors that influence parental involvement

I am writing to inform you that the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee has, following consultation, approved your revised research proposal. The Committee will ratify this decision at its meeting on 9 April 2014

Please note that if there are any major amendments to the project you will be required to submit a revised proposal form. You are advised to contact me if this situation arises. In addition, in line with the University requirements, the project will be monitored on an annual basis by the Committee and an annual monitoring form will be despatched to you in approximately 11 months time. If the project is completed before this time you should contact me to obtain a form for completion.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Liz
Mrs Liz Harmer Griebel
Research Administration Manager

Cc Dr Jane Harden

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APPENDIX THREE

School of Healthcare Sciences
Head of School and Dean Professor Sheila Hunt

Ysgol Gwyddorau Gofal Iechyd
Pennaeth yr Ysgol a Deon Yr Athrawes Sheila Hunt

Cardiff University
Eastgate House
7th Floor
35 – 43 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0AB

Tel Ffon: +44 (0)29 2091 7725

Addressee's name
Address
Date

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral student at Cardiff University and as part of my studies I am required to conduct a research study. As we discussed over the telephone, I have identified a need for research into parents' experiences of talking to their children about puberty, relationships and reproduction. I am writing to ask if it would be possible to recruit participants for this study from your organisation / school / company.

I have attached/enclosed a description of the study and what is involved for potential participants for you to read. Ideally, I would like to begin to interview participants on [insert date] but I am happy to be guided by you on this.

I would anticipate that the interview would take no more than 60 minutes, and I would need a quiet, private place on your premises to conduct the study. I will endeavour to keep the disruption to your working day to an absolute minimum.

I hope that you find the attached project of interest and that you will want to work with me on it. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor, [insert name of supervisor and telephone number] if you would like a reference or any further information.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Bennett
Email: BennettCL@cardiff.ac.uk

APPENDIX FOUR

School of Healthcare Sciences
Head of School and Dean Professor Sheila Hunt

Ysgol Gwyddorau Gofal Iechyd
Pennaeth yr Ysgol a Deon Yr Athrawes Sheila Hunt

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON PARENTS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT PUBERTY, RELATIONSHIPS AND REPRODUCTION.

What is the study about?

The purpose of the study is to explore the views and experiences of parents or main carers who have children in key stage 2 (years 3-6 in primary school i.e. ages 7-11) regarding talking about puberty (physical changes to the body as children grow up), how babies are made (reproduction) and relationships with their children.

Why is the study being carried out?

There is a lack of research that has looked at how parents who live in Britain discuss these issues with their children. It is important that we understand more about this since it will allow schools and health promotion agencies to provide more sensitive health promotion advice if we are aware of parents' experiences and attitudes in this area. This research is part of a Doctoral Thesis at Cardiff University.

Who will take part in this study?

This study will involve parents from the West Midlands region who will be interviewed separately and in private for approximately sixty minutes.

If you are a parent of a child in year 3, 4, 5 or 6 at school and are interested in participating in the study please contact:

Clare Bennett
Tel : xxxx
Email: BennettCL2@cardiff.ac.uk

APPENDIX FIVE

Indicative Interview Schedule.

Preamble:

- Going to talk about your experiences and perceptions regarding talking to your children about puberty, reproduction and relationships.
  - Clarify terms and use of language
  - Check for understanding
- Emphasise, although this is called an interview it is just a conversation; feel free to take the lead.
- There is no 'right' opinion and you are not being tested, so please be as honest as possible.

Indicative Schedule:

1. How old is your child(ren)?
2. Is your child(ren) a boy or a girl?
3. What is your relationship with the child(ren) we are talking about; do you live with them all of the time?
4. Can you tell me a little about yourself in terms of your educational and occupational background?
5. Can you remember how you learnt about puberty, reproduction and relationships?
6. How do you feel children should be taught about puberty, reproduction and relationships?
7. Who do you feel is responsible for teaching children about these issues?
8. Why do you think this is?
9. Has your child ever asked you questions about the way our bodies change as we grow up? [erections, hair, wet dreams, vaginal discharge, breast changes]
10. How do/would you answer these kind of questions?
11. Explore further….. attitudes, beliefs, confidence, knowing what to say, responsive or proactive in raising the issue, physiological/social focus …
12. Has your child ever asked you about how babies are made?
13. How do/would you answer these kind of questions?
14. Explore further….. attitudes, beliefs, confidence, knowing what to say, responsive or proactive in raising the issue, physiological/social focus…
15. Do you talk about relationships with your child? Clarify meaning: respect, choices, the kind of relationship that you consider to be appropriate for sexual relationships…..
16. Explore further….. attitudes, beliefs, confidence, knowing what to say, responsive or proactive in raising the issue …
17. How do you find talking about these issues with your child(ren)?
18. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think would be useful to discuss.
19. OK to get in touch to follow up any points?

