Attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers

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Abstract

This thesis examines attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and what factors influence them. An ethnographic approach is used to explore these issues. It is based on ethnographic interviews with 20 British born Chinese teenagers and 20 parents.

The literature on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and young Chinese people in Britain is critically reviewed. The influences of family, ethnicity, friends and school sex education are identified as important factors. However, little is known about the processes of these influences and there are no such studies of British born Chinese teenagers. The review of previous research concludes that a holistic qualitative approach to the study of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, including both genders of teenagers and parents, is needed. Due to the lack of such studies of British born Chinese teenagers and the Chinese background of the researcher, the study focuses on exploring these issues in this group of teenagers.

Qualitative data analysis assisted by NUD*IST software provides rich insights into social influences on the teenagers. The conservative view of sexual behaviour is dominant. The influences of family, Chinese ethnicity, friends and sex education at school are illustrated and discussed in turn. Analysis shows the complexity of these influences, which affect the teenagers in various ways. Parental sexual values, influenced by Chinese culture and religion, have a profound impact on the teenagers. The parents use various strategies to pass on these values to their children. Friendship similarity in sexual values and behaviour is apparent, but differences between Chinese/church friends and Scottish/non-church friends are highlighted. School sex

education provides the teenagers with accurate sexual knowledge, of which they acquire little from their parents or friends.

The conclusion highlights the value of the holistic qualitative approach in the understanding of social influences on teenage sexual values and behaviour. The implications of the study suggest that it is important for school sex education, health promotion and sexual behaviour counselling to be sensitive to cultural and family norms and values.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and no portion of the work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other university.

Juping Yu

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PART ONE: BACKGROUND TO

RESEARCH

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study explores attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and what factors influence them. This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. It begins with the introduction of the researcher and the seeds for doing this study. Then the background to the study is outlined, followed by the whole structure of the thesis.

1.1 The seeds for this study

The researcher came to Britain for her Master of Science degree in Health Sciences in 2000. Before coming to the UK, she was educated and had worked in China as a nurse in a teaching hospital and later as a doctor in a health centre. She completed her basic nursing training in 1983, and obtained two higher diplomas, one in Preventive Medicine in 1993 and the other in English in 1999, through part time self learning. The English education has opened her to western culture and equipped her with the language ability to pursue higher education in Britain.

The stimulation for doing this study was the lack of research on sexual attitudes and behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers. The researcher began her PhD study by looking at the area of teenage pregnancy in Britain because of government policy and public interest in this topic. While reviewing literature, she was 'shocked' at the sexual behaviour of young people in western countries. With her clinic experience and life in China, she had never seen so many teenage pregnancies. She recognised the huge

differences in sexual values and behaviour between teenagers in Britain and those in China.

From her personal experience, the researcher felt some of the western influences on her way of thinking since she started learning English, especially since she came to Britain for higher education. She wondered about sexual behaviour of young Chinese people born in Britain and the influence of Chinese culture at home and British culture outside the home environment. How does living between two cultures make a difference to their sexual values? With these questions and interests in mind, the researcher started to search for literature. However, to her great surprise, she could not find an answer. Not a single study had examined sexual values, sexual behaviour or teenage pregnancy of British born Chinese youth. This drew her attention away from the study of teenage pregnancy in Britain to the study of attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers, a group of people being called 'BBCs'.

1.2 Background to the study

The term adolescence derives from the Latin 'adolescere', meaning grow up, and other terms, such as puberty, pubescence, teenage, teen and youth are all used to describe the period of growing up (Katchadourian, 1977). In this thesis, the term 'teenagers' is employed in referring to young people in their teens.

Adolescence has long been recognised as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood when individuals undergo physical, social, emotional and psychological changes accompanied by increased interest in sex (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993;

Coleman and Hendry, 1999). Sexual behaviour is one of the most important social and psychological issues for teenagers (Katchdourian, 1990).

In Britain, over one quarter of young people are sexually active before age 16 and the median age of sexual initiation is 16 for teenagers (Wellings et al, 2001). The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western European countries (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). Early sexual activity is associated with several health and social problems, such as more lifetime sexual partners, less regular contraception use and higher rates of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Coker et al, 1994; Wellings et al, 1994; Miller et al, 1999; Maticka-Tyndale et al, 2000; Hagan et al, 2001; Kupek, 2001; Edgardh, 2002).

Ethnic differences in sexual behaviour have been well documented. Sexual values and behaviour vary among teenagers from different ethnic backgrounds. In Britain, the proportion of respondents having had sex before age 16 is lowest in Asian groups (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin) and highest in black group (Wellings et al, 1994). Although the impact of ethnicity is established, little is known about how and why it operates. It is essential to understand how and why teenagers of different ethnic groups experience their sexual lives in a particular way.

However, British born Chinese teenagers are excluded from studies of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. The earliest Chinese settlers in Britain were mainly seamen in the East India Company ships during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jones, 1979). Chinese people (247,403) currently make up 0.42% of the UK population (Office for National Statistics, 2004a), and 29% of these were born in

Britain (Office for National Statistics, 2004b). The Chinese community in Britain is a 'successful' ethnic minority, small in size, young in age, balanced in gender and well-educated (Chan YM, 1994a; Cheng, 1996). Chinese pupils had the best GCSE results in 2002, and were the most likely to achieve five or more grades A in England, the least likely to be excluded from school and most likely to have degrees (Office for National Statistics, 2004c).

Compared to other minority ethnic youth in Britain, little research has been conducted on young Chinese people. Reviewing previous research on this group, a few issues have been addressed over the last 30 years. These included studies of education (Garvey and Jackson, 1975; Taylor, 1987; Cheng, 1992; Wong, 1992; Chan 1994b, 1995, 1997), cultural identities (Chung, 1990; Parker, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998; Song, 1995, 1997a,b; Pang, 2000; Yeh, 2000), employment (Chan A, 1986), language patterns (Wei and Milroy, 1995; Wei, 1996; Raschka et al, 2002), and psychological health (Furnham and Li, 1993; Wong and Cochrane, 1989; Chan YM, 2000).

This body of existing research has provided some valuable data for understanding the life of British born Chinese teenagers. However, it is evident that sexual attitudes and behaviour of these young people have not been investigated yet. Therefore, limited information is available for researchers, school and health professionals to address these issues among these populations.

A few studies of young Chinese people in other western counties, such in the USA (Huang and Uba, 1992; McLaughlin et al, 1997) and Canada (Meston et al, 1996, 1998), reported ethnic differences in sexual attitudes and behaviour. The young

Chinese people in these studies had more conservative sexual values and behaviour, compared to their counterparts. Findings based on Chinese in America or Canada may not be generalisable to young Chinese people born in Britain. Moreover the influence of Chinese ethnicity in these studies was poorly understood. Therefore, the aim of this study is to:

- Provide baseline data on attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers

- Examine what factors influence them, including Chinese ethnicity

The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers?
2. How does the family influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
3. How does Chinese ethnicity influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
4. How do friends influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
5. How does sex education at school impact on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is presented in two parts, ten chapters. Part one comprises chapters one to three, examining why this study should be undertaken and how it was done.

Chapter two provides a critical review of the literature on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and social influences on them. This chapter is divided into four sections. It

begins with the exploration of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain. Ethnic differences are highlighted. The second section deals with social influences on teenagers. The influences of family, friends and sex education at school are explored in turn. Gender and ethnic differences are addressed. The third section reviews the existing literature on young British Chinese people, which shows teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour are neglected research areas in this group. The last section draws out gaps in existing knowledge and highlights the research questions explored in the thesis.

Chapter three describes the research methods. Research approaches, data collection, sampling, issues of data collection, data analysis and reflexivity of the researcher are discussed in turn. The suitability of three qualitative research approaches is assessed. The choice of an ethnographic approach to address the research questions is argued. The description of snowball sampling explains why this strategy was chosen and gives a clear picture of the various contacts with the Chinese communities and the places where the informants were from. Qualitative data were collected from ethnographic interviews with 20 British born Chinese teenagers and 20 parents. Issues raised during data collection process are discussed. The experience and background of the researcher allows a greater understanding of the culture to aid interpretation and analysis of the data. Lastly, there is reflection on the role of the researcher, as a female Chinese student conducting this research on the sensitive topic of sex.

Part two comprises chapters four to ten, presenting and discussing the findings. Sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers are the focus of chapter four. The chapter is in two sections. The first presents sexual attitudes. The dominant conservative views and

less typical permissive views are explored. Then themes of readiness for sex are presented. The teenagers highlighted physical, mental and social readiness, and considered they were not ready for sex. However, their tolerance of other teenagers having sex was apparent. In addition, gender differences in attitudes towards sexual behaviour were evident; the boys and girls presented different perspectives, which were illustrated at the end of the first section. The second section deals with sexual behaviour of the teenagers. Experience of sexual relationships is presented first, followed by the expectations of having girl/boyfriends. Then reasons for not having sex are discussed. The teenagers felt that they were not ready, considered sex not essential in girl/boyfriend relationships and preferred to wait until after marriage.

Families had a profound influence on the teenagers. This is presented in chapter five, from the perspectives of the parents and teenagers. It is divided into three sections. Section one reports parental sexual values. The parents showed their conservative views. They considered teenagers were not ready for sex and highlighted 'no sex before marriage', according to Chinese culture and their religion. Section two presents parent-child relationships. Time with parents, understanding between generations and communication were identified as factors influencing the relationships. Section three deals with parent-child communication. The teenagers discussed certain 'trivial' topics with their parents; however, social life, relationships and sex were topics rarely discussed in these families. Language barriers, embarrassment, understanding between generations and different interests influenced such communication. Lastly, recommendations for improvement of communication are addressed.

Chapter six focuses on the influence of Chinese ethnicity from the teenagers' and parents' point of view. The chapter is in three sections. Section one presents the language patterns in these families. Chinese was the dominant language used between the teenagers and parents. The parents highlighted the importance of speaking Chinese at home, which was seen as a tool to maintain their children's Chineseness. Section two explores Chinese identity. Compared to the teenagers, the parents held a stronger sense of Chinese identity and wanted to pass on Chinese culture and values to their children. Parental supervision is presented in section three. How to behave as being Chinese in Britain, regarding going out and making friends, is discussed.

Chapter seven concentrates on the influence of friends. It is in four sections. The first presents general information about friends. The teenagers mainly made friends of the same age, gender and cultural background. Section two examines activities and communication with friends. Gender differences in communication are highlighted. Section three explores sexual attitudes of friends, followed by sexual behaviour. Friendship similarity in sexual values and behaviour was evident, but differences between Chinese and Scottish friends and between intimate and less close friends, are discussed.

Chapter eight addresses the influence of school sex education. The teenagers and parents presented their positive views, negative views and recommendations for sex education. They emphasised the importance of acquiring sexual knowledge from school, as they obtained little from parents or friends. They also criticised different negative aspects of school sex education, and saw it as ineffective in preventing sexual initiation and teenage pregnancy. The teenagers reported they did not gain sufficient

information from school, while the parents were critical that schools had provided too much information about sex, but little about refusal skills and sexual morality.

Chapter nine draws the key findings from chapter four to chapter eight, interprets and discusses the main findings in relation to the previous studies. The contributions, limitations and implications of the study are addressed at the end of the thesis, chapter ten.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to have an understanding of the existing body of knowledge of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour prior to undertaking the study. The purpose of this chapter is to review critically the literature on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, the social influences on them, and young Chinese people in Britain, and to highlight the research questions for this study. Literature searches were limited to English language publications mainly in Britain and America, back about two decades. The following keywords – 'teenage sexual attitudes', 'teenage sexual behaviour', 'family influence', 'parental influence', 'parent-child communication', 'parent-child relationships', 'parental monitor', 'parental control', 'social class', 'religion', 'peer influence', 'friend influence', 'peer pressure', 'sex education', 'British Chinese', and 'Chinese in Britain', were used singly or combined to search electronic databases, including CINAHL, NURSING COLLECTION, MEDLINE, BIDS, SSCI, and PSYCHOINFO. Other sources included the University of Stirling library catalogue, following up cited references and the websites www.statistics.gov.uk and www.show.scot.nhs.uk.

This chapter is divided into four sections. It begins by examining teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain, Scotland and minority ethnic groups in the UK. The second section focuses on social influences on teenagers. The influences of family, friends and school sex education are discussed in turn, followed by a review of the Chinese people in Britain. Lastly, limitations and gaps in the literature are outlined.

2.1 Teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour

The literature tends to define 'sexual attitudes and behaviour' as 'having sex'. These studies focus on examining whether it is right for teenagers to have sex, whether they have had sex, or when they initiate sexual intercourse. However, 'sexual attitudes and behaviour' mean more than 'having sex'. Throughout this thesis, the meaning of sexual attitudes and behaviour moves beyond whether or when to have sex, focusing on attitudes towards sexual behaviour of teenagers themselves and others, the context and meaning of having sex and reasons for sexual engagement or abstinence.

In this section, teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain are explored first by using UK data, followed by those in Scotland. Lastly, ethnic differences in sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain are addressed.

2.1.1 Teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain

Attitudes towards sexual behaviour have changed dramatically during the past 50 years. The most comprehensive survey of sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain, named National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal), was published in 1994 (Wellings et al, 1994). Interviews were completed with 18, 876 respondents aged 16-59 years, of whom three-quarters of the respondents considered premarital sex not wrong at all. Only 4% believed that sex should not take place before marriage, irrespective of age, which was four time more likely to be supported by the oldest respondents (45-49 olds) than by the youngest (16-24 olds). About half of them considered 17 was acceptable for first sexual intercourse, although older respondents reported a later age

than younger ones. The study also showed a steady increase in the proportion of young people having had sexual intercourse and a decrease in the age of doing so. Young people in the early 1990s were more likely to be sexually active earlier than those in 1950s (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1: First sexual intercourse across generations in Britain

	Age at the interview (years)	Average age of first intercourse (years)	Sexual intercourse under 16 years (%)
Men	16-19	17	27.6
	55-59	20	5.8
Women	16-19	17	18.7
	55-59	21	0.8

Source: Wellings et al, 1994

What is sexual behaviour in the beginning of the new century? Wellings et al (2001) carried out the second National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles in Britain. The study, based on interviews with 11, 161 respondents aged 16-44 years, demonstrated that the trend of median age of first sexual intercourse decreased and the proportion of young women having had sexual experience increased up to, but not after, the middle 1990s. The average age of first intercourse for teenagers was 16, one year earlier than that in early 1990s (see table 2.2).

Table 2.2: First sexual intercourse among 16-19-year olds in Britain

	Natsal	Average age of first intercourse (years)	Sexual intercourse under 16 years (%)
Men	1990	17	27.6
	2000	16	29.9
Women	1990	17	18.7
	2000	16	25.6

Sources: Wellings et al, 1994, 2001

Although the surveys of Wellings et al (1994, 2001) have provided a comprehensive view of the sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain, the response bias, shared by any other studies in this area, should be mentioned. For example, teenagers tend to give a social desirable response, boys over-report and girls under-report their sexual experience (Siegel et al, 1998). Inconsistencies in reporting the occurrence and timing of sexual initiation were found in longitudinal studies (Mott et al, 1996; McNeely et al, 2002; Upchurch et al, 2002). Some teenagers in the study of Upchurch et al (2002) reported being sexually active at the first interview, but reported being virgins at the second one. Similarly, McNeely et al (2002) found some teenagers reported being virgins at first interview, but at the subsequent one reported initiating sexual intercourse before the first interview. Boys were more likely to report this inconsistency than girls, and among the teenagers who reported being sexually active at both interviews, only 22.2% provided consistent date of first sexual experience (Upchurch et al, 2002). These inconsistencies may reflect difficulties of recall or the sexual values of the respondents or society currently held. Although Wellings et al (2001) reported only less than 1% of respondents were unable to remember their age of first intercourse, it may be

questioned if the recall of those who were able to remember it was accurate or if they gave a social desirable response.

2.1.2 Teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Scotland

The national surveys provided an overall, though limited, understanding of sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain, but what are teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Scotland? Wellings et al (1994) reported that the median age for women in Scotland and East Anglia was one year later than for those in other areas, but no such difference was found for men. However, teenage sexual behaviour in Scotland does not seem to follow this pattern. National surveys of schoolchildren reported that by the age of 15, the majority of Scottish schoolchildren had had some form of sexual experience, from hugging, kissing, petting to sexual intercourse (Todd et al, 1999). The trend in the rate of having had sexual intercourse was still upward, from 25.8% in 1990 to 35.3% in 1998 (see table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Sexual experience among 15-year-old Scottish schoolchildren

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys and Girls (%)
1990	24.9 (n=457)	26.5 (n=540)	25.8 (n=997)
1998	32.8 (n=756)	37.5 (n=851)	35.3 (n=1607)

Source: Todd et al, 1999

Todd et al (1999) used a school sample. Neither information about family structure or social class nor data from teenagers having dropped out of schools were available. Early sexual involvement is related to school dropout (Walker et al, 1998; Dunlap et al,

2003). If Todd et al (1999) had included teenagers who were not in school, the proportion of teenagers having had sexual intercourse might be higher than 35.5% by age 15. Compared to the national survey in Britain (Wellings et al, 2001), there are two distinguishing characteristics.

First, although Todd et al (1999) included only school children aged 15 years, the proportion of respondents having had sexual experience was higher, 32.8% for boys and 37.5% for girls, than that in Wellings et al (2001), where 29.9% boys and 25.6% girls aged 16-19 had first sexual intercourse under 16. According to these findings, it seems that Scottish teenagers are more sexually active than the national average (see table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Teenagers' sexual experience in Britain and in Scotland

	Boys (%)	**Girls (%)**
Britain	29.9	25.6
Scotland	32.8	37.5

Sources: Todd et al, 1999; Wellings et al, 2001

Second, although Wellings et al (2001) showed the average age of first intercourse for both boys and girls was 16 years, the proportion of boys having first sexual intercourse under 16 years was higher than that of girls, 29.9% and 25.6% respectively. In contrast, more girls in Scotland are sexually active than boys, 37.5% to 32.8% (see table 2.4). These surveys were conducted among different populations at different periods, which makes the comparison less possible. In addition, these differences may be partly explained by response bias (see page 14).

Although it seems that more Scottish teenagers are sexually active than British teenagers in general, they are no more likely to become pregnant. Teenage pregnancy rates in Scotland were 45.4 conceptions per 1,000 for females aged 13 to 19 in 1999 (Scottish Health Statistics, 2000), which was lower than those in England and Wales, 62.8 per 1,000 in the same year (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 2001). Despite these differences, the trend of increasing in proportion of teenagers initiating sexual intercourse at a younger age in Britain is evident.

2.1.3 Teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in ethnic groups in Britain

Teenage sexual behaviour varies not only from country to country but also among different ethnic groups in a country. This is also the case in the UK. For example, Rudat et al (1992) reported that among teenagers aged 16 to 19 years, young Asians were less likely to have had sexual intercourse than whites or Afro-Caribbeans, 37% having experienced sex, compared to 66% whites and 62% Afro-Caribbeans.

A national survey by Wellings et al (1994) also explored sexual behaviour in ethnic groups in Britain. The proportion of respondents having had intercourse before age 16 was lowest for the Asian groups (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin) and highest for the black group (see table 2.5). The medium age at sexual initiation for Asians was 20 for men and 21 for women, compared to 18 for both genders of whites.

Table 2.5: First sexual intercourse before age 16 by ethnicity

	Men (%)	Women (%)
White	18.9 (n=7749)	8.0 (n=9760)
Black	26.3 (n=157)	9.6 (n=218)
Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian	10.7 (n=186)	1.1 (n=189)
Other	14.4 (n=120)	5.0 (n=139)
All minority ethnic groups	18.8 (n=8212)	7.9 (n=10307)

Source: Wellings et al, 1994

The lower level of sexual activity in Asians was also reported by a study of 18-20 olds in Scotland (Bradby and Williams, 1999). Asians (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), particularly women, were far less likely to engage in sexual intercourse compared with non-Asian groups. Ethnic differences in sexual behaviour indicate the impact of ethnicity. However, the processes of ethnic influences are far less clear.

Given the evidence of high levels of teenage sexual activity in Britain, it is critical to investigate what factors influence their behaviour. However, a lower teenage sexual experience in minority ethnic groups, such as Asian youth, is evident. It is, therefore, also useful to explore how ethnicity operates and why young people from minority ethnic groups have different sexual experience. Biological, psychological and sociological influences play their part, but sexual attitudes and behaviour are regulated and influenced by social and cultural norms (Wellings et al, 1994).

2.2 Social influences on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour

Teenage sexual behaviour is closely linked to biological factors, such as age and pubertal development. Age itself is an important determinant of sexual involvement for teenagers (Christopher et al, 1993; Hovell et al, 1994; Wellings et al, 1994, 2001; Aten et al, 2002; He et al, 2004). It is not until puberty that the reproductive system generally becomes mature (Smith et al, 1985; Udry and Billy, 1987; Smith, 1989; Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Hendry, 1996; Coleman and Hendry, 1999). A positive relationship between pubertal development, hormonal levels and sexual initiation has been documented (Udry and Cliquet, 1982; Smith et al, 1985; Udry et al, 1985; Zabin et al, 1986a; Udry, 1990; Halpern et al, 1993, 1997; Magnusson, 2001; Edgardh, 2002; Lam et al, 2002). Ethnic differences in the influence of pubertal development on sexual initiation are also reported. For example, sexual debut of white and Latina girls is related to early menarche, but not that of African American girls (Cavanagh, 2004).

Biological factors of teenage sexual engagement cannot be ignored. However, sexual behaviour is influenced by a complex web of factors (Moore and Resenthal, 1993) and regulated by social and cultural values (Wellings et al, 1994). This section will explore the social influences on teenagers. The literature suggests that family, friends and sex education at school are the most influential, and these are reviewed in turn. Other factors, such as media and religion, raised from the literature, are discussed under the main headings.

2.3.1 The influence of family

The major influence of family on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour is taken for granted (Katchadourian, 1990). Parents play a unique and significant role in the socialisation of their children becoming sexual human beings (Moore and Resenthal, 1993; Miller et al, 1999). The family provides an environment in which children initially form their sexual values (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Coleman and Hendry, 1999).

The impact of family has received increasing attention recently. A considerable amount of research has examined the relationship between family influences and teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, but the findings are contradictory and it is not clear how or whether these influences take place. How do parents transmit their sexual values to their children? What influence do parents have on the formation of sexual attitudes and behaviour of their children? Theoretical and research evidence has suggested that parent-child communication, parental sexual values, parent-child relationships, parental role modelling, parental supervision and demographic characteristics all have an impact.

The key influences of family are universal, but culturally variable. Ethnic differences are considered little in the literature. This review highlights ethnicity where the literature allows.

2.3.1.1 Parent-child communication

In this section, the patterns of parent-child communication about sex are illustrated first, followed by the impact of such discussion on teenagers.

2.3.1.1.1 Patterns of parent-child communication about sex

Numerous studies of parent-child communication about sex have indicated that there is little direct communication about sex between generations. Although teenagers want to receive sexual information from their parents (Mueller and Powers, 1990; Coleman, 1995; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998), parents also want to provide such information for their children (Alexander, 1984; Kahn, 1994; Hutchinson, 2002), and even teenagers prefer parents to be their best source of sexual information if they talked about initiating sex or condoms with their parents (Whitaker and Miller, 2000), sex is a topic rarely discussed in the family (Furstenberg et al, 1984; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999; Weaver et al, 2002). Parents are not considered as the major source of sexual knowledge and personal relationships (Todd et al, 1999; Somers and Gleason, 2001). A survey of 1,727 Scottish schoolchildren aged 15 reported that a significantly higher proportion of teenagers regarded friends, media and school as the main sources (Todd et al, 1999; see table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Main source of information about sexual matters in 1998

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys and girls (%)
Friends	32.9	31.2	32.0
Media	23.0	32.2	27.7
School	31.1	18.1	24.4
Parents	7.5	14.1	10.9
Books	2.0	0.7	1.3
Others	3.5	3.7	3.6

Source: Todd et al (1999)

Although not considered as important educators, parents may mediate other influences, such as the media, an important source of sexual information for teenagers, especially for girls (see Todd et al, 1999). The research on media effects on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour has generally focused on the type of sexual messages represented in the youth media (e.g. Batchelor et al, 2004), the frequency or content of media exposure (e.g. Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1995; Davis and Mares, 1998; Haferkamp, 1999; Kalof, 1999; Ward and Rivadeneyra, 1999; Collins et al, 2004). However, it has considered little about how the media is used, understood or consumed. Research in this area needs to look beyond content to how young people respond to the media. The negative influence of the media, for example, may be tempered by a good parent-child relationship (Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1995) and discussions about sexual content on television in the context of parents' own sexual values (Collins et al, 2003, 2004), as parents have an impact on how their children interpret sexual messages in the media (Steele, 1999). Findings from these studies suggest the need for future

research to consider the fundamental influence of parents and the complex and interactive influences on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Patterns of parent-child communication are related to parent and child gender, demographic characteristics of parents and ethnicity.