APPENDIX SIX

School of Healthcare Sciences
Head of School and Dean Professor Sheila Hunt

Ysgol Gwyddorau Gofal Iechyd
Pennaeth yr Ysgol a Deon Yr Athrawes Sheila Hunt

Cardiff University
Eastgate House
7th Floor
35 – 43 Newport Road
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Tel Ffon: +44 (0)29 2091 7725

Research Study:

Educating Children about Physical Maturation, Reproduction and Relationships: An Exploration of Factors that Influence Parental Involvement.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

What is the study about?

The purpose of the study is to explore the views and experiences of parents or main carers who have children in key stage 2 (years 3-6 in primary school) regarding how they feel about talking about "growing up" with their children and how they go about this. The term "growing up" refers to physical changes (puberty), how babies are made (reproduction) and relationships.

Why is the study being carried out?

There is a lack of research that has looked at how parents who live in Britain discuss growing up with their children. It is important that we understand more about this since it will allow schools and health promotion agencies to provide more sensitive health promotion advice if we are aware of parents' experiences and attitudes in this area. This research is part of a Doctoral Thesis at Cardiff University.

Who will take part in this study?

This study will involve up to 15 parents from the West Midlands region who will be interviewed separately and in private.

If I take part what will happen?

I would like to interview you to ask about your experiences and your thoughts as a parent regarding teaching your child about growing up. You will be invited to take part in a face-to-face interview with me that will take approximately sixty minutes and will take place in private. With your permission, the meeting will be audio-

recorded. However if for any reason you prefer this not to happen, I can make handwritten notes during the meeting instead.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study at any point up to the point of publication without giving a reason.

Is this study likely to cause me any harm?

Talking about "growing up" may make you think about experiences in your own childhood that were unhappy or distressing. You are free to stop the interview at any time if you do not wish it to continue. You are also free to decline to answer any question without the need for explanation or apology. If you feel you would like some additional support after the interview I will be able to offer you a debriefing session and advise you who else you may contact for extra support.

What will you do with the information I give you?

Your responses will be treated with full confidentiality and anyone who takes part in the research will be identified only by code numbers or false names. The information that you provide will be kept anonymously on a secure computer. All paper and electronic files will be stored securely for the entire duration of the study and for five years following completion of the study. All information gathered will be destroyed after this time. The interviews will be analysed by myself, Clare Bennett. At the end of the research I will write a report and the results may be published in peer reviewed journals and at conference presentations. No research participant will be identifiable from any publication. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University.

What is in it for me?

While I cannot promise that taking part in this study will bring direct benefits to you personally, you will have the opportunity to contribute to a study that will hopefully help health and social care professionals understand more about the experiences and opinions of parents regarding their role in teaching their young children about "growing up".

Who should I contact about the project?

Clare Bennett is the researcher for this project. Her details are as follows:

Clare Bennett
Doctoral Student
School of Healthcare Sciences
Cardiff University
Tel : xxxx
Email: BennettCL@cardiff.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research please contact Clare's supervisor:

Dr Jane Harden
School of Healthcare Sciences
Cardiff University
Room 709, Eastgate House
35-43 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0AB
Tel: 029 2091 7725
email: hardenj@cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions please contact Clare on: xxxx

APPENDIX SEVEN

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Study title:

Educating Children about Physical Maturation, Reproduction and Relationships: An Exploration of Factors that Influence Parental Involvement.

Name of Researcher: Clare Bennett
Study Participant Number:

Please initial each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up to the point of publication without giving any reason. ☐
3. I understand that the above researcher and her supervisor at Cardiff University will have access to the information gathered during this study. ☐
4. I understand that any data or information used in any publications which arise from this study will be anonymous. ☐
5. I understand that all data will be stored securely in accordance with the data protection act. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