First, patterns of communication about sex depend on the gender of parents and children (Kahn, 1994; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Raffaelli et al, 1998; DiIorio et al, 1999; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999; Atkin et al, 2002; Hutchinson, 2002; McNeely et al, 2002; Raffaelli and Green, 2003). These studies have demonstrated that when parents do discuss sexual issues, the mother is the most frequently identified communicator. Mothers provide more sexual information for their children, especially for their daughters, than fathers, and girls receive more communication from their parents than boys. Mother-daughter communication may be attributed to the biological process of menstruation and the negative consequences of sexual engagement (Raffaelli and Green, 2003). In contrast, Kahn (1994) reports that parents feel it is frustrating to discuss sex with their sons because boys do not listen; as a result this discussion occurs less frequently.

Gender differences are reported not only in the amount of communication about sex, but also in the topics being discussed. During early adolescence, girls are more likely to talk about menstrual cycles with their mothers and sexual abstinence with their fathers, although no such difference is found for boys (DiIorio et al, 1999). Parents of middle teens are reported discussing physical development, societal concerns and sexual safety more frequently than discussing sexual experience and solitary sexual activity

(Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999). Research on college students has found that personal relationships and values are more frequently discussed between parents and children than sexual facts and protection (Raffaelli and Green, 2003).

These studies of young people among various age groups demonstrate gender differences in parent-child communication patterns, suggesting the importance of including mothers, fathers, daughters and sons in future research in this area. Studies not including both genders of teenagers and parents will fail to provide a holistic picture of communication about sex between generations.

Second, demographic characteristics of families influence parent-child communication about sex. Well-educated mothers are more likely to discuss sexual issues with their sons than less educated mothers, while paternal education is positively associated with communication with both sons and daughters (Raffaelli and Green, 2003). Lower levels of parent-child communication about sex are also related to the presence of older brothers at home (Raffaelli and Green, 2003).

Third, patterns of parent-child communication about sex are influenced by ethnicity. Significant ethnic differences in parent-child communication about sex are found among African American families, Latino, and Caucasian American families (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Hutchinson, 2002; Wilson and Donenberg, 2004). African American parents are more likely to discuss sexual risk topics with their daughters than Caucasian American parents (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998) and Hispanic-Latina parents (Hutchinson, 2002). However, a more recent study has reported that African American and Latino parents are less likely to engage in mutual

discussions about sex with their children than Caucasian or biracial parents (Wilson and Donenberg, 2004). Inconsistent findings in these studies might be attributable to different sample size and frame. Wilson and Donenberg (2004) recruited 30 young people from an outpatient psychiatric clinic, while 173 (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998) and 234 (Hutchinson, 2002) young women were selected from lists of female licensed drivers. Despite different findings across these studies, ethnic differences in parent-child communication about sex raised a question for further research. The influence of ethnicity should be considered in such research. Therefore communication patterns in families from different ethnic backgrounds can be examined and specific needs of these families can be addressed.

Existing studies have indicated little parent-child communication about sex occurs at home, children do not name their parents as the major source of sexual knowledge, and parent-child communication patterns vary according to gender, ethnicity and demographic characteristics. However, little research has explored barriers preventing parents from providing sexual information for their children. A few studies examining these obstacles suggest that feeling uncomfortable, lack of knowledge, lack of skills, and parents' own experience of communication with their parents have an impact.

First, sex is considered an embarrassing topic between generations (Jaccard et al, 2000). Although parents want to provide sexual information for their children (Alexander, 1984; Kahn, 1994; Hutchinson, 2002), they are uncomfortable discussing sexual issues (Hovell et al, 1994; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998, Rosenthal et al, 1998; Jaccard et al, 2000; Walker, 2001; O'Donnell et al, 2003). Not only parents, but also teenagers feel embarrassed talking to their parents about sex (Jaccard et al, 2000;

Walker, 2001). A significantly lower proportion of teenagers consider their parents as the easiest persons with whom to discuss sex and personal relationships, compared to friends (Rudat et al, 1992; DiIorio et al, 1999; Todd et al, 1999, see table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Persons with whom it is easiest to discuss personal

and sexual matters in 1998

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys and girls (%)
Friends	70.6	79.3	75.3
Parents	16.4	12.2	14.2
Brother/sister	8.0	4.7	6.2
Teacher	2.3	0.6	1.4
Other	2.7	3.2	3.0

Source: Todd et al (1999)

Mothers might feel more comfortable discussing sex with their children, but their children feel more comfortable talking with their friends (DiIorio et al, 1999).

Second, lack of sexual knowledge of parents is apparent (Katchadourian, 1990; Croft and Asmussen, 1992; Kahn, 1994; Walker, 2001). Parents feel fear of losing face if they do not know how to answer their children's questions (Jaccard et al, 2000; Walker, 2001).

Third, lack of communication skills should be considered. Parents are not sure when or how to initiate communication about sex with their children (Walker, 2001). However, the media, such as television, books and magazines, may be used to open a channel for

discussions about sex-related topics within the family (Kahn, 1994; Steele, 1999; Walker, 2001; Collins et al, 2003).

Lastly, the experience of parents receiving sexual information from their own parents influences whether or how they provide sex education for their children (Walker, 2001). Parents are expected to be the initial sexual educator, but the quality of this education received from home in one generation influences the next generation (Walker, 2001).

Due to these barriers, parents rarely discuss sex or provide sex education for their children. Despite limited family discussion about sexual issues, the potential influence on teenagers has been widely investigated. The following section discusses these research findings.

2.3.1.1.2 Impact of parent-child communication about sex

Frequency and impact of parent-child communication on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour have been studied over the past several decades. Findings across these studies are complex and inconsistent. Some studies have indicated positive influences of communication about sexual issues on a variety of teenage sexual outcomes, including sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Other studies have not found such influences, while some studies have even reported a negative impact.

Communication about parental beliefs and values is regarded as one of the primary ways of parents socialising with their children (Moore et al, 1986). A positive parent-

child communication about sex protects teenagers from peer influences, which may encourage risky sexual behaviour (Whitaker and Miller, 2000). As previously noted (see page 22), communication about sexual content on television in the context of parental sexual values may influence the impact of the media (Collins et al, 2003, 2004).

Parent-child communication about sex has been linked to teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. Teenagers with high levels of parent-child communication are more likely to have sexual attitudes similar to their parents (Fisher, 1985, 1988), or less likely to misperceive maternal sexual values (Jaccard et al, 1998). Teenagers who discuss sex with their parents more frequently are more likely to be virgins, delay sexual initiation, or have less frequent sexual intercourse (Pick and Palos, 1995; Hutchinson, 2002; Vesely et al, 2004). This communication also has an impact on sexually active teenagers. Perceived parent-child communication about sex or sexual risks is associated with more regular and effective contraceptive use, fewer sexual partners, fewer sexually transmitted diseases, or more communication about sex with partners (Newcomer and Udry, 1985; Pick and Polos, 1995; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Miller et al, 1998a; Romer et al, 1999; Whitaker et al, 1999; DiClemente et al, 2001; Vesely et al, 2004). As a consequence of contraceptive use, these teenagers are less likely to become pregnant or get a girl pregnant (Kahn, 1994; Adolph et al, 1995; Pick and Palos, 1995).

Gender differences in effectiveness of parent-child communication about sex have been reported. Maternal communication about sexual issues seems to have more impact on children, especially on girls, than paternal communication. A high level of mother-

daughter communication is related to less likelihood of pregnancy (Adolph et al, 1995), more condom use (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Hutchinson, 2002), more discussion about sex with partners (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998), later age of sexual initiation and fewer sexually transmitted diseases (Hutchinson, 2002). However, father-daughter discussion has no impact in these studies. Occasionally, maternal communication is related to increased contraceptive use for boys, but not for girls (Jaccard et al, 1996).

Not only gender, but also ethnicity is associated with the effect of parent-child communication about sex on sexual initiation. For example, open communication with mothers increases the age of first sexual experience for African Americans, while open communication with fathers protect white teenagers from early sexual initiation (Lehr et al, 2000).

These studies have stressed the important protective effect of parental communication about sex on the sexual behaviour of girls, boys or both. However, not all researchers support this view. Some studies have not found such a relationship. The timing of sexual initiation is not related to mother-child discussion about sex (Newcomer and Urdy, 1984; McNeely et al, 2002). Teenagers from high communication families are not more or less likely to have sexual intercourse, or more likely to use birth control or have fewer sexual partners if they are sexually active (Furstenberg et al, 1984; Newcomer and Udry, 1984, 1985; Fisher, 1988, 1993; Christopher et al, 1993).

Additionally, other studies have even reported a negative impact, where high levels of parent-child communication about sex or contraception are associated with more sexual experience (Moore et al, 1986; Jaccard, 1996; Widmer, 1997; Rodgers, 1999; Somers

and Paulson, 2000; Somers and Gleason, 2001; Romo et al, 2002). Similarly, the number of sexual topics that boys talk about to their fathers is positively linked to their sexual activity, although the protective effect of mother-son communication has been reported (Kahn, 1994).

These studies examining the influence of parent-child communication about sex have not provided consistent findings. It is not clear how or whether parental communication influences teenagers. Many gaps remain, which complicate understanding of these contradictions and have implications for future research.

First of all, inconsistent findings are partly the result of methodological differences. These include the diversity of sample frame, such as school, community or female licensed drivers, sample size, sampling strategy, study design and representativeness. These differences also include various measurements of variables. There is the lack of considering some important variables, such as parental sexual values, content, timing and context of communication. Further, response bias (see page 14) contributes to the inconsistent findings across these studies.

Second, sexual values of parents are not consistently considered. Parent-child communication about sex or contraception is moderated by sexual values of parents. Parent-child discussions about strong disapproval of sex are associated with later sexual initiation in teenage females, but the frequency of communication about sex or birth control have no impact (McNeely et al, 2002). Similarly, parental communication influences the sexual behaviour of girls from more traditional families, but not of those from less traditional ones (Moore et al, 1986). Furthermore, parental discussion has

both positive and negative impact on teenagers, depending on the topics discussed. Higher levels of communication about beliefs and values are related to more conservative attitudes towards premarital sex and less likelihood of sexual initiation, but teenagers who discussed sex or their everyday activities with parents are more likely to be sexually active (Miller et al, 1999; Romo et al, 2002).

It is evident that parental sexual values play a significant role in determining the influence of parent-child communication. As attitudes of adults towards marriage and premarital sex have changed (Thornton and Freedman, 1982), it may be no longer assumed that all parents discourage early sexual activity. For example, although majority of the mothers in the study by Weinstein and Thornton (1989) disapproved of premarital sex, about one-third approved. Similarly, a study by Jaccard et al (1996) found that approximately 25% mothers reported ambivalence or positive attitudes toward teenage sex. However, most studies ignored parental sexual values, but only measured whether parents discussed sex and/or birth control with their children. The lack of consideration of parental sexual values might explain the null relationships in some studies (e.g. Newcomer and Udry, 1984, 1985; Christopher et al, 1993; Miller et al, 1998a; DiClemente et al, 2001). It is important for future research on the influence of parent-child communication to consider sexual values of parents.

Third, timing of communication is another issue, which significantly influences the effectiveness of parent-child communication. Examining four mother-child communication patterns (before, during, after or no discussion), Miller et al (1998a) concluded that only discussions prior to sexual initiation were strongly associated with condom use at first intercourse and promoted subsequent use. Similarly, parent-child

communication about sexual risk before sexual onset has an impact on later age of sexual initiation, consistent condom use and less likelihood of sexually transmitted diseases, but communication after sexual initiation has no such protective effect at all (Hutchinson, 2002). According to these findings, timing of parental communication plays a critical role. However, most studies did not consider this issue (e.g. Newcomer and Udry, 1984, 1985; Moore et al, 1986; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Karofsky et al, 2000; DiClemente et al, 2001; Romo et al, 2002). Parent-child communication might occur after sexual initiation of children, due to parents' awareness of their children's sexual behaviour (Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998). Failure to consider the timing of parent-child communication might help explain the conflicting findings across studies. Therefore, it is important to explore the timing and context of such communication in future research.

Fourth, inconsistency of parental sexual values between parents' reports and the perceptions of teenagers increases the difficulty in understanding these findings. Direct verbal communication may be misperceived by parents or by children. There is little agreement about how much and what communication has occurred between parents and their children (Furstenberg et al, 1984; Newcomer and Udry, 1984, 1985; Fisher, 1985; Miller et al, 1986; Kahn, 1994; Pick and Palos, 1995; Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998, 2000; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000). Mothers believe that they have discussed more about sex or contraception than their children perceive them to have (Furstenberg et al, 1984; Miller et al, 1998b; Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998). In addition, mothers tend to underestimate their children's sexual behaviour, whereas children tend to underestimate their mother's level of disapproval of teenage sex (Jaccard et al, 1998). The correlation between actual attitudes of mothers and the perceptions of teenagers varies from 0.22 (Jaccard et al,

1996), 0.26 (Dittus and Jaccard, 2000) to 0.28 (Jaccard et al, 1998). Studies are more likely to find inconsistencies between perceptions of boys and parents than those of girls and parents (Kahn, 1994; Jaccard et al, 1998; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000).

With this inconsistency, interpretation of the findings must be cautious, if studies are based only on teenagers' reports (e.g. Moore et al, 1986; Christopher et al, 1993; Hovell et al, 1994; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Karofsky et al, 2000; DiClemente et al, 2001), or only on mothers' reports (e.g. Rosenthal et al, 1998; McNeely et al, 2002). Therefore, future research needs to consider including both parents and teenagers in order to understand the influence of communication.

The last issue is the context in which the communication occurs. Effective communication depends not only on what parents say, but also on how they say it. Quality and styles of communication are important. Quality, but not frequency, of parent-child communication about sex, birth control and HIV, is related to less teenage risky sexual behaviour (Wilson and Donenbery, 2004). Similarly, teenagers who are more satisfied with the communication with their parents are less likely to initiate sexual activity (Karofsky et al, 2000). Parents' open, skilled and comfortable manner in discussions about sex and sexual risks increases parent-child communication about these issues and encourages teenagers to use condoms (Whitaker et al, 1999). Friendly, attentive, impression-leaving and open styles of parental communication about sexual issues are more effective in discouraging sexual involvement or increasing contraceptive use (Mueller and Powers, 1990). However, research on parent-child communication considered little about how and under what circumstance parents discuss sex with their children.

In summary, previous studies on parental communication about sex on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour have provided valuable data for understanding the influence of parents. However, with the methodological limitations, such as sampling, measurements, representativeness and response bias, research findings are mixed and inconclusive. Failure to consider sexual values of parents, timing of the communication, recruitment of both teenagers and parents, and the context of such communication has contributed to limited understanding of these findings. In addition, the use of quantitative approaches of these studies can investigate the quantity or frequency of parent-child communication; however, it is difficult for these approaches to explore the context of such communication. Qualitative approaches can overcome this limitation and provide better understanding of how parents talk to their children, when it happens, and under what circumstance it occurs. The methodological issues will be fully discussed in chapter three.

Parent-child communication about sex is limited, and various barriers prevent parents from providing sexual information for their children. Although the influence of parental communication is not consistently supported by research evidence, the impact of parents cannot be denied. As discussed earlier, parental sexual values play a significant role in determining the effect of parent-child communication. The following section explores the influence of sexual values of parents.

2.3.1.2 Sexual values of parents

In addition to parent-child communication about sex, sexual values of parents provide further clues to the understanding of parental influence. Parents' attitudes towards sexual behaviour significantly influence teenagers' thinking about sex, what they do, and why, when and with whom they do it.

Considerable research focusing on the influence of parental values has demonstrated such influences. Perceived parental disapproval of teenage sexual activity or risky behaviours reduces sexual involvement, pregnancy, number of sexual partners or engagement of risky sexual behaviours (Luster and Small, 1997; Resnick et al, 1997; He et al, 2004). In contrast, parental permissive attitudes towards teenage sex are associated with less restrictive attitudes and greater likelihood of sexual initiation of their children (Thornton and Camburn 1987; Small and Luster, 1994).

Studies examining parental sexual values tend to focus on the influence of maternal attitudes, and the influence of mothers is highly valued. Maternal disapproval of premarital sex is associated with teenage girls' negative attitudes towards pregnancy (Jaccard et al, 2003), sexual abstinence or delayed sexual initiation (Hovell et al, 1994; Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998; Dittus et al, 1999; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000; Davis and Friel, 2001). Maternal attitudes also have an impact on sexually active teenagers. Perceptions of maternal disapproval of teenage sex are related to less frequent sexual intercourse, fewer sexual partners, more consistent contraceptive use, or less likelihood of becoming pregnant (Jaccard et al, 1996; Miller et al, 1999; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000). In addition, maternal attitudes have more influence on girls. Maternal strong

disapproval of teenage sex is related to later sexual debut for girls, but not for boys (McNeely et al, 2002).

However, it is not wise to underestimate the influence of paternal sexual values because fathers are less involved in such studies. When fathers are recruited, research supports the role of fathers as well. Perceived paternal disapproval of teenage sex is related to later onset of sexual initiation of African American teenagers, independent of teenagers' perceptions of maternal disapproval (Dittus et al, 1997). Lack of recruitment of fathers raised a question about the influence of fathers on their children. It is important for future research to include both parents in order to examine maternal and parental influences.

A few studies failed to demonstrate the impact of parental values on teenagers (Newcomer and Udry, 1984, 1985; Udry and Billy, 1987; Udry, 1988). Teenagers whose mothers disapproved of contraceptive use were more likely to be sexually active and less likely to use contraception (Jaccard and Dittus, 2000).

Parental sexual values can be significantly influenced by religion. Religious commitment and participation of parents can play a critical role in forming sexual values and morality for both parents and children (Thornton and Camburn, 1987, 1989; Miller and Bingham, 1989). Less religious mothers have more permissive attitudes towards sex, which are related to more permissive attitudes and behaviour of their children (Thornton and Camburn, 1987). The effect of frequent parental church participation may influence their children's sexual values indirectly by parental attitudes or directly by placing their children in a religious environment (Thornton and

Camburn, 1987; Werner-Wilson, 1998). Such a religious environment makes teenagers more likely to develop sexual values consistent with religious teaching, gives them more opportunities to make friends with the same sexual values, and reduces opportunities to engage in sexual activity. As a consequence, the influence of peers with different sexual values is reduced (Mott et al, 1996). The relationship between religious commitment or attendance and sexual attitudes and behaviour of teenagers across various ethnic backgrounds and religions has been consistently reported (Thornton and Camburn, 1987, 1989; Miller and Olson, 1988; Udry, 1988; Miller and Bingham, 1989; Day, 1992; Rudat et al, 1992; Wellings et al, 1994; Halpern et al, 1994, 1997; Mott et al, 1996; Resnick et al, 1997; Werner-Wilson, 1998; Bradby and Williams, 1999; Hennink et al, 1999; Paul et al, 2000a, b; Zaleski and Schiaffino, 2000; Le Gall et al, 2002).

Although not all studies support the influence of parental sexual values, most studies do. Overall, the impact of parental sexual values is evident. In addition, research evidence has shown the significant influence of religion on sexual values of parents and teenagers. Considering the critical role of sexual values of parents, it is important to examine how these values are conveyed to their children. Research evidence has suggested that parents may pass on their sexual values by providing role models and communication. Parent-child communication is moderated by parent-child relationships, and good communication and relationships increase the effectiveness of parents transmitting their values.

2.3.1.3 Parent-child relationships

Compared to the large number of studies of the influence of parent-child communication on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, a small number of studies have considered relationship satisfaction. The quality of parent-child relationships influences parent-child communication and the transmission of parental values (Jaccard et al, 2000). A general positive family environment provides the context, in which parents transmit their values effectively and children are more willing to accept their parents' values (Newcomer and Udry, 1985; Weinstein and Thornton, 1989; Jaccard et al, 1996; Rodgers, 1999; Knafo and Schwartz, 2003). Teenagers who have a good parent-child relationship in these terms are more likely to have sexual values similar to their parents (Weinstein and Thornton, 1989) and are less likely to misperceive maternal sexual values (Jaccard et al, 1996). Further, as discussed earlier (see page 22), a good family relationship mediates the negative influence of media exposure on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour (Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1995).

In addition to the influence of parent-child relationships on sexual values, studies also have investigated their impact on sexual behaviour. Some studies have demonstrated protective effect of parental warmth, support, closeness, connectedness or attachment to parents on teenage sexual behaviour. Good parent-child relationships are associated with delayed sexual initiation (Resnick et al, 1997). Close, trusting and supportive relationships with mothers/parents protect girls from early sexual activity (Magnusson, 2001; Moore and Chase-Lansdale, 2001; McNeely et al, 2002; Borawski et al, 2003), but no such effects are found for boys (McNeely et al, 2002; Borawski et al, 2003). Boys with poor or non-supportive parent-child relationships are more likely to be

sexually active, although they have discussed sex with their parents (Rodgers, 1999). These findings indicate the impact of parental relationships on girls, boys or both.

Similar to studies of parent-child communication, maternal relationships with children are investigated more than paternal relationships. The role of mothers is highly valued. Teenagers who have a good supportive relationship with their mothers are more likely to delay sexual initiation, have less sexual intercourse, have fewer sexual partners, use contraception consistently, have fewer pregnancies, or have more negative attitudes towards pregnancy (Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998, 2003; Luster and Small, 1997; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000; Jaccard and Dittus, 2000).

However, the results of these studies are inconsistent and complex. Good parent-child relationships have not necessarily made parents transmit their own sexual values effectively. A few studies have not found an association between parental closeness, warmth or attachment and teenage sexual behaviour (Taris and Semin, 1997; Somers and Paulson, 2000; Longmore et al, 2001; Upchurch et al, 2001). Mothers have more influence on sexual attitudes of their children in families of a low quality parent-child interaction (Taris, 2000).

Methodological issues shared by any other studies of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour (see pages 14, 30) contribute to inconsistent findings across these studies. In addition, these findings suggest that parents still have some influence on their children although the family relationship is poor, which indicates that other factors, such as sexual values of parents, may play a more important role.

The influence of parent-child relationships is modified by sexual values of parents. Children who have a close relationship with their mothers are more likely to have sexual attitudes and behaviour similar to their parents than those who have a more distant relationship (Weinstein and Thornton, 1989). On the one hand, children with close relationships and permissive mothers are more likely to have had sexual intercourse; on the other hand, children with close relationships and non-permissive mothers are less likely to report having had sex. Parent-child relationships moderate the transmission of parents' values to their children. These findings highlight the key role of parental sexual values, and failure to consider them might explain why some studies have not found the influence of parent-child relationships (e.g. Somers and Paulson, 2000; Longmore et al, 2001). When parent-child relationships and sexual attitudes of parents are explored together, studies tend to support parental sexual values (Taris and Semin, 1997) or both (Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998, 2003; Resnick et al, 1997; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000; McNeely et al, 2002). However, these studies have not examined the interactive effect between parental values and relationships. It is important for future research to investigate the impact of relationships in the context of parental sexual values.

In summary, parent-child relationships play a key role in transmitting sexual values of parents. Parents have more influence on their children if the relationship is good. However, sexual values of parents are more relevant to sexual attitudes and behaviour of their children. Only when parents discourage teenage sex, are teenagers more likely to delay sexual initiation or have less risky sexual behaviour. However, the parent-child relationship alone is not the only determinant in transmitting sexual values between generations. Other forms of communication are important as well.

2.3.1.4 Other forms of parent-child communication

Verbal communication is important for parents to pass on sexual values to their children. Parent-child relationships provide the context, in which the transmission occurs and modifies the process. However, direct parent-child communication is limited cross all ethnic backgrounds. How can parental sexual values be conveyed to their children? Obviously, non-verbal communication, such as parental role modelling and parental supervision, is important as well. Through this indirect communication, children are generally made aware of values and expectations of their parents.

Adult behaviour has more impact on their children than adult communication, as children are more likely to follow apparent parental behaviour rather than what parents recommend (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Hovell et al, 1994). Parents serve as a role model, whether willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously (Wilder and Watt, 2002). Thus, parents convey their own values indirectly and children define normative behaviour by observing their parents' behaviour (Foshee and Bauman, 1992; Coleman, 1995). Risk behaviours are reproduced across generations, and similarity in sexual behaviour between generations has been well documented (Newcomer and Udry, 1984; Udry and Billy, 1987; Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Pick and Palos, 1995; Mott et al, 1996; Paul et al, 2000b; Wilder and Watt, 2002).

Parental role modelling is important, which may partly explain the impact of disrupted families on teenage sexual behaviour (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Newcomer and Udry, 1987; Miller and Bingham, 1989; Flewelling and Bauman, 1990; Young et al,

1991). These parents may re-enter the courtship system or have sexual relationships outside marriage personally (Thornton and Camburn, 1987). Therefore, children from these families perceive their parents as more permissive and are more likely to become involved in sex at a young age.

Apart from parental role modelling, parental control or monitoring is another way parents indirectly convey their sexual norms. The influence of parental monitoring, supervision, rules or control has been examined in a number of studies. These studies generally support the importance of parental monitoring in teenage sexual behaviour. Higher levels of parental monitoring are related to later initiation of sexual activity (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Pete and DeSantis, 1990; Small and Luster, 1994; Meschke and Silbereisen, 1997; Ary et al, 1999; Romer et al, 1999; Miller et al, 1999; Li, 2000a,b). Teenagers following family rules regarding sex and dating are less sexually active (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Hovell et al, 1994). Sexually active teenagers closely monitored by their parents tend to have fewer sexual partners, consistent contraceptive use and fewer pregnancies (Rodgers, 1999; Romer et al, 1999; Crosby et al, 2002). While family rules, parental sexual attitudes and parent-child communication about sex are investigated together, rules and parental values, but not communication, are related to less sexual activity of children (Hovell et al, 1994). These findings highlight the influence of indirect parent-child communication on teenagers.

Gender differences in the influence of parental monitoring have been reported. The effect of monitoring is predicted by the gender of parents and children. Paternal supervision decreases the likelihood of early sexual experience in teenage males, but

not in females (Wilder and Watt, 2002), whereas maternal supervision has an impact on girls, but not on boys (McNeely et al, 2002; Wilder and Watt, 2002). Given the fact of gender differences, mothers and fathers play different roles in monitoring their children's behaviour. Future research examining parental supervision should consider including both parents and children.

It is worth noting the degree of parental control, for instance, whether the more the parental strictness, the less likely it is that children will be involved in early sexual activity. Miller et al (1986) have reported a curvilinear relationship. Sexual permissiveness and experience were highest among teenagers who reported no parental discipline or dating rules at all, lowest among those who reported moderate parental strictness, and intermediate among those who reported very strict parental discipline and many rules. Similar, high levels of parental control are associated with earlier initiation of sexual activity (Upchurch et al, 1999). In addition, parental behaviour control is more effective than parental psychological control (Gray and Steinberg, 1999; Rodgers, 1999), which is related to depression and antisocial behaviour in teenagers (Barber, 1996) or increased sexual risks in girls (Rodgers, 1999). However, parental behaviour control protects both boys and girls from these risks (Rodgers, 1999).

Most of these studies used teenagers' perceptions of parental supervision and few studies measured the actual parental supervision. When reports of both mothers and teenagers were used, maternal monitoring was related to less frequency of sex and fewer sexual partners, according to mothers' reports, but not teenagers' (Miller et al,

1999). This inconsistency highlights the importance of including both parents and children in such investigation.

Although not all research (e.g. Newcomer and Udry, 1984; Udry and Billy, 1987; Upchurch et al, 2001) supports the impact of parental supervision on teenagers, most studies have indicated such impact. Indirect parent-child communication, including parental role modelling and supervision, is as important, if not more, than direct communication in transmitting parental sexual values and norms to their children.

Apart from direct and indirect parent-child communication, parental sexual values and parent-child relationships, demographic characteristics of family partly explain teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

2.3.1.5 Demographic characteristics of family

Demographic characteristics of family, such as social class and parental marital status, have long been identified as significant factors in understanding teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Social class, sometimes called socioeconomic status (SES), is measured by various ways in studies of teenagers. Measures include parental occupation (Udry and Billy, 1987; Martin, 1996), parents' education (Newcomer and Udry, 1987; Thornton and Camburn, 1987), maternal education (Upchurch et al, 1999; McNeely et al, 2002), family income (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Miller and Bingham, 1989), a combination

of parents' occupations and education (Roebuck and McGee, 1977), or a combination of parental education and family income (Mott et al, 1996).

Despite different measures, studies generally support the influence of social class on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. These studies have demonstrated that teenagers from lower class families are associated with more sexually activity, or sexual initiation at a younger age (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Udry and Billy, 1987; Miller and Bingham, 1989; Upchurch et al, 1999; McNeely et al, 2002). Highly educated parents may have greater expectations of their children's academic achievements, which discourages early sexual initiation (Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Katchadourian, 1990). The higher academic aspirations of children in turn means that they spend more time in school related activities and have less opportunity to engage in sexual behaviour (Katchadourian, 1990; Whitbeck et al, 1999). Once sexually active, girls from deprived backgrounds are more likely to become pregnant because of less effective contraceptive use (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Aten et al, 2002), or continue a pregnancy (Turner, 2001).

However, a few studies failed to find such an association. Parents' socioeconomic status or parental education is not related to sexual initiation or the age of first sex (Mott et al, 1996; Paul et al, 2000a). In addition, the association varies according to gender or ethnicity. Higher levels of maternal education predict later onset of sexual involvement of girls, but not of boys (McNeely et al, 2002), or in white teenagers, but not in black females (Udry and Billy, 1987). The absence of the influence of socioeconomic status in Udry and Billy (1987) may be due to a high-risk sample, where most teenagers were from low-income and single-parent families.

In addition, family socioeconomic status is closely linked to parental marital status. Reduced income and financial disadvantages are common problems that single parents and their children have to face (Newcomer and Udry, 1987). Research evidence has suggested a link between parental marital status and teenage sexual activity.

Young people who experienced parental divorce are more likely to have sexual initiation before age 16, or enter partnership and parenthood earlier (Kiernan and Hobcraft, 1997; Magnusson, 2001). Teenagers living with one parent or with non-biological parents have more permissive sexual attitudes, higher level of sexual activity or earlier onset of sexual intercourse (Roebuck and McGee, 1977; Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Newcomer and Udry, 1987; Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Miller and Bingham, 1989; FleWellingsand Bauman, 1990; Young et al, 1991; Upchurch et al, 1999, 2001). Living in any type of married family protects African American teenage girls from sexual onset and pregnancy (Moore and Chase-Lansdale, 2001).

Gender and ethnic differences have been reported. Living with both original parents predicts the sexual debut in white teenage females, but not in white males and black females (Udry and Billy, 1987). Single-parent families or fathers' absence has more impact on girls, but little on boys (Udry, 1988; Davis and Friel, 2001), or on boys, but not on girls (Raine et al, 1999). In contrast, a few studies did not report this relationship (Hovell et al, 1994; Miller et al, 1999; Paul et al, 2000a; Whitaker et al, 2000).

Most studies, but not all, have demonstrated the impact of parental marital status on teenagers. Both family disruption and the status of living within different types of

family structure have an impact. The processes of the influence of family structure may be explained by other family factors, such as parental role modelling, supervision or control.

First, marital disruption and single parenting are related to a general loss of parental control (Newcomer and Udry, 1987; Thornton and Camburn, 1987). Teenagers with low parental monitoring or control are more likely to become sexually active (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Miller et al, 1986; Small and Luster, 1994; McNeely et al, 2002). The supervision of one parent and two parents differs in the extent of monitoring their children's behaviour (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Miller and Bingham, 1989; Young et al, 1991; Moore and Chase-Lansdale, 2001), as single parents are normally employed full time due to economic pressure (Newcomer and Udry, 1987). In addition, mothers may have less authority than fathers, so that it is difficult for single mothers to control their children's behaviour (Miller and Bingham, 1989), or pass on their sexual values to their children without fathers' presence (Dittus et al, 1997).

Second, sexual role modelling of parents should not be ignored. Single parents have to confront their marital problems, and may be busy with dating or have personal sexual relationships outside marriage (Thornton and Camburn, 1987). Dating behaviour of mothers, rather than maternal sexual attitudes, has more influence on their children (Whitbeck et al, 1994). If single parents spend time re-establishing intimate relationships, they spend less time monitoring their children or provide less emotional support, which further explains the impact of parental marital status (Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Miller and Bingham, 1989; Young et al, 1991; Thomson et al, 2001).

In summary, family demographic characteristics influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. Socioeconomic status and parental marital status all play their part. However, these influences operate through other interactive parental factors, such as parental role modelling and supervision. It is important to understand teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour without isolating demographic characteristics from other family influences.

2.3.1.6 Summary of family influences

Reviewing the literature, family, especially parents, has profound influence on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. Among various family factors investigated in previous studies, parent-child communication, parental sexual values, parent-child relationships, indirect parent-child communication and demographic characteristics all contribute to the understanding of teenage sexual behaviour. Although there are inconsistent findings across these studies, all these factors influence teenagers in various ways. Sexual values of parents play a key role in understanding parental influences. Without considering parental values, it would be difficult to understand other family factors, such as parent-child communication, relationships, or other forms of communication. Parents transmit their sexual values through direct or indirect communication. Direct parent-child communication about sex is limited, and various barriers influence communication. Parent-child relationships can modify the effect of parent-child communication about sexual issues. However, the transmission of parental sexual values is more effective through indirect communication, such as parental role modelling, supervision and control. In addition, family demographic characteristics, such as social class and parental marital status, are important. The impact of social class and parental marital

status operates through other family factors, such as parental role modelling and supervision.

In summary, previous studies have provided some evidence of the influence of family. In addition to family, friends also play an important role in the understanding of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

2.3.2 The influence of friends

The influence of parents is generally decreased as children grow up (Whitbeck et al, 1999). During adolescence, peer influence becomes increasingly important, which may overwhelm the influence of parents, in guiding various behaviours, such as smoking, drinking and sexual behaviour (Christopher et al, 1993; Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Aseltine, 1995; Harris, 1995; He et al, 2004). Friendship patterns change from having same-sex and same-age friends in childhood to having more relationships with opposite sex and older friends (Cooksey et al, 2002). A steady relationship and having an older friend are associated with early sexual involvement and unwanted sexual activity of girls (Whitbeck et al, 1999; Marin et al, 2000).

Children spend less time with their families when they enter adolescence (Larson and Richards, 1991; Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Larson et al, 1996; Shoveller et al, 2004). This decline in time is not due to family conflicts, but due to increasing involvement in outside activities with friends (Larson et al, 1996). Gender differences in sharing activities with friends have been reported. Boys spend time in sharing activities, such as sports and games. Boys' relationships are based on companionship, but not on intimacy

(Bakken and Roming, 1992; Erwin, 1993; Golombok and Fivush, 1994; Heaven, 1994; Fehr, 1996; Martin, 1996; Hussong, 2000). On the other hand, girls spend their time in conversation, but less in shared activities, and their friendships are based on intimacy.

Although boys are less likely to have intimate conversation with friends, compared to girls, both boys and girls are more likely to share sexual information with friends than with parents. Friends are considered as the major source of information about sex and relationships, compared to school and parents (Todd et al, 1999; Somers and Gleason, 2001). A considerable number of teenagers prefer friends to parents as the easiest persons with whom to discuss sexual issues (Rudat et al, 1992; DiIorio et al, 1999; Todd et al, 1999; Shoveller et al, 2004). However, more sex education about sexual intercourse from friends is related to more liberal sexual attitudes (Somers and Gleason, 2001).

These studies indicate that not only the amount of time with parents and friends, but also the quality of the interaction in the available time, alters when young people pass through adolescence. Teenagers spend more spare time sharing activities and talking with their friends about sex and relationships, as a consequence, they learn more about sex from friends than elsewhere. This process of sharing sexual knowledge has some impact on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, as indicated in a number of studies.

These studies have demonstrated friendship similarity in sexual behaviour between teenagers and friends. Perceived sexual behaviour of friends is closely related to teenagers' own sexual behaviour. Teenagers who believe that their friends are sexually active have greater intentions to initiate sexual intercourse (Kinsman et al, 1998).

Sexually experienced teenagers are more likely to report their friends to be sexually active than sexually inactive teenagers (Billy and Udry, 1985a; Smith et al, 1985; Christopher et al, 1993; Whitbeck et al, 1993; Nahom et al, 2001; Santelli et al, 2004).

Similar to the influence of family, gender and ethnicity differences are also reported in studies of the influence of friends. Friends' sexual behaviour seems to have more impact on girls than on boys, and more influence on white teenagers than on black teenagers. Sexual behaviour of girls, but not boys, is found similar to their friends (Billy et al, 1984, 1985b; Rodgers et al, 1984; Udry and Billy, 1987). In addition, the relationship between sexual behaviour of white girls and that of their same/opposite gender friends has been reported, but no such similarity is found in white boys or black teenagers (Billy et al, 1985b; Udry and Billy, 1987; Cavanagh, 2004). These differences indicate that gender and ethnicity play a significant role in peer influence on teenage sexual behaviour.

These studies have demonstrated friendship similarity in sexual behaviour. However, the influence of friends is not clear. Few studies have explored whether this similarity is due to teenagers selecting friends of similar behaviour or due to the actual influence of friends. Studies of teenage problem behaviours have indicated that both selection and socialisation play important roles in the formation of, for example, drug-using peer groups (Aseltine, 1995). Friendship similarity in sexual behaviour seems also to be explained by these processes.

Perceived high prevalence of sexual initiations of peers has an impact on teenagers' intentions to have sex, and these teenagers change their own sexual behaviour in order

to reflect their perceptions of peer norms (Kinsman et al, 1998). In turn, sexual initiation significantly influences the selection of same-sex friends who are sexually active (Billy et al, 1988). One early study used a longitudinal design to explore these issues by examining processes of influence, deselection and selection of friends of similar sexual behaviour (Billy and Udry, 1985a), and indicated different processes according to gender and ethnic backgrounds of teenagers. For white girls, similarity in sexual behaviour contributed to both influence and selection of friends. For white boys, only selection accounted for the similarity. However, neither influence nor selection operated for black teenagers. These studies highlighted the importance of considering gender and ethnicity in order to understand the complicated processes of friendship similarity in sexual behaviour.

These studies have provided some evidence in the understanding of peer influence. However, some limitations should be considered.

First, using data directly from respondents' friends (e.g. Billy et al, 1984; Billy and Udry, 1985a, b; Smith et al, 1985; Udry and Billy, 1987) rather than from respondents' perceptions (e.g. Christopher et al, 1993; Aseltine, 1995) avoided the bias of friends' perceived sexual behaviour by respondents. By limiting the sample to specific schools and grades, it was possible to match the data of the respondents with those of their friends. However, it may be questioned whether all students had their friends in the same school. If not, how were the influences of friends interpreted? A study of friendships among African American, Latino and Asian American teenagers showed that only one third of these teenagers' closest friends attended the same school as they did (Way and Chen, 2000). In addition, when a longitudinal design was used, the

second-round name list only included the names of teenagers who took part in the first round (Billy and Udry, 1985b). These restrictions might reduce the advantages of direct data from friends used in these studies. Therefore, future research in this area should consider friends from not only the same school but also outside school. Another issue of longitudinal design is the difficulty of following up. An early study of Billy and Udry (1985a) achieved a good following-up rate (82%). Of the 1,405 respondents aged 11 to 17 from the first round, 1,153 completed questionnaire in the second round, two years after the first data collection. However, there were still 252 dropouts, who might have different attitudes and behaviour.

Second, these studies heavily rely on quantitative designs. Given the complexity of the issues involved in these studies, such as sample frame, sample size, representativeness, response bias and difficulty of following up, understanding of peer influences is limited by using quantitative approaches. These approaches have provided some evidence whether the sexual behaviour of teenagers is related to their friends, but not how and why this influence operates. Alternatively, qualitative methods can provide different perspectives on such influence in order to understand the context of interaction between teenagers and friends.

In summary, teenagers generally move away from family when growing up. Friends are increasingly important in influencing sexual norms and knowledge. Friendship similarity in sexual behaviour is common in teenagers. However, the operation of this similarity is far from clear. Gender and ethnicity all play significant roles in the processes of friendship similarity.

Apart from family and friends, sex education at school also has an impact on sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of teenagers.

2.3.3 The influence of school sex education

Discussions about sex are rare at home. Teenagers obtain more information about sex and relationships from school than from parents (Todd et al, 1999; Wellings et al, 2001). Embarrassment, inadequate sexual knowledge, lack of communication skills and parents' own experience of sex education from their parents prevent parents from providing effective sex education for their children (see section 2.3.1.1.1). School sex education plays a significant role in providing young people with knowledge about puberty, sex, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.

Considering the early age of sexual initiation and high rates of teenage pregnancy in Britain, much of the public debate has centred on whether schools should offer sex education. Sex education opponents argue that early and comprehensive sex education programmes encourage the onset of sexual activity. However, little research evidence supports this view. In America and Britain, several researchers have used nationally representative data to investigate the association between sex education and sexual behaviour.

Of the American studies, one concluded that teenage females who had sex education at school were more likely to initiate sexual intercourse at ages 15 and 16 than those who had not (Marsiglio and Mott, 1986). Although the effect was small, it seemed to provide evidence of the negative influence of sex education at school. However, other

studies reported contrary findings. Teenagers who have been exposed to school sex education were less likely (Furstenberg et al, 1985) or no more likely to be sexually active (Zelnik and Kim, 1982; Dawson, 1986), more likely to use contraception and less likely to have been pregnant (Zelnik and Kim, 1982).

Similar findings have been reported in Britain. Analysing data from the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles 1990, Wellings et al (1995) argued that provision of sex education at school did not hasten sexual initiation. Men who cited school as the main source of sexual information were less likely, and women no more likely, to have had sexual intercourse before the age of 16 than those who cited other main sources, such as friends or media. Wellings et al (2001) supported this finding and pointed out that school-based lessons were the main source of information about sex for young people.

In response to early sexual initiation and high rates of teenage pregnancy, numerous school-based sex education programmes have been designed for teenagers and the effectiveness has been evaluated. The findings are inconsistent, citing the influence of educational programmes as ranging from effective to harmful.

School, as a main source of sexual knowledge, is less debatable. Sex education provided by school has significantly increased sexual knowledge of teenagers (Parcel and Luttmann, 1981; Kirby et al, 1991; Mellanby et al, 1995; Wight et al, 2002). Learning less about sexual intercourse from school and more from parents is related to more sexual activity (Somers and Gleason, 2001).

As far as the impact on sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy is concerned, the findings are inconsistent. School-based teenage pregnancy prevention programmes are effective in decreasing frequency of sexual activity and increasing contraceptive use (Smith, 1994). Sex education provided by school, combined with free and confidential contraceptive services (Zabin et al, 1986b; Paine-Andrews et al, 1999) or school and community-based sex education programmes (Vincent et al. 1987; Koo et al, 1994; Paine-Andrews et al, 1999), have shown the effect in decreasing pregnancy rates.

However, other evaluation studies have found sex education programmes have little or no impact on teenage sexual behaviour (Benson and Torpy, 1995; DiCenso et al, 2002; Somers and Eaves, 2002; Wight et al, 2002). Furthermore, school-based abstinence-only programmes are viewed as ineffective or even harmful. These programmes have not changed sexual attitudes (Sather and Zinn, 2002), delayed sexual initiation or reduced pregnancy rates, but increased precoital sexual activity (Christopher and Roosa, 1990; Roosa and Christopher, 1990).

It is difficult to draw conclusions from these evaluation studies, as different programmes with diverse aims were provided for various populations. What is school sex education for? The Scottish Executive (2000: 27) offers a broad definition of sex education as:

> *"a lifelong process whereby children and young people acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop beliefs, attitudes and values about their sexuality and relationships within a moral and ethical framework."*

British government policy highlights provision of skills of safe sex in school in order to tackle the high rate of teenage pregnancy (Social Executive Unit, 1999). Recent policy and practice pay more particular focus on schools, but not on the wider social environment where schoolchildren live.

Although there is general guidance for each age level in Britain, there is no national curriculum (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; Burtney, 2000; Buston et al, 2001). Thus, provision of sex education varies from school to school and even from teacher to teacher within schools (Coleman, 1995; Buston et al, 2001), which increases the difficulties in evaluation.

In addition, sex education provided by school highlights the content, but considers little about the context, such as how and who provides it. There is no doubt that sex education should be delivered by trusted and sensitive teachers (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993). Adequate training and less interest or initiative of teachers influence the outcome of sex education (Coleman, 1995; Wight, 1997; Buston et al, 2001, 2002). In addition, who delivers sex education also has an impact on the effectiveness. Programmes led by older peers (Howard and McCabe, 1990; Short, 1998; Strange et al, 2002) or by medical staff and peers (Mellanby et al, 1995) are more interesting and acceptable to young people. Both adult-led and peer-led methods may play different roles in sex education (Mellanby et al, 2001); however, no matter who leads programmes, it is essential for those who deliver them to have sufficient training and support.

In general, school sex education has not explicitly encouraged young people to initiate sexual activity. It increases knowledge about reproduction, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. However, this knowledge has little impact on sexual attitudes and behaviour. Why have numerous programmes not achieved their intended effects on sexual initiation or teenage pregnancy? A number of issues are raised.

First, the quality of the evaluation studies is problematic. The definition of effectiveness is based on the quality of the evaluation rather than the intervention *per se* (Burtney, 2000). In a review of the methodological quality of evaluations, Oakley et al (1995) found only 18% (12/65) of the outcome evaluations were methodologically sound. These methodological issues still exist in recent studies. For example, in an evaluation study of a teacher delivered sex education programme in Scottish schools, Wight et al (2002) reported 77% (5854/7616) respondents completed the two-year follow up questionnaire. The programme might have a different impact on those who dropped out. Other methodological issues, shared by other studies in this area (see pages 14, 30), also indicate the complexity and difficulty in evaluating the effectiveness of school sex education on teenage sexual behaviour.

Second, timing of sex education should be considered. Obviously, programmes aiming to promote sexual abstinence should be provided before sexual initiation. However, such programmes are not helpful to sexually experienced teenagers (Roosa and Christopher, 1990; Aten et al, 2002). In addition, sex education does not influence contraceptive use of non-virgins, but it does influence that of virgins once they become sexually active (Howard and McCabe, 1990; Kirby et al, 1991).

Third, these evaluations concentrated on the programmes themselves, but considered little about the influences outside school, such as family and friends. Research evidence has shown that programmes involving parents increased parent-child communication about sex, which in turn has some positive impact on teenagers (Black et al, 2001; Lederman and Mian, 2003).

Lastly, studies relying on surveys failed to understand the perspectives and experience of teenagers. Without listening to their views, improvement of such education is less possible. In addition, the Scottish Executive has stressed the co-operation between parents and schools in sex education (Scottish Executive, 2000). However, little research has investigated parents' perspectives of school sex education provided for their children. It is important to explore what parents and children think about and want to get from school. Qualitative methods will make it possible.

In summary, sex education at school is generally considered to be necessary. However, more sex education is not enough; the lack of statutory training, or standard curriculum makes it difficult to achieve expected effects (Mellanby et al, 1992; Buston et al, 2001). It is impossible to rely on school alone to change teenage sexual behaviour. Without considering wider influences, it will be difficult for school sex education to change sexual values, delay sexual initiation or reduce pregnancy rates of teenagers.

2.3 The Chinese people in Britain

The Chinese community has been paid relatively little attention by politicians and researchers and is the least understood minority in Britain (Chan A, 1986; Baxter and

Raw, 1988; Bailey et al, 1994). This section provides a review of literature on the Chinese people in Britain. The general information is discussed first, followed by research on young Chinese people in Britain.

The earliest Chinese settlers in Britain were mainly seamen from East India Company ships during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jones, 1979). Most of these Chinese men settled in the ports of London, Liverpool, Cardiff and Bristol. Before the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, a considerable number of Chinese left Hong Kong for Britain because of the fears and uncertainty of Chinese politics and the future of Hong Kong (Chan YM and Chan C, 1997).

It was estimated that the Chinese people formed from one of the largest (Wong and Cochrane, 1989; Furnham and Li, 1993) to the third largest minority ethnic communities in Britain (Jones, 1979, 1987). However, it was not until the 1991 Census that the official statistics reported the number of Chinese people in Britain (Cheng, 1996). The census identified that there were 156, 938 Chinese people, composing 0.29% of the population of Great Britain[1], forming one of the small minority ethnic groups, and 28% of these were born in Great Britain (OPCS, 1993).

The number has been growing, according to the 2001 Census. It climbed to 247, 403 Chinese people, representing 0.42% of the British population, a small minority ethnic group after Indians, Pakistanis, Black Caribbeans, Black Africans and Bangladeshis (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Among them, 29% were British born, which remains relatively stable, compared to the 1991 Census (Office for National Statistics,

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[1] Great Britain: including England, Scotland and Wales

2004b). It is not clear if the number of Chinese people in Britain has actually increased dramatically since the 1991 Census, or if the research methods used in the 2001 Census improved, so that the data were more reliable. The Chinese people in Britain are one of the successful minority ethnic groups, small in size, young in age, balanced in gender and well-educated (Chan YM, 1994a; Cheng, 1996). According to the National Statistics, Chinese pupils had the best GCSE results in 2002 and were the most likely to achieve five or more grades A in England, the least likely to be excluded from school and the most likely to have degrees (Office for National Statistics, 2004c).

Compared to other minority ethnic youth, little research has been undertaken among young Chinese people in Britain. Reviewing research on this group, a few issues, including, education, cultural identities, employment, language development and mental health, have been addressed over the last 30 years.