APPENDIX EIGHT

Michael D2 Data Analysis

Descriptive notes		Linguistic qualities	Conceptual notes
	1	Just thinking about you now, can you remember being taught about	
	2	reproduction, puberty, relationships? aggregating three areas to coitus	
mother on fifth marriage (discussed in preamble) - lack of open sexuality communication in the home - describes a silence & ignoring. Refers to parents as poor role models. No mention of puberty - focusing on coitus.	3	*I don't think I would have got a lot at home, on the sexual side I don't think I*	Reproduction, puberty & rel'ps = sex.
	4	hesitancy *would have got, got umm anything. I can't remember getting any sort of*	
	5	*guidance on relationships in general. We didn't talk like that. Any questions*	Socialisation - lack of communication - "silence", "ignoring"
	6	lack of flow? finding it difficult to recall/recount?? *would have been met with, greeted with, you know a silence, ignoring type*	
	7	*behaviours. And urrr I urrr I possibly wouldn't have taken advice from those* - lack of fluency out of keeping & general communication style.	
	8	hesitancies *people* [referring back to a conversation about his parent's relationships in preamble].	
	9	So there wasn't much input from home?	
Learning through observing. Counter-discourse. Aspiring to be better than own parents.	10	*I think you you probably learnt a little, sort of from, what you see when your mum* not I hesitancy	
	11	*has gone through four marriages and you think* [eyes raised and a shrug] *"I'm not*	
	12	*going to do it like that". But no umm no talking about it, you know that sort of*	
	13	*thing. Just watching you know. I think I can do a better job than that.*	Desire to be better than own parents in this regard.

	14	So you observed but there wasn't any talking about it?	
	15	*No*	Silence
	16	How about at school?	
Input at 2° school - biological focus.	17 18	*School, school* [pause] *I moved a lot around schools I went to 5 different senior schools, umm but I do remember at one of the schools doing it in science, biology.*	SRE - 2° school - biology
	19	How about primary school?	
	20	*I moved around schools a lot then too but I really can't remember anything.*	
	21	So nothing that you can remember at primary school?	
May be unable to recall or may have had no input?	22	*No, no.*	SRE - 1° school - silence??
	23 24	Moving to the present now, what do you think parents' responsibilities are with regards to teaching their children about reproduction, puberty, relationships?	
Aggregating the three aspects to mean coitus. Regards "the talk" - suggests single episode/treatment. Feels they have good rel'p - open - friendly. Lack of ownership - 25, 27 Shared experience - friendlike.	25 26 27 28 29	*On the sexual side I probably haven't actually approached it in a, as a are you ready for a talk yet? I don't, I don't think I've said if you ever want to talk. Henry and I have got a good relationship. We talk, you know umm we're open with each other, you know. We sometimes let him stay up a bit late and there are things on the telly and if he*	Puberty + rel'p + reproduction = sex. Lack of communication. Perceived open rel'p Lack of ownership

Avoidance. Control. Question tactics. Suggests discomfort. Doesn't want him to know? Avoids mentioning sex himself. Avoiding talking. Feels it's inappropriate for Henry to see scene of a sexual nature on TV. Avoidance — Yet can tease/communicate through banter.	30	*realises I'm trying to get his attention and start talking to him when something's*	Repeating our experiences re. lack of communication in the home. Sending out a message - "not for discussion" Discomfort Avoidance Disjunctive → treats H as afraid but infantalises him / silences or controls comm^n Open / Closed ? heteronormativity ?
	31	*happening on the telly or about to happen then he will turn away and look away*	
	32	*from the telly. Other times we throw a blanket over his head so he can't see*	
	33	[laughs]. why laughing? ?aware	
	34	*He might be grinning but there's an awareness that it's inappropriate for him,*	
	35	*which we've said at other times that things are inappropriate for him and he'll* (contrasts with previous discussions)	
	36	*have to go to bed or he's got to look away from the telly. He's very happy to not*	
	37	*look and I think he's aware that as long as he's looking away and talking to me*	
	38	*keeping the conversation going, or stays under the blanket, he's quite happy as*	
	39	*he won't have to go to bed.* (much more fluent now)	
	40	*So we've got around that.* Suggests a sense of relief.	
	41	*I think relationships with girls* [pause] *a long time ago I said something sort of*	
	42	*silly with him and said 'Henry & ... sitting in a tree, k i s s i n g ...' and he said to*	
	43	*Beth* [wife/mum], *this is going back a few years, and he said he's never going to*	
	44	*have a girlfriend til daddy's in the sky, which...* [cough] *but that was years ago but*	
	45	*I obviously did something there that* [pause] *and he's not at the age, at 10, when*	

APPENDIX NINE

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SUPPORT AGENCIES FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Talking about the topics raised in the research interview may have made you think about experiences in your own childhood that were unhappy or distressing. If you feel you need some additional support after the interview, I would advise you to contact the following agencies for support:

Your General Practitioner

The Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (www.wrsasc.org.uk) Tel: 01905 724514

The Survivors Trust (www.thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support/west-midlands-england)

The Rape and Sexual Violence Project (www.rsvporg.co.uk) Tel: 0121 233 3818

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