The earliest study can be traced back to Garvey and Jackson's (1975) research project into the educational needs of Chinese children in Britain. These children were described as speaking little or no English, deeply unhappy, giving up school altogether, especially girls, and escaping from school trips to the British Museum exhibition of Chinese culture. After this earliest work, the issue of education has continually been explored (Taylor, 1987; Cheng, 1992; Wong, 1992; Chan YM 1994b, 1995, 1997). The picture illustrated by Garvey and Jackson (1975) has changed overtime. These later studies demonstrated that most Chinese children in British schools were happy, hard working and good at school. These findings were supported by the Office for National Statistics, which showed Chinese pupils had high academic achievements in England (Office for National Statistics, 2004c). Given the fact that academic performance is

negatively related to early sexual initiation, number of sexual partners, risky sexual behaviour, or pregnancy (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; Paul et al, 2000b; Magnusson, 2001; He et al, 2004), future research is needed to explore the impact of educational expectations on sexual attitudes and behaviour of British Chinese teenagers.

In addition, the formation of cultural identities has become a concern since the 1990s (Chung, 1990; Parker, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998; Song, 1995, 1997a,b; Pang, 2000; Yeh, 2000). The work of Parker, a researcher of mixed Chinese-English descent, reported the absence of a new British-based Chinese identity shared by the immigrant Chinese in Britain, and identified a range of different forms of identity (Parker, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998). The studies of Song (1995, 1997) explored cultural identities between siblings and between daughters and mothers by focusing on children's labour in family catering businesses.

The Chinese takeaway was regarded as a unique place where young Chinese people formed their cultural identities (Parker, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998; Song, 1995, 1997a,b). These researchers argued that helping out in takeaways, young people acted as a bridge between the Chineseness of their parents in the kitchen and the Britishness of customers in front of the counter. As a result, the samples were either all or mostly recruited from takeaways. It is not wise to deny the Chinese takeaway as an important site in forming cultural identities, as 90% Chinese people in Britain are involved in the catering trade (Home Affairs Committee, 1985). However, it should not be the only site. Although 75% young people in Parker's studies had at least one parent employed in catering businesses, the parents of another 25% worked elsewhere (Parker, 1993, 1994). Furthermore, according to recent national statistics, only half of Chinese men

and 40% Chinese women in employment worked in the distribution, hotel and restaurant industry (Office for National Statistics, 2004d). Therefore, future research on Chinese people in Britain should not concentrate only on those in catering businesses.

Pang (2000), a British-Chinese researcher, examining the cultural identities of second generation young Chinese people in London, overcame this limitation by moving beyond takeaways. Unlike their parents, the majority of the young people in Pang's study were employed outside the catering businesses. The experience at school, in the catering trade and in Chinese social arenas provided a rich insight into how these young Chinese people formed 'new, mixed, hybrid formations of identities'. British-Chinese art has also played a role in understanding complexities of identity. Yeh (2000) offered a fresh view on the meaning of cultural identity by examining the works of a group of six young British-Chinese artists, and concluded that there was 'no single or definitive British-Chinese identity'. These studies of cultural identities have indicated the diversity of being British Chinese.

In addition to education and cultural identities, prospects of employment have been addressed (Chan A, 1986). Unlike their parents, young Chinese people dislike working in the catering trade, and want to pursue careers in three top professions, medicine, law and accountancy. Further, researchers have investigated the language patterns and bilingual development among young Chinese people (Wei and Milroy, 1995; Wei, 1996; Raschka et al, 2002). The grandparent generation tends to use Chinese language only; the parent generation uses a mixture of Chinese and English; the children's generation uses predominantly English in their social network contacts. British born children tend to speak Chinese with their family members, and English or a mixture of

English and Chinese with their peer groups. Research is needed to investigate whether these language patterns have an impact on parent-child communication about sex.

In comparison, few studies of health related issues have focused on this group. For example, Chan YM (2000) compared the self-esteem among British Chinese, White British and Hong Kong Chinese children. Surveys by Wong and Cochrane (1989) and Furnham and Li (1993) addressed the issues of migration and psychological well being among first and second generation Chinese people in Britain. Kwan and Holmes (1999) conducted qualitative research to explore attitudes towards oral health of three groups of Chinese people, the elderly, adults and teenagers.

Reviewing the research on young Chinese people in Britain raises a number of issues. First, few studies were concentrated on British born Chinese teenagers. The sample was normally a mixture of young people born in Britain and born elsewhere. Second, the definition of young people needs to be defined. Young people in these studies included children at primary school, teenagers at secondary school, and young adults in their twenties. However, few studies focused on teenage years. Third, nearly all these studies of young Chinese people were conducted in England, except for a study of Chan A (1986) recruiting those in Edinburgh and London. Chinese youth in Scotland is a neglected subgroup in an understudied group, and research is needed to understand their experience. Lastly, none of these studies have explored sexually related issues. Further research is needed to address their sexual attitudes and behaviour in order to inform the development of culturally sensitive services.

2.4 Summary, gaps in the literature and research questions

The literature review began by examining teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in Britain, Scotland and minority ethnic groups in Britain. In general, teenagers in Britain are more sexually active than previous generations. The average of sexual initiation has decreased from 20 years about 60 years ago to 16 years for teenagers in 2000. However, sexual activity varies among different ethnic groups in Britain. Asian young people have the lowest level, compared to those from majority or any other minority ethnic groups.

The review then moved to explore social influences on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, which put teenagers into a social context. Family, friends and sex education at school are identified as major influences. Family provides an environment, where teenagers shape their sexual values, and thus in turn have impact on their sexual behaviour. Parents influence their children directly or indirectly through parent-child communication, parental sexual values, parent-child relationships, parental role modelling, parental supervision and family demographic characteristics. In addition, parents have a significant influence on their children's religious beliefs regarding sexual behaviour and moderate the impact of the media on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Friends play a significant role when children move into teenage years. Similarity in sexual attitudes and behaviour between teenagers, especially girls, and their friends, has been reported. Furthermore, sex education at school is considered. Teenagers learn little about sex from their parents and communication about sex between generations is

limited. Therefore, schools are considered as an important source of knowledge about sex, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. This education has some impact on teenagers forming their sexual values, although this effectiveness is not always empirically supported. Family, friends and sex education at school all play their part in the understanding of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. However, it is important to note that teenagers are influenced by various factors, which are integrated with one another. Ethnic differences in sexual behaviour are evident, however, little is known about how and why ethnicity operates.

Then research on young Chinese people in Britain was reviewed. The lack of studies of this group is evident. The young Chinese people in Britain, especially British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland, are a relatively neglected group, who are still both little known and little understood. The existing studies among these young people have explored the education, employment, racism and cultural identities. Despite the small number and the limitations, these studies provided some valuable evidence in the understanding of these young people in Britain. However, none of these studies examined their sexual attitudes and behaviour. Considering the lack of studies of British born Chinese youth, the importance of ethnicity and little knowledge about the processes of the ethnic influence, this study will focus on British born Chinese teenagers.

Although existing studies have provided some evidence in the understanding of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, the processes of the influences are poorly understood. A number of questions are raised.

First, there is lack of a holistic approach to study teenage sexual behaviour. Teenagers live with their parents, they make friends and they go to school. Family, friends and schools are three major social factors influencing teenagers. However, previous studies isolated these influences by examining one factor, or combining two. Little research explored these influences together. It is important to develop a holistic approach by examining how and why family, friends and schools influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Second, there is a heavy emphasis on traditional quantitative methodology. Questionnaire surveys, which tend to be highly structured, have been the norm. The findings from these studies have contributed significantly to understanding of the influences of family, friends and schools. However, two issues of using quantitative approaches are raised.

Credibility is the first issue. Due to the difficulties inherent in such studies, such as a highly private issue of sexual attitudes and behaviour, response bias, recall difficulty, sampling, representativeness and the difficulty of following up, credibility of some studies in this field is limited. Some contradictions and inconsistent findings in the literature indicate the difficulty in addressing the complex issue of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour by using quantitative approaches. Although some of these methodological issues, such as response bias, may be unavoidable by using a qualitative approach, these limitations may be reduced by the development of a rapport between the researcher and the researched.

The second issue is the limited ability of quantitative approaches to explore issues in depth in order to understand the processes behind social influences. It is qualitative methods that provide deeper and richer understanding of sexual attitudes and behaviour. Given the importance of personal meanings of sexual values and behaviour, existing studies have a lack of qualitative depth. Qualitative design can contribute substantially to a greater understanding of teenagers from their own perceptions. This will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

Third, little research has considered the influence of culture. Ethnic differences in sexual behaviour have been reported in a number of studies. However, little research has explored why and how ethnicity influences teenagers. The processes are paid little attention and far less understood. In Britain, few teenagers from minority ethnic backgrounds are recruited in studies of sexual attitudes and behaviour. Findings from the majority group may not apply to minority ethnic groups. Health promotion, sex education, or sexual behaviour counselling have provided no evidence to inform the development of culturally sensitive services to ethnic minorities (Earls, 1993; Villarruel, 1998; Hagan et al, 2001; Murphy-Black, 2003). There is a need for further research to explore their sexual values and experience, and more importantly, how and why ethnicity influences them.

Fourth, most studies involved only teenagers or parents. There is evidence that parents' reports on parental sexual values, parent-child communication and sexual behaviour of their children are inconsistent with teenagers' reports. Therefore, studies based on the perceptions of teenagers or parents are problematic. It is important to include both teenagers and parents to understand how the influences happen.

Finally, considering gender differences, it is important to include both genders of teenagers and parents. A dearth of studies of fathers and teenage males is apparent. Mothers and daughters are normally involved in studies of parental influences. Few studies have included fathers when considering such influences. Fathers should not be ignored in research, as mothers and fathers play different roles. It is urgent for future research to consider the role of both parents in order to provide a better perspective on family influences.

In view of the limitations of these existing studies, this study will examine teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in the holistic social context, by listening to the views of both teenagers and parents. In particular, the processes of ethnicity influence will be explored in British born Chinese teenagers. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers?
2. How does the family influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
3. How does Chinese ethnicity influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
4. How do friends influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
5. How does sex education at school impact on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research design and methods. It is divided into six broad sections. Research approaches and the choice of an ethnographic approach for this study will be discussed first. The second section focuses on the method of data collection, followed by the study sample. Issues of data collection are discussed in section four. Section five explains the methods of data analysis. Lastly, a reflexive discussion of the experience of being a female Chinese researcher is addressed.

3.1 Research approaches

In this section, different approaches will be investigated in order to address the research questions outlined in the previous chapter (section 2.4). Firstly, quantitative and qualitative approaches will be discussed. Then, strength and weakness of three qualitative approaches considered are addressed in turn. Lastly, the choice of an ethnographic approach will be argued.

Prior to conducting research, it is essential to choose the most suitable research approach. Choosing quantitative or qualitative methods depends on research questions, the nature of the phenomena to be studied, the overall aims of the research, and the state of existing knowledge (Liehr and Marcus, 1994; Carter, 1996). The general aims of quantitative research are to explore questions about 'how many' and 'how much' by collecting numerical data, while qualitative research aims to address questions about 'what', 'how' and 'why' by collecting language data. Quantitative research tends to

measure the phenomenon under study, but qualitative research highlights the need to understand more about the phenomenon through informants' own points of view.

In view of the fact that little is known about sexual attitudes and behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate to explore this unknown phenomenon. There are a variety of qualitative approaches, which reflect the particular branch of the discipline researchers adhere to. Phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography are three most commonly used qualitative approaches. All these three approaches place emphasis on looking at the phenomenon from the perspective of informants in their natural environment, by using flexible research strategies, such as an overlapping process of literature review, research design, data collection, analysis and writing up, according to the nature of the study and the perspective of the researcher. However, their focuses are different. For example, the focus of phenomenology is on description and interpretation of an individual's unique perspective of the phenomenon, but not on the wider cultural context. Grounded theory highlights the generation of hypothesis grounded in data through systematic data collection and analysis, but it devalues theories learned from and built on previous work. Ethnography focuses on cultural norms that shape human values and behaviour. This approach stresses understanding and describing why a group of people do what they do and how an individual's behaviour is influenced by their surrounding culture by looking at the phenomenon through informants' own points of view. The present study is interested in British born Chinese teenagers' and their parents' own views of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and how these are influenced by their social and cultural environments. Therefore, an ethnographic approach allows this phenomenon to be

examined in a holistic social and cultural context of family, ethnicity, friends and schools.

3.1.1 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative research is a traditional research process to deal with quantities and relationships between variations. This approach is a formal, objective and systematic method to obtain information about the phenomenon under study by collecting and analysing highly structured numerical data (Burns and Grove, 1997; Bowling, 2002,). Types of quantitative research include descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental and experimental research (Carter, 1996).

Quantitative research is suitable for collecting more numerical and measurable information. Questionnaires, structured interviews, observation and other measuring tools are commonly used to collect quantitative data (Carter, 1996; Parahoo, 1997). The aim of quantitative research is to document prevalence or test hypotheses (Bowling, 2002). The research findings may provide an explanation of cause and effect (Carter, 1996; Parahoo, 1997). Experiments and surveys are the most popular designs in quantitative research. For example, surveys, with large samples, are widely used to examine sexual attitudes and behaviour (Hong et al, 1994; Wellings et al, 1994, 2001; Fan et al, 1995; Todd et al, 1999), or evaluate the impact of sex education programmes (Orr, 1982; Zelnik and Kim, 1982; Dawson, 1986; Marsiglio and Mott, 1986; Zabin et al, 1986b; Howard and McCabe, 1990; Wellings et al, 1995; Sather and Zinn, 2002).

These studies have undoubtedly produced some valuable findings in the understanding

of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and provided some evidence for

interventions. However, the useful, but limited, data generated by quantitative research

only provide a partial view. It is difficult for quantitative research to obtain a complete

understanding of comprehensive human experiences of sexual attitudes and behaviour

(see discussion in chapter two). For instance, with quantitative approaches, it is less

possible to understand the thoughts, beliefs, feelings and values of teenagers who have

engaged in sexual activity and those who have not. In another words, it can examine

what they have done, but it will fail to understand why they did it.

However, quantitative research is not the only way available to study teenage sexual

attitudes and behaviour. Qualitative approaches offere an alternative way to understand

this issue from a different point of view. Leininger (1985a: 5) defined qualitative

methods as:

> *"the methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analysing and*
>
> *interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics, and meanings of specific,*
>
> *contextual or gestaltic features of phenomena under study. With this method, the*
>
> *focus in on identifying the qualitative features, characteristics, or attributes that*
>
> *make the phenomenon what it is".*

In contrast to quantitative approaches, which are concerned with how much of

something exists, qualitative approaches are most appropriate to explore what exists,

especially when little is known about the phenomenon (Walker, 1985). It is the main

purpose of qualitative research to understand phenomena, for example, values,

meanings, beliefs, thoughts and general characteristics of life events, in some holistic

way or within its own context (Leininger, 1985a; Lincoln, 1992). It is qualitative

approaches that could provide great opportunities to understand better some of the

ambiguous, unknown and complex phenomena of humans (Leininger, 1992).

The present study is designed to obtain a holistic view of attitudes towards sexual

behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers. The use of qualitative approaches ensures

that the research focuses on the perspectives of individuals, i.e. teenagers and parents,

in order to understand their attitudes towards sexual behaviour and how social factors

and Chinese ethnicity influence the teenagers, and these have not been explored in

previous research. The following section examines three commonly used qualitative

approaches.

3.1.2 Qualitative approaches

Leininger, as the first nurse anthropologist to focus on qualitative research methods in

the 1950s, emphasised the long struggles to make qualitative approaches known and

applied in nursing (Leininger, 1992). Since the late 1980s, qualitative research methods

have been slowly recognised in nursing to advance humanistic and scientific

knowledge (Leininger, 1985a). There are more than 20 different qualitative approaches

(Tesch, 1990), but phenomenological, grounded theory and ethnographic methods are

most commonly used in nursing research. Each of these three approaches shares some

similar features; however, they are distinguished from one another. Phenomenology,

grounded theory and ethnography are discussed as follows.

3.1.2.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology, deriving from the Greek 'phenomenon', means 'to show itself'. As a qualitative approach, phenomenology has its roots in the discipline of philosophy (Thorne, 1991; Baker et al, 1992; Liehr and Marcus, 1994; Parahoo, 1997). It is recognised that Husserl, a German philosopher, was credited as the originator of this approach to investigate consciousness as experienced by people (Ray, 1985; Thorne, 1991; Baker et al, 1992; Holloway and Wheeler, 1996; Parahoo, 1997). It is an inductive and descriptive approach to gain understanding of an individual's unique perspective of 'lived experience' and the effect of the perspective on an individual's experience and behaviour (Omery, 1983; Ericksen and Henderson, 1992). The main concern is to describe and interpret a phenomenon, and to understand how the phenomenon is known and how it is expressed linguistically and behaviourally (Parse et al, 1985; Thorne, 1991; Beck, 1992, 1994; Jasper, 1994).

There are two branches of phenomenology: Husserlian transcendental phenomenology and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. There are fundamental differences between them (Koch, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Paley, 1997; Parahoo, 1997). Husserlian phenomenology is concerned with descriptive psychology, which emphasises 'bracketing'. This means the researchers have to set aside their own preconceptions, prejudices and beliefs about the phenomenon under study, so that the phenomenon can be described without being influenced by personal thoughts and values (Liehr and Marcus, 1994; Taylor, 1995; Paley, 1997; Parahoo, 1997). However, it might be difficult for researchers to bracket themselves in any human-to-human situation (Taylor, 1995; Parahoo,1997). On the contrary, Heidegger, a student of Husserl

developed Husserl's phenomenology, which believed people's being-in-the-world (Taylor, 1995). Heideggerian phenomenology, far from 'bracketing', stresses researchers' own interpretation to understand and describe how individuals experience phenomena differently (Koch, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Parahoo, 1997).

Phenomenology, a complex and controversial approach, has become increasingly popular in nursing research (Hallett, 1995). It is argued that phenomenological research is particularly appropriate for investigating the reality of human phenomena and their connection with the world (Parse et al, 1985; Beck, 1994). This approach is especially applicable in health sciences, which provides a new way for nurses to understand patients' or clients' experience of illness and care received (Lincoln, 1992; Beck, 1994; Parahoo, 1997). The significant nature of deliberately focusing on an individual's perceptions is consistent with both nursing theory and practice (Ray, 1985; Jasper, 1994; Hallett, 1995).

Phenomenology is suited to study a particular phenomenon among a particular group of individuals, such as nurses, nurse students, patients or a minority community. Both Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian hermeneutics stress that only those who experience the phenomena are able to describe and express their experiences to the outside world (Parahoo, 1997). However, it highlights individuals' lived experience of the phenomena, but not the social context, and is therefore of limited relevance to the present study.

3.1.2.2 Grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced 'Grounded Theory' as a process of discovering theory from systematically gathered and analysed data. When conducting qualitative research to explore patients' perceptions of dying, Glaser and Strauss created this approach for a systematic process of generating theory grounded in the reality of the social world rather than in interpretation (Smith and Biley, 1997). Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23) offered a comprehensive definition:

"A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge".

The ultimate aim of grounded theory is to generate hypotheses and theories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Parahoo, 1997; Smith and Biley, 1997). As a qualitative inductive approach, most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but also are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the process of research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

Grounded theory shares some similarities with other qualitative research methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). For example, despite differences in roots, purposes and

methodological prescriptions, grounded theory and phenomenology both aim to understand the richness of human experiences from the subjects' own points of view by using flexible data collection procedures (Baker et al, 1992).

Grounded theory has a significant influence on the traditions of sociology and social psychology, such as nursing sciences (Smith and Biley, 1997). It is particularly useful to tackle nursing problems and to develop theories of health care from nurses' everyday practice (Benton, 1996; Parahoo, 1997; Smith and Biley, 1997). It has been used to study diverse nursing phenomena, such as patients' experience of illness (e.g. Brydolf and Segesten, 1996; Thomas and Retsas, 1999; Duggleby, 2000; Crooks, 2001; Kylma et al, 2001), patient-nurse relationships (e.g. Vehvilainen-Julkunen, 1992; Byrne and Heyman, 1997; Carr, 2001) and the quality of care (e.g. Wilde et al, 1993; Williams, 1998).

Grounded theory highlights generation of theories grounded in data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), but it devalues concepts and theories learned from and built on previous work. In the present study, the social influences, such as family, ethnicity, friends and school, on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour have been established. However, the processes of these influences are not clear. Therefore, the present study will be based on the previous work to develop theories explaining attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers. Thus, grounded theory is not a highly relevant approach, but some insights are taken from it, allowing explanations to emerge from data.

3.1.2.3 Ethnography

Ethnography has a long history and been used in anthropology to discover unknown facts and lifestyles of people from different cultural backgrounds in the world (Leininger, 1985b). However, ethnography is essentially new in nursing. It was only in 1960s that nurses were beginning to learn and appreciate this approach to gain holistic and fresh insights on nursing phenomena (Leininger, 1985b), for instance, cultural beliefs and health behaviour (Mayo, 1992; Torsch and Ma, 2000), experiences of illness (Donaghy, 1995; Preston, 1997; Montbriand, 1998), the approach of different professional groups in assessing the needs of older people (Worth, 2001), patients' information needs (Worth et al, 2000), and nursing culture (Upvall, 1992; Wright, 2001).

Spradley (1979: 9) pointed out:

"Ethnography is a culture-studying culture. It consists of a body of knowledge that includes research techniques, ethnographic theory, and hundreds of cultural descriptions. It seeks to build a systematic understanding of all human cultures from the perspective of those who have learned them".

As both a process and a product, ethnography is concerned with understanding and describing why a group of people do what they do, and how an individual's behaviour is influenced by their surrounding culture (Fetterman, 1998; Roper and Shapira, 2000). By entering the world of a group and learning from people, the researcher can obtain the knowledge of what, why and how of people's lifestyles and understand the

thoughts, feelings and actions accompanying such behaviour (Leininger, 1985b; Roper and Shapira, 2000).

Ethnographic researchers do not intend mainly to test out their own ideas, but look at the phenomena through informants' points of view (Parahoo, 1997). Ethnographic research is not 'learning about people', but 'learning from people' (Roper and Shapira, 2000). To recognise and acknowledge the importance of the roles and contributions of those who take part in the ethnographic study, the personal term 'informants' is usually used rather than impersonal ones 'subjects', 'respondents', or 'participants' used in quantitative research (Leininger, 1985b).

How to enter and establish rapport with the group to be studied, as Leininger (1985b) illustrated as 'stranger' to 'friend', is an essential issue. It is by no means a small and simple task to be generally known, accepted and trusted. Patience, time, sensitive participation, self-appraisals, thoughtful consideration, and respect for the people are all essential (Leininger, 1985b). It is difficult, but possible to establish rapport with the study group. When trust, acceptance and respect replace fear and distrust, informants will be more likely to tell their true stories. It is the central core of ethnographic research.

Given the fact of the emphasis on the understanding of people's way of life in their social and cultural context through the native point of view, an ethnographic approach will be considered suitable for the present study.

3.1.3 The choice of an ethnographic approach

Although all three approaches discussed can be used to explore little known human experience from people's own points of view, their focus is different.

Phenomenology is interested in how the individual experiences phenomena. The focus is on the description of the 'lived experience', which means the participants have experienced the phenomena under study. The main concern is the individual's perceptions of the 'phenomenon', but not the cultural context. The aim of the current study is to explore attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers, including those who have had and have not had sex, and whether, how and why they are influenced by their surrounding environments, such as family, friends and school. The emphasis on the 'phenomenon', but not on wider cultural context, suggests phenomenology may produce only limited understanding. However, phenomenology offers some insights to the present study, for example, examining lived experience from people's own points of views.

Grounded theory seeks to generate theories or hypotheses from the data through the concepts of how and why. It is suitable to investigate phenomena where no theory exists or the existing theory fails to explain the phenomena. Grounded theory emphasises generating theories from data, which are not built on previous work. The social influences on teenagers are established and the present study aims to explore teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour, building on these existing theories. Therefore, grounded theory is of limited relevance. However, it offers some useful insights to the present study, allowing ideas and explanations to emerge from data.

Ethnographic approaches focus on people's behaviour related to their cultural and social environments. The present study is interested in people's own views of teenage sexual behaviour and accounts of behaviour. In order to understand this phenomenon, it needs to put teenagers in a holistic social context of family, ethnicity, friends and school. Therefore, of the three qualitative approaches examined, an ethnographic approach is considered the most relevant. This approach allows the researcher to examine attitudes towards sexual behaviour from British born Chinese teenagers' and parents' own points of view in the social context where they live. However some insights are drawn from phenomenology and grounded theory, for example, exploring lived experience from informants' own points of view and allowing ideas to emerge from data. This approach will generate rich and descriptive data to interpret how and why ethnicity and social factors have an impact on attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers.

3.2 Data collection

In ethnography, the researcher can obtain a holistic view of informants' behaviour through asking questions, observing and sharing some of the informants' experiences (Parahoo, 1997). Participant observation, interviewing and examination of available documents are three principal data collection methods (Roper and Shapira, 2000). In-depth interviews and participant observation are frequently used (Baillie, 1995), but participant observation is rarely used where the research topic is sensitive (Walker, 1985). In-depth interviews are generally becoming a favourite and most important data collection method in ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Fetterman,1998),

which can provide rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Laugharne, 1995; Holloway and Fulbrook, 2001). Considering the sensitive research topic of sex in the present study, only in-depth interviews are used. These interviews are called 'ethnographic interviews' and the interview process is guided by Spradley (1979: 58), who regards the ethnographic interview as:

'a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informant'.

These interviews contain open-ended questions and allow the researcher to focus on various aspects associated with the phenomenon through the informant's free speech. The amount and depth of data can be obtained with no restriction placed on an individual's response, as questionnaires or structured interviews do. The adoption of this method, therefore, enables the elicitation of data and an exploration of the complex phenomena of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour.

These friendly conversations are not unstructured, but are structured in some way (Sorrell and Redmond, 1995). The structure, which guides the interview process, is usually named interview agenda, schedule, topic or checklist. The interviews in this study were guided by a series of questions, which included the issues that the researcher wished to explore (see appendix 1). The schedules were modified as the study progressed. The questions asked varied, depending on the informants' willingness to talk. Not every informant was asked every question, but most of the questions were asked of all informants.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with 20 teenagers and 20 parents in informants' homes, Chinese churches, a hotel lounge, tea room and a restaurant. The interviews lasted about 40 minutes to an hour. Before each interview, the informant was asked if s/he agreed to the interview being tape-recorded. All interviews, except for two, were recorded. Two mothers did not agree, and detailed notes were taken instead. The notes were typed up immediately after the interviews when the memory was fresh. All transcriptions of interviews were carried out as soon as possible, in order to catch the meaning of both verbal and non-verbal communication. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, including those in Chinese.

3.3 Sample

A sample is a proportion or subset of the population. The method or procedure of selecting a sample to represent the entire population under study is known as sampling (Haber, 1994; Parahoo, 1997). A population means the total number of units, which may be composed of individuals, animals, objects, events, or organisations, from which potential data can be obtained (Haber, 1994; Parahoo, 1997). In relation to this study, the population was defined as British born Chinese teenagers and Chinese born parents. In this section, the criteria for recruiting the informants are examined first, followed by the process of snowball sampling.

3.3.1 Sample criteria

The criteria for selection of the teenagers were:

- Either male or female

- Aged 16 to 19 years old

- Unmarried

- Born in Britain, or moved to Britain before age 5

- With both parents of Chinese origin

- Currently living in Scotland

Boys and girls were included in order to provide an overview from the perspectives of both genders. Research evidence has shown that gender still profoundly shapes teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour (Udry and Billy, 1987; Young et al, 1991; Rudat et al, 1992; Wellings et al, 1994, 2001; Werner-Wilson, 1998; Ip et al, 2001; He et al, 2004). The reason for including teenagers aged 16 to 19 was that 16 is the age of consent to sexual intercourse, but still close to earlier teenage years in order to give the view of a teenager. It was also because 16 is the average age of first intercourse for teenagers in Britain (Wellings et al, 2001). Married teenagers were excluded, but by the age of 19 most teenagers were still unmarried.

The reason for choosing teenagers born in Britain or moved to Britain before age 5 was to consider the British influence. Not excluding teenagers who moved to Britain before age 5 was for practical reasons. Difficulties in recruiting the teenagers were expected. As these teenagers moved to Britain before school age, they were educated in Britain. There might be little difference in the influence of two cultures between these

teenagers. However, the British born Chinese teenagers were a prior choice, but teenagers who moved to Britain before age 5 were not excluded. The purpose of selecting teenagers with both parents of Chinese origin was to consider the influence of Chinese culture from both parents.

The criteria for recruiting parents included those who were born in China and had at least one child meeting the sample criteria. However, as it was much more difficult to recruit parents, a few parents interviewed had children slightly older or younger. One mother had a 21-year-old son; two mothers had daughters almost 16; one father had two sons of 15 and 21.

Theoretically, any teenagers and parents who met the above criteria were prospective informants. These characteristics were selected because they contributed to recruiting the most suitable informants to understand the phenomena under study. The study took place in Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow for practical reasons, although it did not exclude the recruitment of informants from somewhere else in Scotland if there were problems in accessing Chinese families. In the event, all informants interviewed were from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

3.3.2 Snowball sampling

How to approach the Chinese families with British born teenagers in Scotland was a considerable challenge. There were three major difficulties. The first one was the lack of Chinese social network. Pang (2000), a researcher of Chinese origin, but growing up in Britain, had little problem recruiting young Chinese people and parents to take part

in his PhD study. Prior to his study, he had already established a social network with Chinese people in London. More importantly, similar to his informants, he could speak Cantonese and also felt obliged to help out his parents in the catering trade. However, other researchers, for example, Parker (1995), a mixed-descent Chinese-English researcher, and Song (1997a), a Korean-American researcher, experienced difficulties in approaching Chinese families in Britain, who normally refused long and personal interviews.

However, the researcher in this study was born and grew up in Mainland China. She did not know any Chinese people in Britain before coming to the UK for higher education in 2000. She had not established a social network with the local Chinese community when she decided to study British Chinese. Actually, the only Chinese people she knew were a few students in the university.

The second difficulty was due to the sensitive research topic. Sex is always a sensitive topic for people, but especially for Chinese people. It was not possible for the researcher to stop British born Chinese teenagers on the street to ask them to take part, because there were few teenagers with Chinese features on the street. Even if she met one, she had to firstly ask whether s/he was British born Chinese, then explain the research aim, and finally ask him/her to take part. She did not think she could find a single informant this way. Although placing advertisements in Chinese community centres, Chinese schools or Chinese churches might be possible, it was not expected to get a good response.

The last difficulty was the small Chinese population in Scotland. There are about 16 thousand Chinese people in Scotland (Office for National Statistics, 2004e). It was difficult to find Chinese families with British born teenagers in such a small population.

Four types of sampling are frequently used for qualitative research. These are convenience sampling, purposive sampling, theoretical sampling and snowball sampling. Due to the lack of Chinese social network, the sensitive topic of sex and the small Chinese population in Scotland, snowball sampling was considered as the most suitable method of recruiting the informants. Snowball sampling, a strategy frequently used in qualitative research, means that:

"a respondent refers someone they know to the study, who in turn refers someone they know, until the researcher has an adequate sample" (Parahoo, 1997: 234).

Before the formal sampling, some fieldwork was considered in order to establish a relationship with the Chinese community. Ethical approval was applied for from the Departmental Research Ethics Committee in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Stirling. Approval was obtained on 19 May 2003, and a formal letter from the committee is attached (see appendix 2).

The exploratory phase of sampling was conducted before approval by Research Ethics Committee to 'get into the world'. The contacts in this phase included:

1. Chinese associations in Glasgow and Edinburgh
2. Chinese students at Stirling University
3. A Chinese language school in Edinburgh

4. Consulate General of China in Edinburgh

This exploratory phase of sampling was important. The researcher was known as a Chinese student at Stirling University. She started to get familiar with the Chinese communities and had ideas about where and how to recruit her informants. The main phase of sampling was conducted after ethical approval. The contacts were based on the exploratory phase, including:

1. Chinese association in Stirling

2. Chinese students at Stirling University

3. Edinburgh Chinese Women's Group

4. Chinese language schools

5. A Chinese youth counsellor

6. NCH San Jai Chinese Project in Glasgow

7. Chinese churches in Glasgow and Edinburgh

Despite all these difficulties and challenges, through these contacts, 20 teenagers and 20 parents were recruited. The process of the snowball sampling is detailed in appendix 3.

3.4 Issues of data collection

This section discusses issues raised during the data collection. The issues of snowball sampling, the languages of the interviews and ethical issues are addressed in turn.

3.4.1 Issues of snowball sampling

Various sources were contacted in order to recruit the informants (see appendix 3). This section discusses some of the issues raised by using snowball sampling, including negotiation access to the families, establishment of rapport and limitations of using a snowball sample.

The first issue raised during the sampling process was how to negotiate access to the families. Two teenagers took part with both parents, and five with their mothers only. Some teenagers were approached first, but only two were willing to invite their parents to take part when they were asked after the interviews. If the parents were interviewed first, they were also asked to invite their children to take part. None of the parents refused. They either asked their children themselves, or let the researcher invite their children directly if she met the teenagers before. The parent-child pairs are illustrated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The informants in a family

	Introduced by parents	Introduced by teenagers
Teenager-parent pairs (n=2)	2	-
Teenager-mother pairs (n=5)	3	2

The second issue was how to establish rapport. It depended on effective and sufficient time the researcher spent with the communities. For example, the Chinese Association at Stirling was the first Chinese community contacted. Although the researcher joined the lunch gathering for the elderly now and then, she did not establish rapport with

them. All of them spoke Hakka or Cantonese, dialects of Chinese. The grandparents'
generation could speak neither Mandarin nor much English. As a Mandarin (the official
language in Mainland China) speaker, the researcher found it difficult to talk to them.
Without effective conversations, she did not develop a relationship with them. As a
result, she recruited no Chinese families in this group.

Sufficient time together was also important. For example, at least six families met the
criteria in the Edinburgh Women's Group. Only one teenager, but no parent, was
willing to take part, due to the lack of opportunity to develop rapport. Similarly, young
people went to Chinese language schools to learn Chinese once a week. The researcher
was not a Chinese teacher, as were others who studied young Chinese children in
Britain (Wei and Milroy, 1995; Wei, 1996; Raschka et al, 2002). These researchers had
opportunities to know Chinese children. However, the researcher in this study did not
have such opportunities to meet and to spend time with the teenagers. In addition, these
schools closed in summer, the data collection period of the present study.

In contrast, it was less difficult to establish rapport with people in Chinese churches.
The researcher met them through Sunday worship or bible study groups, at least once a
week. Because of the sufficient and effective time together, most of them were willing
to take part or introduce their friends.

The last issue was the limitation of snowball sampling. The researcher tried various
contacts to avoid recruiting people of similar background, the major limitation of using
a snowball sample. However, people in churches were the group most willing to help.
Due to time and resource constraints, as a result half of the teenagers and most parents
were from Chinese churches. As only 21.56% Chinese people in Britain are Christians,

15.12% are Buddhists, and 52.60% do not have a religion (Office for National Statistics, 2004f), the sample was representative only of Christian Chinese. The findings of this study are based on interviews with this particular group, and Chinese people from other groups may have different perspectives on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. This study is a starting point in an unresearched area.

3.4.2 Languages of the interviews

All teenagers were interviewed in English. All parents, except for two, were native Cantonese speakers. The researcher is a Mandarin speaker and was not able to speak Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese. Fortunately, most Cantonese speakers in this study could speak some Mandarin. There was little problem for the informants and researcher to communicate. Before each interview, the parent was asked if s/he preferred to be interviewed in English or Mandarin. The languages used were illustrated in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Languages of interviews with the parents

Native language / Indications / Languages used	Indicated in quotations	Native Mandarin speakers (n=2)	Native Cantonese Speakers (n=18)
Mandarin	*Chinese	2	10
English	*English	-	5
A mixture of Mandarin, Cantonese and English	*English & Chinese	-	3

Some interviews in Chinese were transcribed in Chinese first, and then translated into English. However, the later interviews were translated into English directly from the tapes, as the researcher was more familiar with the data and it avoided the timing consuming process of double transcriptions. These transcripts were not backtranslated, due to time pressure and financial reasons, but a few strategies were used to enhance the reliability of the translation. First, the researcher went back to the informants or people from Chinese communities to clarify some vague comments in the interviews. Second, her principal supervisor checked the transcripts. If any issues were raised, the researcher listened to the tapes again and discussed the issues with her supervisor. Lastly, the researcher encountered some difficulties in translating Chinese into English without changing meanings. In this case, she discussed the translation with her supervisors, other students, Chinese or Scottish friends and her landlady, but confidentiality was maintained.

3.4.3 Ethical issues

The research proposal was approved by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery at Stirling University. General ethical principles in social research were applied. However, this study raised some distinctive and specific ethical issues due to the sensitive topic of sex and the involvement of both teenagers and parents from an ethnic minority group. Issues of informed consent, confidentiality and protection form harm are discussed in turn.

3.4.3.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a key ethical issue. It is important to give the informants as much information as possible, so that they can make a free, independent and informed decision whether or not to take part. It is the researcher's responsibility to make sure such information is accurately and clearly understood (Murphy-Black, 1998). Therefore, in the present study, all information given included both an English version and a Chinese version. The information about the topic of the study, confidentiality, participation involved and questions to be asked was provided. A covering letter (see appendix 4) with information sheet for parents (appendix 5) and for teenagers (see appendix 6), and a response form (see appendix 7) was given to the potential informants. Before the interview, the aim of the study was explained again and the informant was given an opportunity to ask questions. Then a signed consent form (see appendix 8) was obtained from each informant. It was also stated that they had every right to stop the interview if they wished without giving a reason. However, no informants withdrew in the middle of the interview.

As the teenagers involved were over 16 years old, they were treated as adults, not as children. Therefore, they had the right to sign the consent form without the permission of their parents. A consent form for the girl almost 16 was obtained from her mother.

3.4.3.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is another ethical issue. It is the researcher's responsibility to keep the informants anonymous from others. Before and during each interview, anonymity and confidentiality were stressed again. Any data the informants provided were confidential

and nobody except the researcher had access to them. What the teenagers said in the interviews was not disclosed to their parents or friends. Similarly, the information provided by the parents was not repeated to their children, spouses or friends. The informants' real names were not mentioned in any written documents and codes, such as Boy3 and Father2, for the teenagers and parents were used instead. The list of the codes and the informants' real names was hand written and kept in a locked drawer.

The interview tapes and the printouts of the transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet. The transcripts and analysed data were stored in a password protected computer file. The University of Stirling is registered under the Data Protection Act. All the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed on the completion of the thesis.

3.4.3.3 Protection from harm

The issue of protection from harm is also an important ethical principle. It is the researcher's responsibility to make sure that the study should cause the informants no harm. Personal and private issues of sexual values and behaviour were explored in the present study, which meant that strong emotions might accompany the interview process, as experienced by informants in studies of sensitive topics (e.g. Bergen, 1993).

It is morally wrong to explore issues interesting to the researcher, if this exploration upsets informants. The researcher did not explore any issues that the informants were not willing to discuss or felt uncomfortable talking about. For example, during the interview, a 16-year-old girl felt uncomfortable talking about her first sexual experience with her ex-boyfriend at the age of 15. The researcher did not ask further

questions, but changed to another topic, although she was interested to listen to this girl's perspective on her sexual initiation.

The provision of two support workers was considered before the data collection. If an informant felt upset, someone beyond the researcher would be available to provide sufficient support. One support worker was a Chinese researcher from the University of Stirling, and the other was a lecturer in sexual health from the Department of Nursing and Midwifery at the university. Each teenager was given the support sheet with the contact details of the two support workers and Childline before the interview (see appendix 9). The role of two support workers was to provide emotional support. The support workers were there for them to talk to, but none of the teenagers contacted them. The Childline is a free, 24-hour helpline providing counselling service for children and young people in trouble and danger. If the teenagers did not want to talk to a support worker, they might contact the Childline.

3.5 Data analysis

Great quantities of data were collected through ethnographic interviews. The process of qualitative data analysis is 'a long road to travel and there are many way-stations', but there is always something left behind 'as with all journeys' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Making sense of the rich and complex data collected is challenging, time-consuming and expensive (Spradley, 1979; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Laugharne, 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Roper and Shapira, 2000; Bowling, 2002). Rigour and investment of time and energy are required (Roper and Shapira, 2000).

Ethnographic analysis is 'the search for the parts of a culture and their relationships as conceptualised by informants' (Spradley, 1979: 93). The central aim of data analysis in this study is to understand the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and how and why these are influenced by their surrounding culture.

Although there are no hard and fast rules to follow in analysis, there are general guidelines to assist in analysing data (e.g. Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980, 2002; Strauss, 1987; Tesch, 1990; Dey, 1993; Porter, 1996; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Data need to be broken down first in order to categorise them and make connections between them. The following section discusses the method adopted to analyse data. Teenagers' data were analysed first, and the analysis of parents' data followed the same process.

3.5.1 Selecting the interest

The first step of analysis was to find the interest, a piece of data meaningful and suitable for analysis. Having transcribed all the interview tapes herself, listened to the tapes and read each transcript several times, the researcher got an overall idea of her data. After close reading, thinking and judgement, meaningful words, sentences, lines, phases or paragraphs were selected and marked with coloured pens from the printouts for each transcript. These meaningful data were called 'databits' following Dey (1993), which could provide a simple way for readers to understand that databits were a bit of data for analysis. Each databit was given a short name indicating its meaning, such as 'safety of sex', 'knowledge of the consequence' or 'taboo topic'.

3.5.2 Categorising databits

Having divided the data into small databits, the following task was to create a conceptual tool to classify, compare and understand the meanings behind the data. Categories were developed for this purpose. Databits, which were similar to or related to others, were assigned to the same category, and each category expressed a criterion or a set of criteria for distinguishing one from another. Therefore, differences, similarities, connections and contradictions could be searched in categories. For example, databits, 'understanding', 'same age', 'sharing' and 'no criticism' were allocated into the category 'personal relationships' to explain the reasons for communicating with friends about personal relationships. This process of organising databits into appropriate categories can be called categorising (Dey, 1993).

Two important sources were used to create categories. The first one was the prior theoretical assumptions, which helped organise the data and stimulate the process of theoretical thinking (Dey, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Layder, 1998; Patton, 2002). Layder (1998) argues that categories derived from theoretical assumptions are prior to and independent of a specific study, and no researchers enter the research without any theoretical ideas in mind. Using extant concepts is in order to understand how they are manifest and given meaning in a particular group (Patton, 2002). The researcher entered the fieldwork with a set of concepts from the extant theory, and the interview schedules were based on these concepts, such as the influences of family, friends and schools. All interviews were in-depth, and the informants were asked almost the same questions although they were not asked in a rigid way. The questions asked, therefore, were applied as an initial framework to organise and interpret the data,

as well as to develop the theory and concepts from the data. A significant number of categories were derived from the theoretical assumptions, such as 'peer pressure', 'parental sexual attitudes', 'parent-child communication', 'parent-child relationships' and 'sex education'.

Secondly, the researcher kept an open mind to accept any new concepts emerging from the data. It was the other source, the data themselves, that brought the richness for creating categories. Categories, such as 'language barriers', 'family sense' or 'close to Chinese friends' all came out of the data. These categories, either come from theoretical assumptions or from data, reflected the data, and the interpretation of the data were not forced into the extant theory. All these categories were tentative and ready to be modified, redefined or discarded when the analysis continued. They were either split up into a number of subcategories to deal with conditions, interactions or consequences, or spliced to provide a more integrated conceptualisation.

3.5.3 Making connections

Once the data are categorised, they are broken down and the relationships between different parts of them may be lost, for example, how things interact (Dey, 1993). After categorising, the focus of analysis shifted from concentrating on the data in categories to discerning how the categories linked together in order to build up a picture of attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and what factors influenced them.

Data were linked in various ways, such as one category explains, rationalises, supports, opposes or criticises the other. For example, 'physical maturity', 'mental maturity' and 'social maturity' explained the teenagers' interpretations of 'readiness for sex'. Throughout the processes of analysis, some strategies suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) were applied in order to make good sense of the data, such as, noting patterns/themes, seeing plausibility, clustering, counting, making comparisons, splitting, splicing, factoring, making relationships and finding intervening databits/categories.

In addition, the researcher went back to the field notes, which recorded emotions and feelings of the researcher and informants and interaction between them. This reflection helped her to interpret the data. The process of translation, literature and questions being asked in conference also aided her in making sense of the data and stimulating critical thinking. Further, the researcher gave her supervisors a few transcripts and the conceptual maps to discuss and review the potential explanations of the data.

The procedures followed allowed the researcher to check internal validity and to obtain solid interpretations and explanations of the data (see Miles and Huberman, 1994: 278-279). Logical relationships between categories were established by selecting, categorising and connecting data. These relationships provided a framework to the understanding of attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers.

3.5.4 Computer software – NUD*IST 6

NUD*IST 6 (Non-numerical Unstructured Data: Indexing, Searching and Theorising), a computer software qualitative analysis package, was used to assist the analysis. All transcripts were put into NUD*IST.

At this stage, the researcher tried to put the databits and categories into the 'nodes' (same idea as categories, but called nodes in NUD*IST) in NUD*IST. She started to code from the transcripts of each interview. How confused and frustrated she was. It was extremely difficult to manage so many nodes at one time and change from one topic to another. She gave up shortly and deleted all the nodes. NUD*IST did it neatly and quickly without effort. She learned soon that NUD*IST could help her physically, but not intelligently. NUD*IST could not think or analyse data, and she had to give it orders.

It is worth noting the painful analysis process. At that stage, the researcher's mind was full of the informants - like a pot of porridge. During the day, she worked on what they said. At night, she dreamed them. She was deeply immersed in the data, and the informants occupied that period of her life.

The researcher prepared herself to start the painful process again. At this time, answers to certain questions were pulled out, according to the topic of the question being asked. The great help of NUD*IST made this much easier. Six broad topics, which had guided the interviews, were analysed in turn, including:

1. sexual attitudes

2. sexual behaviour

3. influence of family

4. Chinese ethnicity

5. influence of friends

6. influence of sex education at school

Under each topic, similar to the process carried out before, she read through the printouts, marked meaningful databits with coloured pens, and named them. All the names of the databits were also written on paper in order to look for relationships. These databits were allocated into categories, which were also given short names. These names were moved back and forward on paper, modified and redefined by splitting, splicing or discarding. Then themes of each topic appeared. For example, theme of 'the influence of sex education' included 'positive views', 'negative views', 'recommendations' and 'perceived parental views of sex education'.

After this process, a conceptual map was being developed on paper for each topic. It was time to move to the next step – putting the databits into NUD*IST. With the map in front, the names of databits in printouts were ticked when they were put into NUD*IST, so that the databits and their names could be tracked at any time. The researcher preferred to see materials. This also provided a safe guide in case the computer crashed. The databits not fitting into any nodes had been left as free nodes. Some of them went somewhere later on when the analysis progressed. For example, a free node, 'language barriers' created when Chinese ethnicity was analysed was found

as one of the reasons influencing parent-child communication in the later analysis. Each topic was analysed followed the similar process.

Parents' data were entered into NUD*IST and coded followed the same process. The illustration of the node tree is shown in appendix 10, as they were structured in NUD*IST.

3.6 Reflexivity – on being a female Chinese researcher

In qualitative research, the researchers act as a tool of collecting and analysing data, becoming part of the social world they study. Reflexivity is a significant aspect of qualitative research, reflecting on the orientations of researchers shaped by their socio-historical status (Hammerley and Atkinson, 1995). Reflexivity allows a better understanding of the role of the researcher and the impact of the research process on the findings.

The similarity between the researcher and the informants is sharing the Chinese background. However, the researcher, growing up and educated in Mainland China, is a foreign student in Britain, while the informants were British citizens, who were either born in Britain or emigrated from Hong Kong or Mainland China. Nearly all informants spoke Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese, while the researcher speaks Mandarin, the official language in China.

These differences indicated that the researcher was not a pure 'insider', as she and the informants were from different social and cultural environments. As an outsider, the

researcher did not belong to any of the Chinese communities contacted. This might reduce the response bias, as the informants were not worried about their responses being disclosed to their parents, children or friends. The outsider status, together with the rapport developed by spending time together, having a cup of tea/coffee and chatting casually before the interviews, increased the reliability of the data collected. In this case, teenagers from families where sex outside marriage was unacceptable or from religious families were less likely to give culturally acceptable responses.

The researcher knew nothing about the perspectives of the informants on teenage sexual behaviour before the interviews, although she did have some preconceptions about conservative sexual attitudes of teenagers in Mainland China where she was from, and some preconceptions about open attitudes of British teenagers. She was interested in learning from the informants and adopted a non-judgmental or neutral attitude when conducting the interviews. Thus, the impact of her preconceptions was limited. The outside status and the adoption of a neutral attitude promoted the rigour in data collection and analysis.

Sex is regarded as a taboo topic in Chinese culture. However, the researcher did not feel uncomfortable asking questions about the sensitive topic of sex or listening to the informants talking about their perspectives on teenage sexual behaviour, as she considered herself as a researcher with a neutral attitude. Similarly, the teenagers and parents felt comfortable talking about their views on teenage sexual behaviour. The teenagers did not feel they should provide culturally desirable responses because of their Chinese background shared with the researcher, as a boy said: *'If I were at school, I probably would say the same thing.'* The rapport developed with the informants, the

way the questions being asked and the emphasis on confidentiality also increased the reliability of the data collected.

There is no doubt that the Chinese background of the researcher helped her approach the informants and establish rapport. This shared cultural background is highly valued by other researchers, for example, Bowes and Dar (2000), in a study of minority ethnic Pakistani older people in Britain. In the present study, when asked about the reasons for taking part, the informants highlighted:

> *I think it's no problem. It's relatively easy to talk to a Chinese person, because*
> *we have the same culture, the same understanding or similar views.*
> *(Mother4, *Chinese)*

> *Because I thought, you know, being a student, you know, in a foreign country,*
> *they do need help, because also you are Chinese as well. I think that's the*
> *relationship between us. (...) If you were not Chinese, I might not be so, you*
> *know, so willing to help, because I think they would get other people. You see,*
> *because if you are like Scottish, right, I think, it's not I don't want to help. I think,*
> *oh, you know, she would get, you know, a lot of people to do this for her. But*
> *because you are Chinese, I know you are in a foreign country, sometime it's not*
> *easy to get, you know, Chinese people's help.*
> *(Mother16, *English)*

The informants were also sympathetic to the topic of the study. The teenagers wanted their opinions to be heard as British born Chinese. The parents wanted to know more about their teenagers raised in Britain.

> *I think it's good, as you are Chinese. As far as I know, no Chinese have done this kind of project before. So we think it's very special, as you are a Chinese female and are doing this sex related study. It's very special. So I am willing to be interviewed. I think it will help Chinese people somehow, like how to bring up young people.*
>
> *(Mother13, *Chinese)*

The gender of the researcher might have some impact on recruiting fathers. Pang (2000), a male Chinese researcher, also experienced difficulties in recruiting female Chinese informants, who were less willing to discuss their personal lives. In the present study, the researcher had limited opportunities to approach fathers, and none of the mothers introduced their husbands or other fathers. The gender played a role. For example, a father was approached first in a Chinese church. He and his wife agreed to be interviewed. His wife was interviewed first, as he was 'busy' at the first arrangement. At the end of his interview, he said:

> *Mr F told us that a friend needed our Chinese's help for her study. I think it's OK to help her if I can. At the beginning, I felt a little embarrassed when I heard about the topic of sex. My wife has been interviewed already, and it's not embarrassing. It's OK.*
>
> *(Father19, *Chinese)*

It might not be because he was busy at the first time, but because he hesitated due to the gender of the researcher and the research topic. This hesitation also appeared in a boy's report.

> *I might feel uncomfortable when I heard about it, but I guess it's OK, you know. I am OK with it now, you know. It's not that bad after all, you know, get interviewed about these questions. (...) Well, when I read the information at home, you know, once again, I was not sure. But I guess it's OK after all.*
> *(Boy18, aged 16)*

This impact of the researcher's gender reflects findings of Hutchinson et al (2002), where more than a third of young men preferred to be interviewed by male researchers on topics of sex and procreation, as they felt more conformable talking about these sensitive issues to a researcher of the same gender.

However, Boy18 also encouraged his mother to take part. When the researcher was introduced, his mother asked the researcher to call her 'aunt', a Chinese way to address parents' generation. Obviously, the Chinese background of the researcher made this mother consider her as Chinese, rather than as a researcher. These perspectives indicated the impact of the gender and Chinese background of the researcher on approaching the informants.

In summary, there were some similarities and differences between the researcher and the researched. The familiarity of Chinese culture helped her to negotiate access to the

communities, establish rapport, interpret the perspectives of the informants and analyse the data. The distance between them allowed the researcher to interpret, analyse and describe the phenomenon from an outsider's point of view. All the data presented in this thesis have been interpreted in terms of the context in which they were collected and analysed.

3.7 Summary

Through the examination of quantitative and qualitative research, and three frequently used qualitative approaches, an ethnographic approach with origins in anthropology, was considered as an appropriate approach for this study. Culture, naturalism and holism are three significant components of ethnography. It could provide an opportunity to understand people within their social and cultural context. With these characteristics, it was possible to uncover a phenomenon from both emic (inside) and etic (outside) viewpoints, for example, to understand how social and cultural factors influenced attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with 20 British born Chinese teenagers and 20 Chinese born parents. These interviews provided rich qualitative data from informants' point of view. Considering the lack of Chinese social network, the sensitive research topic and the small Chinese population in Scotland, snowball sampling was employed to recruit the informants. By various contacts during the exploratory phase and main phase of sampling, 20 teenagers and 20 parents from Glasgow and Edinburgh were recruited.

The recruitment of both teenager and parents in the same family, involvement of young people and the sensitive research topic of sex had raised a number of practical issues during the data collection process. Through careful planning and considerations, the conflicts and disadvantages were minimised.

By selecting the meaningful bits of data, categorising databits and making connections, attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers were interpreted. Computer software NUD*IST, as a management tool, made the analysis easier. These analysed data are presented in part two, from chapters four to eight, and are discussed in chapter nine.

PART TWO: FINDINGS

Structure of Part two

Thorough descriptions of findings are presented from chapters four to eight, which pick up on emergent themes, followed by discussion in chapter nine and the conclusion in chapter ten. The presentation of these data is not in the exact order of issues discussed in the chapter of literature review, but is organised to address the research questions.

1. What are the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers?
2. How does the family influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
3. How does Chinese ethnicity influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
4. How do friends influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
5. How does sex education at school impact on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?

Chapter four explores question one, focusing on the sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers. Chapter five presents the influence of family to address question two, followed by the influence of Chinese ethnicity in chapter six, addressing question three. Chapter seven focuses on the influence of friends, considering question four. Chapter eight explores question five, dealing with the influence of school sex education. Chapter nine discusses these findings. Chapter ten concludes this thesis, considering contributions, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Conventions and presentation

Before presenting the findings, the informants are introduced and signs used in the quotations are explained. The demographic information about the teenagers is detailed in appendix 11. In total, ten girls and ten boys were interviewed. Ages ranged from 16 to 19, except for one girl, a month away from her 16th birthday at the interview, who was allocated to the age 16 group. The demographic information about the parents is illustrated in appendix 12. Five fathers and fifteen mothers were interviewed, aged from 42 to 55, with the majority in their 40s. Two teenagers took part with both their parents and five with their mothers. Two teenagers were brothers, and two were brother and sister. They were all interviewed separately.

The informants were identified individually. The teenagers were numbered from 1 to 20, according to gender and the interview order, as were the parents. The identity and the age of each teenager are given at the end of each quotation. For example, '(Girl1, aged 18)' means the first teenager interviewed, an 18-year-old female. The identity of each parent and the languages used are indicated after each quotation. '(Mother20, *English)' means the 20th parent interviewed, a female, interviewed in English. Other signs in the quotations include:

- JY: the researcher
- ...: pause by the informant
- (...): an edit by the researcher
- < >: informant's action
- [ ]: explanation by the researcher

CHAPTER 4: SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

In the literature, 'teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour' mean more 'having sex' than the meaning and context of sexual behaviour and reasons for having sex or not. This chapter presents a comprehensive picture of sexual attitudes and behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers, focusing on the teenagers' perceptions about the context of their sexual behaviour.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first presents various views of teenage sexual behaviour. Two opposite views, conservative and permissive views, are illustrated first. Then the perspectives on readiness for sex are presented. These teenagers considered physical, mental and social readiness important. Following this, their tolerance of teenage sex is discussed. Lastly, gender differences in attitudes towards sexual behaviour are addressed.

The second section deals with sexual behaviour of the teenagers. First, the experience of the teenagers who had sex is reported. As few teenagers had sex and a few had girl/boyfriends, the second part of this section explores the teenagers' expectations of having a relationship. Lastly, the reasons for not having sex are presented.

4.1 Sexual attitudes

This section concentrates on the sexual attitudes of the teenagers. Conservative views, permissive views, readiness for sex, tolerance of teenage sex and gender differences are addressed in turn.

4.1.1 Conservative views

A relatively conservative view of teenage sexual activity was repeatedly expressed. The teenagers with this view believed that sex was not for fun or something one should do in teenage years. Sex was something special and related to love, trust, commitment and/or marriage. For these teenagers, sex was acceptable only when the individual found the right person, and at least intended to get married.

> *JY: What do you think about teenage sex?*
>
> *Just teenage sex? Well, I think if you've found the right person, then I could understand you have sex with them and if they think they'll spend the rest of their life with them. But, because I mean I am quite religious, I won't say I am the most religious person in the world, I would say I wouldn't go having sex until I am sure I've met the right guy or until I am married or whatever, you know.*
> *(Girl17, aged 19)*

For this girl, sex was a commitment and should happen within a lasting relationship. It was evident that religion had some impact on her sexual values, something which was also reported by others.

> *Well, for me, I think as a Christian, I should follow the Christian rules. I'll*
> *probably have to wait for marriage first.*
> *(Boy15, aged 16)*

> *I guess being a Christian, you are kind of brought up no sex before marriage. So*
> *I guess those kind of values pass on to me as well. I kind of think that in the ways*
> *of things that can happen, that sex maybe should be behind marriage.*
> *(Boy4, aged 18)*

These teenagers indicated the influence of religious beliefs on their way of thinking about sex and marriage. Strong disapproval of teenage sex was also expressed, without emphasis on religious values.

> *I haven't really been thinking about it actually. I think it's right to have sex after*
> *marriage rather than have it at a very young age, because when you are young,*
> *you don't really have a great responsibility, because you don't have a proper... I*
> *think when you are younger, you don't have many, many choices. When you are*
> *older, you have many, much more choices because you've got a job and you've*
> *got more, you are more reliable.*
> *(Boy9, aged 17)*

Although this boy indicated that he had not been thinking about the issue of teenage sex, he highlighted the disadvantages of having sex at a young age. Sex was something to do with responsibility, which increased with age. He felt that age, jobs or reliability were all related to the possibility and consequences of having sex.

Subgroup differences in sexual attitudes have been reported in the literature (Meston et al, 1998; Villarruel, 1998). This is also the case among British born Chinese teenagers.

4.1.2 Permissive views

Contrary to the conservative views, exceptionally, the teenagers reported their permissive views of sex. Although none of the teenagers approved of casual sex or a one-night stand, teenage sex was not unacceptable, as long as the safety was considered.

> *To me I think it's fine if you do it. I don't think it's a big deal as long as you know, as you know what is happening, and what is your plan, and all the stuff you need to use, safety (...). Apart from that, I think it's OK for teenagers to have sex. (Boy7, aged 19)*

Safety was not the only issue considered by the teenagers with open views. Having sex within a steady relationship was also essential, as indicated by the following.

> *OK, as long as it's safe. It depends on the people involved. Like if they are just, just doing it, for the sake of doing it, then that's not really proper. But see you are*

boyfriend and girlfriend for, like ten years, and then later on you get married.

Then, like, that's not wrong, or, like, you are serious.

(Boy3, aged 19)

Safety and having sex within a relationship were two main concerns for this boy. In addition, the awareness of responsibility of having sex was apparent, as a 16-year-old boy explained:

I think it's perfectly normal, but it is also better to, like to take precautions, like contraception and stuff, because we are not exactly old enough to cope such a large responsibility, like babies and stuff.

(Boy5, aged 16)

The teenagers believed that they were not old enough to take the responsibility of looking after babies and highlighted the need to take precautions.

Sex was also acceptable to the girls, but they were more concerned about the legal age for sex. 'It sounds better' to have sex when they passed th-at age, as a girl reported:

I think 16 is OK, because like, I don't think everybody is going to start going out and having sex when they hit 16. Usually it would be like a year or two years later, when they are 18 or something. You know, but it gives them, like, at that time, I think if you say 16 to them, I think they would have in mind, like, you know, because they know I am 16, then they might just start thinking about things like that. They have more time to think about it until they are ready for something

like that. I think it's good to have a limit because you won't want to see kids being

pregnant or anything at 13 or 14, oh, my God, you know. If you pass that age,

like that age limit, you know, then you would think it sounds better to have, like,

you know, you pass that age, then it's legal. If you know what I mean, it sounds

better...sounds better.

(Girl1, aged 18)

The legal age for sex had some restriction on the teenagers. In addition, readiness for

sex was also the concern of this girl. None of the teenagers reported that young people

were ready for sex before age 16. However, what did readiness mean to the teenagers?

The following section discusses this issue.

4.1.3 Readiness for sex

The teenagers provided diverse interpretations of readiness for sex. Three main themes

appeared, including physical, mental and social readiness.

4.1.3.1 Physical readiness

Sex is the intimate contact of two bodies. It is not until puberty that teenagers are

generally physically mature to have sexual relationships. Although it was not the first

thing that occurred to the teenagers when talking about their views of sex, physical

maturity was mentioned as in the following.

JY: Some people consider that there is an age, below which young people should not start having sex. What do you think?

That's correct. You don't like, you have to go for puberty and need to finish it off. If you have sex too early, like, it interferes with your body functions for the rest of your life. You should wait for when you are a proper adult. Like for some people that's different, because like, some people finish puberty early, and some people start it late. It depends on their body. It's not an age, it's different for people, and like that, and then it's different for different races. I'm sure that some people, some races like, develop quicker than others.

(Boy3, aged 19)

This boy was concerned about the negative effects of having sex too young. He believed that the readiness for sex was not related to age, but to levels of body development, which was different according to races. The negative effect of having sex before puberty has been widely recognised. There are individual differences in the onset, duration and speed of pubertal development. One teenager may have completed the process at an age when another has not even started (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993; Hendry, 1996; Coleman and Hendry, 1999). Boy3 highlighted biological influence on teenage sexual behaviour. However, human sexual behaviour is controlled by social factors. In addition to physical maturity, the teenagers felt that mental maturity was important as well.

4.1.3.2 Mental readiness

It was the mental maturity that was the major concern of the teenagers. They reported that young people should not be rushing into having sex until they were ready for it.

What do I think? Well, I don't know. I think, I think only, only do it if you are really ready. Don't really rush into anything, and make sure you use protection, use contraception, and you know, if anything does go wrong, speak to someone about it. Make sure you can actually go to someone.
(Girl11, aged 16)

In this case, the meaning of readiness was the willingness, protection and available support. Asked to explain further the meaning of readiness, this girl replied:

Ready? Mentally, mentally, if you feel that you are willing to do this with this person, because you actually do like them, and not because you want to try it, or you want to do it because your friends are doing it, because I think these are quite wrong reasons. I think actually you do it if, you know, you feel you are ready to do it.
(Girl11, aged 16)

Knowledge about protection was strongly suggested. The teenagers believed that if they decided to have sex, they should be mature enough to know the implications of having a sexual relationship, what could happen after sex and, more importantly, how

they should protect themselves. A 19-year-old boy considered 18 as an acceptable age, and explained the reasons as follows:

> *I think 16, 17, I don't say they will, but for the possibility to tend to have accidents, or, or to have like, to do what they do, or less education, or less knowledge to use contraception. I think that would be more problems. Also, but I mean, what I'm saying is 18, but some people, some parents want their son to have a baby, like their grandson, when they are 16. So different people have different thinking. I think if you ask me personally, I'd say 18. The reason is that I think it would be more responsibility, more likely to take care what's happening, You also have the knowledge what you should use and what you shouldn't use.*
> *(Boy7, aged 19)*

Knowledge about contraception, safety of sex, and responsibility were related to an older age. Mental maturity was also related to the ability to handle the responsibility of sexual relationships. The teenagers felt that they were less likely to take care about what might happen when young, such as pregnancies or babies. A 17-year-old boy, who believed that 19 was probably the right age, reported:

> *I am against it as well. I think you should have sex, like, at a very late age, like, you've got a bit more, you are a bit more responsible and you know what to do in a right time.*
> *(Boy9, aged 17)*

Mental readiness also referred to the ability to make the right decision to have sex for love, but not due to peer pressure. The teenagers felt that they should not rush into having sex because of the pressure from their sexually active friends, as Girl11 reported.

> *I think it's more, more based on how the individual feels. How they feel with their, their boyfriends or girlfriends, and how they feel if they feel comfortable or not, and if they are mature enough to handle the situation, because I know, I know a few people that sort of rush into it without knowing what they are doing. And I am pretty sure that, you know, they regret (...). I am sure if they waited, like, even a year later, they would feel completely different about it. So I think a lot of us to do with, you know, pressure from your friends, from other people at your age. (Girl11, aged 16)*

The teenagers noted that the younger they were, the less capable they were of making the right decision, because they were not mature enough to understand the possible consequences. Having sex at a later age or after marriage reduced the likelihood of regret, as indicted by Girl12.

> *Well, 20 I would say, I don't think anyone should have sex before they actually get married. But definitely, like, people younger than 20 should not have sex. They are not mature. They wouldn't understand, like, they probably wouldn't, like, understand the circumstances, like, what happens. And then they are not quite mature enough to, like, look after themselves, and they probably do*

something that they regret. They probably do something that they regret. Like,

they would do it by influence. Oh, why did I do it? She would be stupid.

(Girl12, aged 16)

These teenagers considered that age, knowledge of sex, willingness to have sex, ability

to resist peer pressure, and responsibility were all associated with mental readiness for

sex. They believed that teenagers were less likely to make a right decision and

understand the reasons for and the consequences of having sex. Mental readiness

referred to the responsibility for the decision they made – having sex with the right

person at the right time. In addition, social readiness was another concern of the

teenagers.

4.1.3.3 Social readiness

The teenagers considered that young people should not have sex until socially ready.

This readiness would not be reached until their twenties when they finished education

and found a proper job to support themselves, as reported by the following girls.

Yeah, when you finish your school and it's not much to worry about, and well, it

really depends if you are lucky or not to have a boyfriend <laugh>, but because

it comes, it comes really. But I think twenties about twentyish, is about a right

time.

(Girl14, aged 17)

I think the law right now, if you're 16, you can get married, like a family of your

own. But I think that's way too young. I would think when about...20 or above, I

think. Because you've got, because you pass high school, and it also depends on if

you are going into university or college, or if you just start working, such as my

age. (...) If people start working, then yeah, they could support themselves. But if

people want to go to university or college, they won't be thinking about this.

(Girl8, aged 16)

The major concern of these girls was the need for social maturity before having sex.
The teenagers understood that diseases, pregnancies and babies could all happen as a
result of sexual engagement. They felt that they were not capable of looking after
babies.

I think it's too young. Some people might think it's like fun, but I don't think it's

fun because you could get a lot damage. Their family will be worried about them,

you know, because if they test they are actually pregnant, then the whole school

life has gone. They have to leave school, and it's really early to be doing now,

and then you have to bring up the baby and you know, and things like that.

(Girl8, aged 16)

A 16-year-old boy showed sympathy for his friend, a teenage mother, who left school
to look after her baby.

I have a friend. She is 16. She is already, like, pregnant, had a child, got married.

I just find that's young, that's young. I don't think she should be doing a lot of

stuff. (...) I think they threw away their lives. Basically, if you have a child, she's got a child, and like basically she is good at school. (...) She has to look after her child. I just find it's wasting of life basically.
(Boy15, aged 16)

Education was considered important for these teenagers. Sex was related to the risk of getting pregnant and leaving school; therefore, they did not feel that they were socially ready for sex.

Thus, to summarise, the teenagers presented their views on readiness for sex. Three major themes regarding this readiness were presented. It was not until puberty that functional adult sexual anatomy and physiology were established, and teenagers were physically ready for sexual relationships. However, they were more concerned about mental and social readiness, something that they thought were hardly achieved at a young age.

4.1.4 Tolerance of teenage sex

The teenagers considered that they were not ready for sex and were restrained in their own sexual behaviour. However, when they talked about teenage sex in general, their tolerance was apparent. They were not against teenagers or even their friends having sex.

They shouldn't do it, well, they shouldn't do it at all unless they are married, I

think. But it doesn't bother me if they do it, because it doesn't really affect me at

all.

(Boy19, aged 16)

I think it's OK for teenagers to have sex, but for my own religion, for my own

thinking, I think it's wrong anyway. Unless you are married, or you are engaged,

apart from that, I don't see why you have to do it. But I understand other people's

culture. They thought it's open, it's fun, it's an enjoyment, it's a part of activity. I

find I understand that. I can change anyway.

(Boy7, aged 19)

These teenagers did not expect other teenagers to share the same values, and showed

their understanding of different sexual values. They said that what people were doing

did not matter or affect their own lives. However, when their friends were involved in

sex, the teenagers might do something for them. For example, a 16-year-old girl

thought she was too young to have a boyfriend or have sex, giving advice to her

sexually active friends or those who intended to have sex.

Oh, I don't, it's up to them, I think, because it's their life. I don't have to say that,

but I give them advice. Like, I say make sure he's the right guy, contraception,

and don't go rushing into things, because it's a big thing.

(Girl2, aged 16)

This girl did not interfere in her friends' sexual behaviour, but respected their choice. The suggestion she gave to her friends might help them to think if they were having sex with the right person, at the right time and in the right way.

The teenagers consistently expressed their tolerance of teenage sex. The mainstream culture could partly explain this tolerance, as indicated by a 19-year-old girl.

Teenage sex? I don't know. Personally, I am against it. I think that sex should be left until after marriage. But I think I can understand why so many people are wanting it because just now, because I think the culture just now, especially in the UK it's really, yeah, they, you know, they're actually, I think some are encouraging, encouraging, like you know, sex before marriage. I don't think they are bothered about it because I think probably sex after marriage is about kind of like a Christian thing. So it's really opinionated.
(Girl20, aged 19)

This girl stressed the Christian values regarding sex and the influence of society on teenagers. The teenagers felt that they could not stop others doing things against their beliefs, but accepted it, as sex was everywhere and people started having sex at a very young age. For example, a boy believed 'no sex before marriage', reporting:

People do it anyway, and I just, you know, accept what they are doing. We can't, like, stop them from doing it anyway. We can, but you just, I just, you know, put in a word, but if they still do it, they do it.
(Boy19, aged 16)

In summary, the teenagers felt they were not ready for sex and preferred to wait until after marriage, but they were tolerant of others having sex. Not only the difference in sexual values between themselves and others, but also gender differences were highlighted.

4.1.5 Gender differences

The teenagers showed gender differences in attitudes towards sexual behaviour. In this section, double standards of the boys and girls regarding sexual behaviour are explored first. Then perspectives of the boys and girls are presented in turn.

4.1.5.1 Double standards

Double standards toward sexual behaviour were still rooted in teenage culture. The girls and boys described different perspectives of sex. The girls used 'a good thing', 'nothing wrong', 'cool', 'boast', 'show off' or 'honour' when talking about boys who had sex. However, the girls described sexually active girls as 'contaminated' or 'not good'. Girl11 gave a typical explanation for this phenomenon.

> *I mean if you are a girl, all right, and if you have sex with someone, and that guy left all right, then another guy who comes along, knows that you had sex before. They would think like, oh, contaminated, you are contaminated <laugh>. (...) But guys, it's just like, oh, I sleep with this girl. I've done this and that. And they think*

it's a good thing, you know. They think it's like, oh, I am cool, I have most girls,

you know that. I think, you know, that is the impression that I get from them.

(Girl1, aged 18)

This girl implied that she got the impression of double standards from boys she knew.
On the contrary, a 19-year-old girl indicated double standards of society.

I think it's different. I think just back to the culture, I think men get away with sex

more than women can because if men have more sex a lot, it's kind of, they don't

think something that's, in the majority people think that men have sex a lot, often,

they boast about it. There's nothing wrong with it. They think it's a good thing.

But whereas if it's a woman boasts about it, say, have sex a lot. It's different. They

think that she is, you know, it's not good. Their image is, their image is not that

good either. I think it's just different perspective probably.

(Girl20, aged 19)

The boys also implied these gender differences. They reported that girls had to worry
about pregnancy, but boys worried little about this; their concern was with sexually
transmitted diseases.

Yeah. I think it's obviously less repercussion if you're a boy, because if they go

out and have sex and apart from the STD side, apart from that, there is nothing

much wrong that can happen. But if you are a girl and you go out and have sex,

you can get pregnant. So, it would be different for a boy and a girl.

(Boy4, aged 18)

Similarly, another boy mentioned this disadvantage for girls, and his suggestion was that advice about contraception should concentrate on girls.

> *I think the advantage for girls, for women, as far as I am concerned, is that they can enjoy more. I think for a baby, I think there is a disadvantage for girls if they do get pregnant, at the end of the day they have, like, 9-month period of being pregnant to give birth, and tend to, men just like walk away from them. I think it's quite a big disadvantage for women. I think contraception should be concentrating on women's rather on men, like the Pills, you know that, because I do agree with that statement it is a great disadvantage for women to have sex. (Boy7, aged 19)*

It takes two people to have sex. According to this boy, it was girls' responsibility for contraception, and boys seemed unwilling to take this responsibility. The boys considered that girls had more disadvantages; on the other hand, the girls believed that boys had more advantages. The following sections discuss these issues.

4.1.5.2 Boys

The boys were proud of their sexual bodies. They considered that they had more physical and psychological advantages in sex. Physically, they believed that it was easy for boys to be satisfied and have more pleasure.

Of course, because guys' job and girls' job are different, and for the guy to be

happy having sex, he doesn't need to try anything, but a lot of times the partner is

not happy, because like, they need to be harder to satisfy them.

(Boy3, aged 19)

The boys assumed that they thought about sex more than girls and were more sexually active.

Yeah. Probably boys are more sexually active than girls, but I am not really sure

about girls, but you see, that's just my ideas.

(Boy5, aged 16)

Boys think about sex a lot more than girls. Girls think about shopping and clothes

or something. Boys think about sex. But there is a statistics saying that you think

about sex every, every second of a day most of them, but I think it's not true.

(Boy19, aged 16)

Unlike the boys, the girls considered that it was not shopping and clothes that they thought about more, but their future. For example, a 16-year-old girl, who considered that boys were less mature and wanted to have sex more, implied the importance of the girls' future.

I think girls are more mature than boys, mature, and most of the boys in this

world would want to do it. Only about a quarter or half of the girls in this world

just, maybe want to do it. Obviously, you have to think about your future life for

girls.

(Girl8, aged 16)

Psychologically, the boys believed they were in the dominant position. They argued that it was hard for girls to say no to boys, because of the fears of stopping the relationship, peer pressure or curiosity.

I think it's true because the girl doesn't want to give up the relationship with the

person that they might think he is the one. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, but

the guy could be, just want to have that fun, just want to have that experience.

(Boy6, aged 19)

In this case, girls were perceived as unable to refuse to have sex, because they wanted to keep the relationship going and did not want to let boys down or made them unhappy.

Yeah, I think it's hard for a girl to say no because maybe the guy thinks it's the

right time probably. And if the girl says no, it'll probably, probably break down

the relationship, the boy and the girl, because the boy thinks it's the right time,

but the girl doesn't think it's the right time. I think again the pressure is on girl

because, because if that happens, maybe the relationship could break.

(Boy9, aged 17)

From the boys' point of view, they wanted to have sex, because they thought it was the right time, but girls thought it could be the right boy, but not the right time. In other words, girls were not ready for sex, but they might give in to boys in order to preserve the relationship.

In addition, peer pressure and curiosity stopped girls saying no, according to a boy's report.

Boys always actually say something, like, you don't love me, or you don't like me, or say something. There are a bunch of friends, or someone, oh, I had sex, or I haven't had sex. They feel pressure, also pass the issue. Feel pressure or boyfriends what they say, or curiosity, you know that.
(Boy7, aged 19)

Asked who felt the pressure, he replied:

The girls, the friends she's going out. If a group of five girls, if four had sex and talked about it, and the girl who hasn't had sex, she would find it very curious. She'll get peer pressure, and she'll go out and try, you know that.
(Boy7, aged 19)

For this boy, girls wanted to have sex because of curiosity, but not because of pressure from boys. Later in the interview, this boy acknowledged that boys often insisted on sex, and provoked and encouraged girls to have sex. However, he highlighted that girls should say no, rather than boys say no to girls.

However, girls' voices demonstrated different stories. The following section discusses what girls considered about sex.

4.1.5.3 Girls

Like the boys, the girls themselves reported that they had more disadvantages. The boys were worried more about catching diseases, such as AIDS or HIV, but less about getting girls pregnant, because 'they are boys'. The girls understood their situation better than boys. Pregnancy was the first thing that they were worried about.

> *JY: Some people believe that sex is different for boys and girls. What do you think?*

> *...The consequences will be a lot different because pregnancy, diseases and stuff, but diseases, boys will get them as well, but because the first thing is worrying about pregnancy. Like, if they are pregnant, and if they want to make an abort, you know that. If they're boys, they are kind of, kind of free, you know, ...and they won't worry about these things because they are boys.*
> *(Girl8, aged 16)*

The girls indicated that they had to be more careful because they didn't want to 'lose out' and end up pregnant. Because of these disadvantages, when asked whether they thought it hard for a girl to say no, the girls noted that they could and had to say no.

I don't know. Nobody asked me that before <laugh>. So I don't know. Probably it

would be harder, but they would say it if it's for their safety. It would be, I mean it

would be harder to say no to them, but we have to say it.

(Girl12, aged 16)

I don't think it's hard because if you don't want to do, you just say no. I'm not

sure. I haven't been really in this circumstance yet.

(Girl13, aged 16)

It was unclear if it would be hard for the girls who had been asked, as none of the girls

implied that they had experienced the situation. In the study of Martin (1996), sexually

experienced girls expressed their feelings of pressure from boys. The girls, as indicated

by boys in the present study, gave in to boys to have sex because they were afraid of

losing their boyfriends.

The girls repeatedly reported that they were aware of the potential pressure from boys.

They noted that putting pressure on girls meant that boys wanted to have sex to show

off, but not for love. In this circumstance, the girls expressed confidently that they

should refuse to have sex.

Personally, I don't think it's hard if you really don't want to have sex. If you

maybe like, you wouldn't mind having sex or anything, I mean boys are very

persuasive of everything, and you know. (...) Because boys can, like, you know,

can push you to, like giving you stories, you know, if you don't do it, you are blah,

blah, or whatever. (...) But that would just mean they don't actually, the boy

doesn't actually love her, you know. He just wants to do it, just to say to his

friends whatever. He's got like a reason for doing it.

(Girl17, aged 19)

Exceptionally, the girls did not think that boys always pushed girls to have sex. For example, Girl1 reported:

When you are ready, and girls just take as much time as they need. That guy

won't wait then. That guy will shut the door. You are not worth it. You kick back

the door. You know what I mean. But, I mean if you say no, but a guy keeps

pressing you, that's a rare view, you know what I mean. I think, if you say no, I

think it's quite easy to say no to a guy, not unless you want to do it, that's what, if

you want to do it, then it's quite straightforward to say yes.

(Girl1, aged 18)

This girl considered it not common for boys to keep pressurising, as boys would either wait until girls were ready, or break up the relationship. The girls also indicated boys' patience as a test of their love. It might mean true love if boys would wait. If not, the girls believed that it was not worth having sex to keep such a relationship, as boys were using them. They highlighted that women were more capable of saying no and less likely to submit to men nowadays, as noted by Girl20.

I think again women these days are getting more independent, they are more

standing up for themselves, so they probably would reject them more maybe. Not

it's just like, because like in traditional days, like the old days, probably women

are, like, submissive to men, but I don't think it's that much any more.

(Girl20, aged 19)

The teenagers showed gender inequality regarding responsibility for pregnancy and

sexually transmitted diseases. The girls emphasised the responsibility of boys in sexual

relationships.

I guess they have to worry about pregnancy and STDs and everything, but it's

like, they shouldn't be the ones, like, just have to worry about because it's like, it's

not their fault, it's not like a fault or anything. But it's part of guys' responsibility

too, if the woman becomes pregnant or it's his responsibility too if she catch STD

from him.

(Girl17, aged 19)

In summary, the teenagers highlighted gender differences in attitudes towards sexual

behaviour. The boys believed that they had more physical and psychological

advantages in sex, and that girls had more disadvantages and should be more

responsible for sex. The girls were also aware of their disadvantages and considered

entering sexual relationships carefully. In addition, the girls believed that women were

standing up for themselves and refusing unwanted sex.

4.2 Sexual behaviour

This section presents the self-reported sexual behaviour of the teenagers. The experience of the teenagers who had sex, the expectations of having girl/boyfriends and the reasons for not having sex are explored in turn.

4.2.1 Experience of having sex

Of the twenty teenagers, three boys and two girls currently had girl/boyfriends. All of their friends were of Chinese origin, except for one girl who had a Scottish boyfriend. They met their friends at family events, work place, Chinese school or church.

None of the ten boys had had sex, but two girls had. One had sex with her current boyfriend and the other with her ex-boyfriend. Neither of them felt regret or pressure from their boyfriends or peer group. Girl1, who lost her virginity to her current boyfriend at age 17, expressed her feelings this way.

I think it was because I was ready and, like, I wasn't too sure. You know, it's like, I mean that it's because I was thinking about it when we never went out, I was thinking if I wanted to sleep with this guy. And then afterwards, he actually asked me out. And that's like, oh, well, he's going to be the guy anyway. It's like, why not. It's kind of like yeah, and then it's like, yeah, I think it's because at the time, I really, I really, really like him a lot. And it's like, oh, he is not that bad looking. It doesn't matter. At least I can tell my friends that my first time was a nice guy, you know. Even though afterwards he just split up, at least, you know, I would think,

oh, I've met a nice guy at first time. So, that's why I didn't mind. I think I was

ready at first time.

(Girl1, aged 18)

This girl indicated that she was ready for sex at the beginning and end of the extract; however, her uncertainty was apparent. She noted 'I was thinking about it when we…' in order to convince herself, her friends or maybe the researcher as well, that she wanted to have sex. While 'I wasn't too sure', 'it's like why not', 'it doesn't matter' and 'I didn't mind' all suggested a degree of uncertainty and a sense that she thought it was no big deal.

Girl11, who had sex with her ex-boyfriend at age 15, reported the similar experience.

I felt I was ready, but I don't know. Well, maybe other people say that I wasn't

ready, but I always, always see myself as being a lot more mature than I should

be. I think a lot more different than other people, and I do a lot, like, I don't do

things that people at my age do, if you know what I mean. I thought I was ready.

(Girl11, aged 16)

Like Girl1, she expressed her readiness for sex at the beginning and end of the extract. 'But I don't know. Well, maybe other people say…' implied that she was a little uncertain and saw sex as a complex issue with a range of possible views. Earlier in the interview, she showed the similar view when talking about the acceptable age for sex.

What do I think? I don't know. I think to me at the moment, a lot of time I think

the age is just a number. It doesn't really, you know, say, you know, if you are

mature enough to do something, or if you think the right way, or if you're

mentally, you know, mature enough. So I think, I think at the moment 16 is the

legal age to have sex, I think. I think that's OK. I mean around about 15, 16,

that's a time that a lot of people start going out anyway. (...) The legal age is 16,

but at the end, I still feel it's, it's more to do with individual rather than to do with

the age, or whatever.

(Girl11, aged 16)

Here, her uncertainty was implicit - 'I don't know' and 'it doesn't really, you know...'

She was trying to persuade herself that having sex around age 15 was acceptable,

because young people were doing it anyway, and the maturity of individuals varied. On

the one hand, she thought she was ready for sex at age 15, because age was just a

number and she was more mature for her age. On the other hand, she recognised that 15

was not a legal age for sex and other people might not accept her behaviour.

Martin (1996) reported that girls had sex in order to keep their ideal love and felt closer

to their boyfriends after having sex. However, neither Girl1, nor Girl11, said that they

were in love when they had sex. Girl1 used three "reallys" - 'I really, really, really like

him a lot', instead of saying that she loved him. Moreover, neither of them felt that sex

made the relationship different.

I think we're just still as close as when we first met, apart from that we know each

other's bad sides <laugh>. We don't really fight that much. We just argue about

stupid things. It's like he always, he always ties me down or anything. It's like not

physically, all right, just like mentally, all right. He always like, say where you've

been, you know that, and who you've been going with, you know that. You're like

my mum. That's what we argued about last night. I said I was only two hours late

<laugh>. He goes like, I am worried about you. Then I say that's fine. That's

enough. I know what to do. I can take care of myself. Then he goes like, I was

worried about you. Oh, shut up!

(Girl1, aged 18)

No, <laugh> I just felt the same. I don't, I don't think he let me feel any different.

(Girl11, aged 16)

No matter how ready these girls thought they were, these data suggested that they were

uncertain about their sexual experience although they made a choice. Sex did not bring

them any closer to their boyfriends.

4.2.2 Expectations of having girl/boyfriends

Five teenagers had a girl/boyfriend, and those without one were asked about their

expectations of having one. The teenagers repeatedly noted that they did not want to

have one at the moment. Exceptionally, they wanted to have an intimate relationship.

I guess somebody to be close with and talk about quite a lot, and I guess to be

intimate as well.

(Boy10, aged 18)

This boy indicated that talking or having a close friend was what he wanted from a relationship. In addition, peer norms had some impact on boys' intention of making girlfriends. A 17-year-old boy wanted to have a girlfriend because the majority of his friends had one.

> *I think it's, ... suppose most of my friends have got one <laugh>. I wouldn't*
> *mind, like experience myself, like, just to see what it's like.*
> *(Boy9, aged 17)*

The girls did not speak as straightforwardly as the boys, although they might want to have a boyfriend.

> *If the right person came along, yes. It depends on the right person and the timing*
> *as well.*
> *(Girl17, aged 19)*

> *Just now? I am not bothered. I think I am quite happy with things I've got. I mean*
> *I am still young. So I think I've got plenty of chances of having one. So I am not, I*
> *don't think about it all the time. In fact I don't really think about it that much. So I*
> *don't think it's something I should worry about just now anyway. So not, I don't*
> *really, not, I am not saying I really want one just now.*
> *(Girl20, aged 19)*

In these cases, the girls were more concerned about the ideal love – waiting for the right person appearing at the right time. They thought that they were still young and had plenty of opportunities; however, they also expressed their contradictory feelings. As noted by Girl20, for example, 'I don't think about it all the time. In fact I don't really think about it that much', implied that she did not mind having a boyfriend. Another girl's report may partly explain why girls were uncertain and unsure about having a boyfriend.

> *It doesn't bother me, if one comes along, one comes along. But I'm not like I have to have a boyfriend to live with. I think it's better being single because like there is no point to have a boyfriend now, when you know it's not going to last. It's, I like having friends...of boys because you can have fun with them. But I don't like having relationships with them because you have to commit to them, and I think, I think I am too young to commit at this age. It's not worth it at the end.*
> *(Girl2, aged 16)*

This girl indicated she liked boys' company, as she could have fun with them; however, she was not actively looking for a boyfriend just now because she thought the relationship was not going to last. The lack of confidence in relationships might have prevented these girls from speaking out about what they wanted. The boys did express reluctance to commit in their teenage years. For example, a 19-year-old boy described girls as a 'bother'.

> *No, not right now, because girls are quite a lot bother. They don't like you, for a lot of people, you have to call them, like, every so often, or they call you quite a*

lot. Then you need to spend time with them, rather than concentrate on other

things. I am not interested in it right now. Like, rather hanging about my friends,

or like concentrating on a few of my hobbies, and getting things done. Like it has

to be finished off, or so like just not enough time.
(Boy3, aged 19)

This boy complained about the amount of time that boys had to spend with their

girlfriends. Boys' unwillingness to commit may be the concern of many girls.

However, it might be education that was the major concern of many teenagers. A

common reason for not having a girl/boyfriend was that they wanted to concentrate on

study to get into university first.

Not really just now because I try to concentrate on school. Like, when I was

younger, then yes. But now I try to concentrate. I am still young. I still get lots of

time <laugh>.
(Girl14, aged 17)

I have thought about it. ... Yes or no? But my answer is probably no, because

study hard to get into university first. So I won't be thinking about these things.
(Girl8, aged 16)

These girls considered that they were too young to think about having a boyfriend

because of the worry of their education. A 16-year-old boy reported relationships and

education in a typical way.

I am just, you know, I am a bit burdened at school things. So it's not, I am a bit,

like, worried about education, college and stuff. So it's not really important to me

just now. Well, I had a relationship before, but it's just, you know, I am just

concentrating on this part of my life just now. (...) It's not important just now

because I've got the rest of my life to like, go over there, but it's education, then

you don't really have it, you know. Oh, I would get a job first, get a job first, and

then you go for it because girls want money. They want money first, then they go

shopping, clothes, shoes and make-up.

(Boy19, aged 16)

This boy noted that the most important thing at this stage was education, not a

relationship. He felt that it was education that he had to concentrate on at the moment,

whereas he had the rest of his life to pursue a relationship. Similarly, Girl11 described

her experience of education and her ex-boyfriend.

Why? I want to concentrate on my exams, studies, because I think to me, like, my

education is a lot more important than that to him. For me I don't, I don't think he

kind of thought in the same way. He didn't go to the same school as me. (...) But I

think we both had different, kind of different aims, different goals. So that was

probably why, also because I have pressure from home to do well. I just feel like I

have a lot to do because I couldn't concentrate with him for day and night

<laugh>. We broke up... we broke down after about 17 months.

(Girl11, aged 16)

Doing well at school to get into university was the major concern of these teenagers. The priority for them at the moment was education. However, even though they were in university, they were still worried.

> *I think because I am not ready. It's because I am worried about uni, I guess.*
> *(Girl16, aged 17)*

These data highlighted the importance of education and the conflict between studying successfully and having girl/boyfriends. The teenagers felt too busy with their education to think about having girl/boyfriends, or even broke up a relationship in order to concentrate on study.

4.2.3 Reasons for not having sex

As only two teenagers had sexual experience, sexually inactive teenagers were asked whether they wanted to have sex if they had had a girl/boyfriend. None of them indicated they wanted to do so, no matter whether or not they had girl/boyfriends. They felt that they were not ready for sex; sex was not essential in girl/boyfriend relationships; they preferred to wait until after marriage.

4.2.3.1 Not being ready

The teenagers were not considering having girl/boyfriends because of educational worries. It was also the case when they talked about whether they wanted to have sex.

Now? No, because I still want to go to school and I still want to go to university. I think right now my age 16, it's too young to think about these things.
(Girl8, aged 16)

In addition, the girls were uncertain about whether they could find the ideal love at a young age, as indicated by the following.

I guess it's a bit early. I am 17, you know. If the guy waits, then that's really true love, I think. If he doesn't, then he might just be using you.
(Girl14, aged 17)

I don't know. Probably not until we are both ready. I don't know because it has to depend on the situation and if he was maybe like the one, or maybe if we are whatever, you know, if he is really serious, he was ready to get married or whatever. Yeah, maybe, but not like it's just for the sake of having sex.
(Girl17, aged 19)

The boys took the same view. Unlike Martin (1996), where only one boy in her study used the word 'ready', boys having girlfriends in the present study repeatedly expressed that they were not mature enough to have sex or not ready.

JY: Have you had sex with her?

No, I have my views on that <laugh>. I spoke very briefly about it because we are not very comfortable talking about it. We are not, we are not mature, I think we are not mature enough yet.
(Boy6, aged 19)

It's probably because both are not ready for it and both don't want to, not want to go that far, but you know, both don't want to at the moment.
(Boy18, aged 16)

These boys briefly discussed whether they should have sex with their girlfriends, and decided not to go so far. Another boy described the same feelings, although he had the desire for sex.

Because we both don't feel we are ready for. Sometimes also I feel I know her for too short period of time. I think half a year we don't know who to talk to yet. I think you probably don't know each other yet. I mean sex, like, people take it as a very simple thing. Nowadays for me, how we believe, and we understand, it's, it's a big step in a relationship, in that sex is like more trust, and also share more stuff with each other. So I think at the moment, our stage is not ready. And secondly, we are both not ready for the consequences. So I just think we are not ready yet. It doesn't mean we don't want it. At the end of the day we just think we are not ready.
(Boy7, aged 19)

For this boy, sex, as a big step in relationships, was related to trust, sharing and responsibility. He also implied his desire for sex and ability to control his sexual drives at the same time. All these data suggested that both boys and girls considered they were not ready for sex, no matter whether or not they had sexual desire.

4.2.3.2 Not being essential in relationships

The teenagers did not consider sex as an essential way to keep a relationship, and believed that there were more things that they could do in a relationship without having sex. For example, Girl20 said:

> *I think there are a lot of things to be, like to be in a relationship, you can do a lot of things without having sex, you can do a lot more things. I don't think it's, I mean, having sex in a relationship is essential, like, as a married couple from marriage side, but I don't think it's really essential as just a boy/girlfriend relationship, not yet anyway.*
> *(Girl20, aged 19)*

Similarly, a 16-year-old girl noted that teenagers could have a serious relationship, but they should not 'go over the top' to have sex.

Definitely not, of course. You are going over the top, like, I just think, well, you're just my boyfriend, like, we could be, like, seriously in relationship, we shouldn't be doing things like that, too young to do things like that.
(Girl12, aged 16)

Like the girls, the boys expressed the similar view. They did not consider sex as essential in a close relationship, as noted by a boy, who had a girlfriend.

We don't think it's that important. Our relationship is close, but we don't want, we just don't want to go for that stage at the moment. (...) Probably we are skipping that stage and continue our relationship. Like, we don't need to, we don't want to, we're just missing that out, and work to continue our relationship, just like that.
(Boy18, aged 16)

Having sex before marriage or without commitment was considered as a source of tension, as indicated by a boy.

I don't think there is much to gain from having sex, definitely just like tensions. I think it's something to be committed, I guess, for somebody who you are going to stay with and who you are going to marry. Sex after marriage will be a lot safer, just not something for fun.
(Boy10, aged 18)

These data suggested that sex was not considered necessary or essential in a girl/boyfriend relationship. No matter whether they had girl/boyfriends, none of the teenagers wanted to 'go over the top' to experience sex at this time. Sex after marriage was considered safe and right.

4.2.3.3 Sex after marriage

The teenagers consistently reported that sex should be left until after marriage, as a normal thing between married couples. Marriage, sex and reproduction were considered as a progressive process.

> *If she is going to be my wife, then yeah. But I won't, you know, go out with a girl and say I want to have sex with her. I will say that, but I won't have sex with her unless she is my wife.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

> *Sex, maybe, should be behind marriage, because it kind of leads more progressively, because after marriage, then you have sex, then after sex, you have children. It's a kind of progression.*
> *(Boy4, aged 18)*

The girls presented the similar view. Girl13 had a boyfriend currently, regarding sex as a special thing and a commitment. She discussed sex with her boyfriend and they agreed that they would wait until after marriage.

Actually we discussed this and we agreed that we should leave it until we are

married. We keep it special.

(Girl13, aged 16)

Sex before marriage was considered unsafe because there was no commitment or agreements. Religious beliefs had some influence on these sexual values, as noted by Girl20.

I still stick my values that, as a Christian, I feel that it should be after marriage

because I think it's too exploited just now, like to have it. I think it's, I think, you

know, I think it's still before marriage, and you're with that person, you're still

not guaranteeing that person is going to be with you forever. But like marriage,

when you get married, it's a kind of way to say, you know, you make an

agreement to each other.

(Girl20, aged 19)

These teenagers presented their perspectives on having **sex after marriage**. They wanted to keep their virginity as a special thing for someone special.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, two main issues were addressed, the attitudes towards sex and sexual behaviour of the teenagers.

As far as sexual attitudes were concerned, it was apparent that the conservative views were dominant. These teenagers believed that they were too young to have sex, as they were not ready for taking the responsibility for the possible consequences. Exceptionally, permissive attitudes towards sex were presented. The teenagers who were in favour of sex reported it was acceptable for teenagers to have sex as long as safety had been considered. However, no matter which views they had, they were all aware of the need for readiness, and provided diverse explanations for readiness. The main themes presented by all included physical, mental and social readiness. Although the teenagers were restrained in their own sexual behaviour, teenage sex was acceptable. In addition, the boys and girls presented different attitudes towards sexual behaviour. In general, the boys expressed a positive feeling about having sex, while the girls felt more stressed. As there were more disadvantages for girls in having sex, the boys thought it hard for girls to refuse unwanted sex, but the girls indicated that they had to say no and believed that more and more girls were standing up for themselves.

Two girls, but no boys had had sexual experience. No matter how ready they thought they were, they were uncertain and unsure about having sex, and sex did not bring them closer to their boyfriends. Five teenagers currently had a girl/boyfriend. The teenagers repeatedly reported that they did not want to have one or broke up the relationship, in order to concentrate on their education. None of the sexually inactive teenagers indicated that they wanted to experience sex at this time, no matter whether or not they had a girl/boyfriend. They felt not mature enough or not ready for sex. Sex was considered not essential in girl/boyfriend relationships and they preferred to wait until after marriage.

CHAPTER 5: THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY

The significant influence of family on teenage sexual values and behaviour has been identified in the literature. The family provides an initial environment, in which children shape their own sexual values. The family, especially parents, has profound influence on teenagers through parental sexual values, parent-child communication, parent-child relationships, sexual role models, parental supervision and demographic characteristics.

This chapter presents these influences from the perspectives of both teenagers and parents. The account is intended to be an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the teenagers' reports, and the parents' perceptions are presented in relation to the reports of the teenagers. Differences and similarities between generations are highlighted. The chapter begins by examining the sexual values of the parents. Then parent-child relationships are addressed, followed by parent-child communication.

5.1 Sexual values of the parents

This section presents the sexual values of the Chinese parents. The dominant view of reserving sex for after marriage is illustrated first, followed by the concern of readiness for sex.

5.1.1 Sex after marriage

The widespread view of the parents was the belief that sex should be left until after marriage. Age did not matter for these parents, and sex outside marriage was not acceptable.

> *It's no problem to have sex after marriage. (...) Not an age. You shouldn't do it at*
>
> *any age.*
>
> *(Father14, *English & Chinese)*

> *In Britain, 16 is the legal age for sex. I think teenagers should not have sex at*
>
> *that age, because they are too young. They should wait until after marriage.*
>
> *(Mother5, *Chinese)*

The parents related their conservative sexual values to Chinese culture, and considered the perceived permissive views of British people opposed to Chinese values.

> *They [British people] couldn't be open any more. There are some teenagers with*
>
> *babies where we live. Our Chinese people think it's too early because you are not*
>
> *mature. I don't think it's good to have sex and have babies that early. Their*
>
> *thinking is different from ours. I don't think it's right, as you are immature. If you*
>
> *are immature, how could you educate your children?*
>
> *(Father19, *Chinese)*

The parents thought that their values were different from those of British people. Living in Britain, they saw teenage sex, teenage pregnancy or teenage mothers in their everyday life, and were worried about these influences on their children, especially on their daughters.

> *The teenagers in the UK are too open. They don't mind teenage sex or teenage pregnancy. They don't consider it serious, and they also give birth. It doesn't matter. Westerners think it's normal to have sex and get pregnant before marriage. I always see teenagers with big tummies in front of my restaurant. I am worried about my own daughter. I don't agree with that. We are Chinese. Maybe, we are behind the times. We are not westerners. We believe that we should not have sex before marriage, but it is hard to say, as we are in a western country.*
> *(Mother5, *Chinese)*

In addition to the Chinese culture, religion played a significant role in sexual values of the parents. Christian parents highlighted the impact of religious beliefs and tended to combine the influence of religion and Chinese culture.

> *I think it is different between those who believe in Jesus and those who don't. Non-Christians might think it doesn't matter if they do whatever they want. They do whatever they want to enjoy their life, you know. Our thinking is different. I think non-Christian Chinese people also don't want their children to have sex at a young age.*
> *(Father14, *English & Chinese)*

I think young people should not start having sex before 20. It doesn't matter if over 21. But because we are Christians, teenagers are not allowed to have sex before marriage. If they are Christians, they should know. If not, they might not know. Now I believe in Christ, so that I don't agree with sex before marriage. However, before I believed in Christ, I thought it was OK after 21.

(Mother9, *Chinese)

Apart from Chinese culture and religion, health was also considered as a reason for not having sex before marriage.

Well, why, OK, partly because of my background, OK, Chinese background, partly my religion, and partly for health reason, so culture, religion, medical and hygiene reasons, everything. (…) That's why you shouldn't lose your virginity, isn't it, before you get married? That's the Chinese culture and religion as well. That's why. Now, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases are so common, and also I don't think they can handle sexual relations anyway. I feel that's wrong.

(Father17, *English)

These parents presented their conservative sexual values, believing in 'no sex before marriage', regardless of age. The influence of Chinese culture and religion was highlighted.

5.1.2 Readiness for sex

In section 4.1.3, teenagers' perspectives on readiness for sex were discussed, including physical, mental and social readiness. The parents also stressed these aspects. Physical and mental readiness were considered side by side.

> *Probably it is the maturity because when you are young, also physically, then you maybe, you maybe mentally, right, well, the body maybe ready for the sex life. But probably their attitudes, well, their maturity may not be able to cope with it because sex is not just the physical aspect, also you've got the mental, and also got the emotions.*
>
> *(Father1, *English)*

This father highlighted that teenagers might be physically ready for sex, but they were not mentally mature enough to deal with sexual relationships. The impact of early sexual activity on physical and psychological development was also stressed.

> *It's not easy for me to accept teenage sex. It influences not only their study, but also their physical and psychological development. If they have sex too early, or if something happens, they will suffer from lots of pressure.*
>
> *(Mother4, *Chinese)*

Like the teenagers, social readiness for sex was the widespread concerns of the parents. They noted that sex was related to pregnancy, which would militate against the success of their children's education. The parents expected their children to concentrate on their

study to get into university. Therefore, dating or a steady girl/boyfriend was discouraged in these families.

I told them, I did not tell how to get on with boys, but I told them, I wouldn't like you to have sex at the moment, too young, far too young. And I don't want, I don't like you to have a steady boyfriend at this moment either, not until you get into university. You know, I think study is more important to you.
(Mother16, *English)

I think they should be over 20, at least after they graduate from university. How would they do if they have babies at university, unless they don't want to finish their study? When they are at least 20, they graduate from university, they can find a job, and then they can support a family, so that's fine if they have babies.
(Mother4, *Chinese)

Exceptionally, premarital sex was acceptable. These parents did not accept one-night stands or promiscuity; however, sex was acceptable in a loving relationship with the intention of getting married. For example, Mother11 reported:

I think sex before marriage is not a problem. I can accept it. If they have sex for fun when they are 16 or something, it's not right. It's all right as long as they are serious. I think it doesn't matter if you know each other for a while, and you want to be with that person for the rest of your life.
(Mother11, *Chinese)

Age was highlighted as well. The parents who accepted premarital sex considered that at an older age, their children would have the ability to make a reasonable decision, or take the responsibility for having sex.

Yeah, over 20. So they know what they are doing. And they know, you know, they would see that person more closely, because I don't want to, maybe the western people think, oh, sex is nothing, you know; I can go with this man today and sleep with others tomorrow. But I don't think, you know, it's a good way. Why it's over 20 is, so that they know 'are you really in love with each other?' or you know, he is. I don't want them to sleep with anyone. (...) Maybe over 20, they will, maybe they still make mistake, choose the wrong men, but I thought you know, they would have a better plan at this age.
(Mother16, *English)

I think that 16 to 18 is still too young really, maybe over 18. I think it's not just having sex, it's having the responsibility of the maturity as well, of knowing you are doing this. But you've got to know precautions because you don't want to end up having children. So you need to be a bit mature, and also you need to know that you are not doing this like a regular thing for fun. It's for love the person you are going out with. It's just a boyfriend, a permanent boyfriend. And you are seriously into thinking of marriage, you know, before you want to start thinking like that. I don't like people doing flings, one-night stands and like that. I think it's, it's not a good idea. It's usually, it makes people, it's not just my way of being brought up, you know.
(Mother7, *English)

In general, the parents preferred their children to wait until after marriage or at a later age. Like the teenagers, the parents felt that sex was related to physical, mental and social readiness. They considered that teenagers were not mentally and socially ready to cope with the possible consequences of having sex, and discouraged their children from having a relationship in order to concentrate on their education. Education was regarded as more important than sex or girl/boyfriends.

5.2 Parent-child relationships

The impact of parental sexual values on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour is established in the literature. Parents transmit their values in various ways, while parent-child relationships moderate the transmission. This section presents parent-child relationships. Time with parents, understanding between generations and communication are discussed in turn.

5.2.1 Time with parents

Time spent with parents was the major theme emerging from the data while analysing parent-child relationships. None of the teenagers stated that they had a negative relationship with their parents, but it was apparent that the more time they spent together, the more likely that they had a close relationship. For instance, a 16-year-old girl, whose brother used to give her a lift to school for four years, vividly described how the parent-child relationship had improved since her parents began to take her to school.

My brother used to take me to school every day. He's been doing that for the past four years (...) and so I won't see my parents really, apart from, like, two days a week. Now my brother graduated. He works somewhere else. He can't take me to school, so my parents take me to school every morning. And so every morning in these 20 minutes in the car, we talk a lot more than we used to. And I think that's how we've become a lot closer.

(Girl11, aged 16)

This girl stressed how precious and important these 20 minutes were to her and her parents. Although her mother did not point out this essential time in the car, another mother highlighted this point. Mother3 worked in restaurant from late afternoon to midnight, getting up early in the morning to take her 16-year-old daughter to school.

I want to have time to spend with them. If I didn't take them to school, I would not have time to talk to them. When I go to work at 4 o'clock, sometimes they just get home or sometimes they have not been home yet. (...) So I take them to school in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. Then I go to work. So our relationship is very good. We usually talk a lot in the car.

(Mother3, *Chinese)

Like the girls, the boys talked about how close they felt to their fathers because of the time they spent together. For example, although feeling close to his mother now, a 16-year-old boy used to be close to his father before his mother separated from his father and he went with his mother.

I used to be very good with my dad because my dad just stayed in the house. I used to be very close to him because he bought lots of stuff for me and he spent a lot of money on me, and now I think I'm very close to my mum now, because I need to spoil my mum. My mum is working hard for me, trying to raise me. So I am very close to my mum as well, but now I am not really that close to my dad, because my dad separated to my mother.

(Boy18, aged 16)

This boy had been living with his mother since his father moved out when he was eight and had not seen his father for over six months before the interview. He felt close to his father when he was young because of the time his father spent with him and the money his father spent on him. He continued to explain the close relationship with his mother.

Because I am the only child left in the house, you see, so she's more, she spent more time on me. (…) When we are in the house, I spend a lot of time with my mum because I am in the house and she's in the house. So that's what, your close time with them.

(Boy18, aged 16)

These data suggested that it was the time spent with parents rather than the money his father spent on him or his parents' separation *per se* that pulled him away from his father. The relationship with his father was partly associated with frequency of contact.

Another 16-year-old boy reported that he had a good relationship with both parents, but he felt closer to his father although his father was strict with him and did not allow him to do or buy what he wanted, as his mother did. Although this boy, like Boy18, mentioned his close relationship with his mother when he was older due to the money his mother spent on him, the time spent with his father when he was young was emphasised as in the following.

> *I think I've got a good relationship with my mum, but we always have arguments.*
> *I think my relationship with my dad, you know, it's OK as well, but we don't*
> *always, like, want the same things. Yeah, like, I want to do something, but he*
> *won't let me, but my mum would let me, so that's why I like her. But I still like my*
> *dad more. I don't know, I just, because I think I spent a lot of my time with my*
> *dad when I was wee, when I was smaller. When I am older I like my mum more*
> *because she buys me, like, the things that my dad wouldn't.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

Like the teenagers, the parents showed how the relationships with their children were influenced by the time they spent together. A mother of three boys did not feel as close to her middle son as she did to her other two sons, because she spent less time with him.

> *[Middle son's name] is a bit different because he is in the middle. I think it's true*
> *that sometimes because the first one you have nobody with him, it's the first one.*
> *It's the only one at that time; then you can have more time with him. For the*
> *second one you've got the first one, you ignore him as well. Then the third one*

came; then the second one is neglected again. So I feel I neglected him. So

[middle son's name] talks with me a bit less than others.

(Mother20, *English)

Similarly, a father of three girls reported that he had a good relationship with his two younger daughters, but not the oldest one, because they did not spend enough time together when she was young.

I think that maybe we've had a problem since she was young. She was living in

Hong Kong for three years, you know, from the baby. She came back here when

she was three years old. (...) So at the beginning we didn't stay together. And

then when she came back to Glasgow, we are working in the takeaway shop, and

my mother watched her in the house. (...) The problem is that we've not got a

good relationship, I think, from the beginning. There was not much conversation

and not enough time to spend with each other. I find now I spend a lot time with

the youngest, the baby, and with the second one, so we are quite close together.

(Father14, *English & Chinese)

The teenagers highlighted the necessity and desire for time with parents. For example, a 19-year-old boy complained about the lack of time his parents spent with him and his siblings when they were young.

My dad got old ideas. Like, he still thinks that his job is to provide for family. So

like he should work all the time and get the money. But that means like, that he

doesn't spend any time with us. You know what I mean?(...) Like nowadays,

sometimes, people say that you should have sometime for work, but you should

spend a lot more time with your family.

(Boy3, aged 19)

'You should spend a lot more time with your family' indicated this boy's disappointment about his parents not spending enough time with him. However, this was not the only case. Eighteen of the twenty teenagers had at least one parent involved in the catering trade. These parents either ran Chinese takeaways/restaurants or were employed in these businesses, working six days a week from late afternoon to midnight. The time spent with their children, therefore, was relatively limited and it was normally the grandparents who looked after children after school. Occasionally, the whole family might have evening dinner together before the parents went to work. However, it was common that the parents went to work before or just after their children came back from school; the children were in bed when their parents got home after work, or the children might see their parents before they went to bed at weekends or during holidays. Usually, apart from Mondays or Tuesdays when parents had a day off, they rarely had time with their children to do things together, such as talking, going out for a meal or shopping.

However, the working time of parents running catering businesses varied, so that one parent might spend more time with children than the other. Fathers were always busy working, except in the case of one girl who reported her father was at home most of the time due to his health condition. The teenagers, therefore, spent more time with their mothers. The fathers were perceived as not only busy with work, but also busy with other things, such as sports.

My dad usually works in the weekdays. When he does have a holiday, he's sometimes at home, sometimes goes with his friends. My mum's at home most of the time.

(Girl16, aged 17)

My dad plays golf quite a lot. So he goes often and does that, so he usually just leaves me and my mum.

(Girl11, aged 16)

In these cases, the teenagers spent less time with their fathers, but none of the five fathers indicated that they spent a lot of time on sports and left their children and wives alone. It was not surprising that the teenagers felt closer to their mothers due to the time together.

I think I am closer to my mum than my dad, because my mum, I think, it's a bit more, because my dad is working a lot, I get close to my mum because she works less.

(Boy9, aged 17)

Actually, I don't spend enough time with my dad, but I spend quite a long time with my mum because I see her every day, you know, when she comes home, you know that. I find I'm quite good with my mum.

(Girl1, aged 18)

Helping parents in takeaways/restaurants provided another opportunity for the teenagers to see their parents. One 18-year-old boy had been working in his parents' takeaway since he left school, and some other teenagers gave their parents a hand especially on Fridays and Saturdays when the business was busy. However, although they could see their parents while working, they did not have enough opportunity to communicate.

> *After Fridays, I go straight from school and the same Saturdays as well. So although I do see them, we don't actually talk that much because we're working. So it's I say, like, twice a week, really if you actually say, we actually do something and talk together really.*
>
> *(Girl11, aged 16)*

There was no doubt that the time together was particularly important for parent-child relationships, especially when children were young. While growing up, the teenagers might have a part-time job or spend more time with friends; therefore the interaction with parents decreased naturally. If the parents were busy as well, there would be less possibility for parents and children to spend time together.

> *I don't really talk to them much because they are going to work and I go to work, or I'll, they go to like church meeting, you know that. So I just rarely talk to them.*
>
> *(Boy15, aged 16)*

> *When we were younger, they used to take us out a lot, to like, the zoo, the park, you know that. But now it's because, like, my brother, both of my brothers, a kind*

of, have got their own family. So it's like, you don't do that anymore. And they

know that I won't like doing whatever they want to do.

(Girl11, aged 16)

In common with the teenagers, the parents also noted this decreased time together as their children grew up. They perceived their children as less willing to stay with them, no matter whether or not they got on well, because their children had their own friends and interests. What the teenagers did mostly at home was playing on computers and talking with friends on the phone, according to parents' reports. Spending more time outside home was regarded as a normal process of growing up.

When they are young, so of course, then you have more interactions with them.

But then very naturally, when they are older, we don't spend every day, well we

don't spend, well one or two hours with them every day because they start to go

out to find own world. (...) I think it's very natural, then parents should do,

should speak to their children when they are small. And when they grow up, then

they would find their own world. But the influence, well the real influence is when

they are small.

*(Father1, *English)*

This view was supported by his wife, Mother20, who explained that her 15-year-old youngest son still spent time with her after school, but her two older sons went out all the time. Mother13, having limited time with her son when he was young, complained about the unwillingness of her 17-year-old son to spend time with her although she had

time now. These data suggested that as part of the process of growing up, the teenagers no longer spent as much time with their parents as they used to.

In summary, the parents and teenagers highly valued the influence of time together on their relationships. However, equally important was the active time together, the time when they could have mutual interaction, such as talking or doing things together. As the parents of most teenagers were working in the catering trade, their available time was limited due to this type of work. The parents considered it important to use the available time effectively with their children when they were young.

5.2.2 Understanding between generations

Understanding was the second theme emerging when parent-child relationships were examined. Greater understanding was seen as producing fewer arguments and closer parent-child relationships. A 16-year-old boy described his parents as annoying because they did not 'see eye to eye'. He explained:

> *We have a lot of arguments and sometimes they all are about petty things. A lot of the times there're all petty things. Petty, petty means unimportant. (...) It's not really important. It's very small. It doesn't really affect you.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

Arguments about these 'petty', 'small', or 'unimportant' things might have a negative influence on parent-child relationships. Similarly, Girl17, a university girl, reflected

this negative impact. She had a better relationship with her parents than did her brother, highlighting the concern of arguments and parent-child relationships.

I think it's just because they don't really agree with what he's done with his life, maybe. And they agree with what I've done with my life even though it's, like, my choice, it's not their choices or anything. (...) Our relationship is very, very good. We don't argue that much.
(Girl17, aged 19)

However, disagreement about certain issues did not indicate less harmonious family relationships, as reported by a father of two boys. Father14 stressed the most difficult period of age 15 when children did not want to listen to parents and argued with everything. His 15-year-old son was argumentative, as was his older son at age 15, but the communication with his older son had improved since he passed that age. Similarly, Mother4 highlighted the great difference in her daughter's character before and after age 16 when her desire for independence became very strong. No matter whether these arguments and conflicts had an impact on parent-child relationships, the parents said that they understood their children's desire for independence and freedoms during teenage years and tried to reduce the conflicts with their teenage children.

In addition, the generation gap was a factor that might affect the understanding between parents and children. The teenagers perceived that their parents were brought up in a different way from them.

I don't really have much to say to them, like, because they were like, brought up more seriously, you know, like they were brought up like quite seriously, like how they've been brought up. You know what I mean. They are quite strict families.
(Girl1, aged 18)

Because I think it's different generations, and things that they got told by their parents and people around them were different, but they think their thoughts are different.
(Girl20, aged 19)

In these cases, not only the generation gap, but also the cultural difference had an impact on the understanding between generations, which in turn affected the relationship. The teenagers were brought up in Britain, while their parents were born and brought up in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Mainland China. Growing up in different mainstream cultures might cause conflicts and misunderstanding between them.

I would say it's not bad. I mean, I think it could improve, but I think one of the main, like, we do talk, but I think one of the main things, it's because my mum, how my mum grew up and how I grew up in, like, different cultures. So she is, sometimes she doesn't understand, like, how we would think and the things we do because she didn't experience herself. So that's probably one of the problems. (...) But now, it's changed quite a lot. So I think they are adapting to because they've lived in this country for quite a long time. But I think there is still something that they hold on to, like, their thinking.
(Girl20, aged 19)

This girl illustrated the different values between British born Chinese children and Chinese born parents. Although her parents had been adapting to British culture, they still held on to some Chinese values tightly, after having been living in Britain for more than 20 years. Similarly, a mother of two girls, who moved to Britain when her older daughter was four, reported the cultural conflicts between parents and her British born/raised daughters.

If we bring them up in the Chinese way, they would not accept that, as they are growing up here. However, we parents are still Chinese. I mean we grew up in China, and we had been in China for 20 or 30 years. Childhood is very important in the formative years. How you are brought up during childhood has a great impact on the rest of your life. Therefore, there is a distance between us, because they are brought up here, they get educated differently, and the people they contact are different. They have different thoughts from us, so that sometimes we have arguments or conflicts. If they are brought up or live as the British children, we would feel a sense of loss. We would think they completely give up the Chinese culture. Sometime if we don't go too far, they won't rebel too much.
(Mother4, *Chinese)

This was consistent with Girl20's comments on different thinking between the parents and children brought up in two different cultures. As reported by Mother4, the parents did not want to give up their Chinese values completely, which were not understood by their children raised in Britain. All these had caused some conflicts and

misunderstanding between generations, but they were making a concession to each other to some extent.

In addition, religion played a role in promoting understanding between generations. Girl11 and her family started believing in Dao four years ago. Unlike Girl11, her mother did not see Dao as a religion. However, it was apparent that Dao influenced the thinking of her parents, as Girl11 reported.

> *They are really, well, beforehand used to be old fashioned, and quite, like, narrow-minded. They don't open to any new ideas. (...) But now I think everything started going to our religion thing. It made a big difference to their real thinking, because they listened to a lot more in classes, and they really kind of opened up a lot more. And like, they understand that you can't really say no to everything, or repress your children.*
> *(Girl11, aged 16)*

Similarly, a mother illustrated how church attendance changed her thinking. Although not considering herself very religious, Mother12 noted that what she learned from church increased understanding between her and her son, which improved their relationship.

There is a reason for going to church because I can learn something there. I understand that. Now I tell my son no matter whether I am happy or not. I tell him if I am angry with him. My son also asks me to tell him if I am not happy. (...) I think this is why our relationship has improved.

(Mother12, *Chinese)

These data showed the conflicts caused by the generation gap and cultural differences between British raised children and Chinese raised parents. Religion had an impact on understanding and improved parent-child relationships. In addition, parent-child communication modified their relationships.

5.2.3 Communication

Communication was another theme from the data, which had an effect on parent-child relationships. The closeness with parents was related to effective communication. The teenagers with a good parent-child relationship expressed their satisfaction with communication.

I think our relationship is quite good. We talk a lot. I think it's a good relationship, compared to a lot others, like all my friends. I think, they all have arguments with their parents. I still do. But it's not serious ones. It's just stupid ones.

(Girl2, aged 16)

Communication was increased by religious attendance, as it opened a channel for family communication, and thus in turn improved parent-child relationships, as indicated by Girl11. She vividly illustrated how her parents became 'chatty' after they believed in Dao.

> *So they are a lot more open now and a lot more chatty with all of us, like a family. (...) It's a lot more close now, yeah. I think, I think in the past, see, a year, a year or two, it's got a lot closer, because I actually have a lot more to talk with, to say to my parents now.*
> *(Girl11, aged 16)*

On the other hand, poor communication might have a negative effect on parent-child relationships, although the teenagers did not say so.

> *It's quite good. It's quite OK, I guess. It's, but with my dad, like, I don't have much to talk about, because there is nothing much to talk about.*
> *(Girl16, aged 17)*

> *I've got a relationship with both of them. We don't always speak (...) because a lot time I am at home, they are working. So I don't have a lot of time to talk to them, but when I do talk to them, that's fine.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

The parents' reports presented a clear picture, where communication and relationships interacted with each other. For example, Father14, who had a good relationship with his two younger daughters, but not the oldest one, reported communication as follows.

It's good with the two younger ones, but the oldest one, it's a bit, not so close with her, because we have not been talking for a long time, and then not much feeling for each other, you know. (...) It's a previous problem, but we haven't been talking to each other for a long time. We might have lost the way of how to communicate, how to speak to each other, you know.
(Father14, *English & Chinese)

Father14's oldest daughter spent the first three years with her grandmother in Hong Kong. Returning to Scotland at age three, his daughter was looked after by her grandmother, as Father14 and his wife worked in a takeaway. The limited interaction had a great impact on their communication and relationship.

Like Father14, the parents of most teenagers worked in catering businesses, so that the available time with their children was limited. It might be not 'nothing much to talk about', but not much time to talk, that influenced parent-child communication. However, finding opportunities to talk, even for 10 minutes, might make a big difference, as indicated by Boy6.

It's quite good, and sometimes I think, I look at my friends and I think they are not really communicating with their parents very well. But I think, I think I do. I think I do quite a lot. If I see my mum, I would talk to her for a while. I spend

about 10 minutes talking to her before I do what I am supposed doing. If I play

football, then I leave 10 minutes later, it doesn't really matter. The same with my

dad, I speak to my dad that time as well.

(Boy6, aged 19)

Similarly, Mother13, who used to work in a takeaway, highlighted the precious time in

the morning before her son went to school. Praying together was regarded as an

important interaction between them, as she reported.

He went up at eight, we prayed together, and made sandwiches for his lunch.

Although we didn't spend a lot time together, we prayed together.

(Mother 13, *Chinese)

Through these prayers, the teenagers and parents shared their spiritual life and everyday

life together. Thus, religion increased parent-child communication and interaction.

We pray together on Sunday evenings at home. We share something. They tell us

lots of things, like their spiritual life and everyday life, then we pray together.

(Mother 18, *Chinese)

The parents also laid particular stress on communication at the dinner table, when they

could see their children, as children normally spent time doing homework or playing on

computers in their room. The parents regarded dinnertime as an important time for

communicating and tried their best to get everybody involved at the dinner table, such

as by making delicious food.

The parents highlighted the influence of communication on relationships. Mother12, who divorced when her son was 5 and had a very difficult time with him when he was 13 to 15, illustrated how communication improved their relationship.

> *Sometimes I tell him 'I am not happy because I don't want you to go out in the evening and come back very late. If you go out, you don't have enough sleep. It's not good at all for your body. You should sleep in the evening. You should sleep when you should.' I told him these things. I think this is why our relationship has improved.*
>
> *(Mother12, *Chinese)*

These reports indicated how parent-child relationships were influenced by communication. As the parents were busy working, the time for communication was relatively limited. However, when both parents and children found an effective way to talk to each other, it made a real difference in their relationships.

5.3 Parent-child communication

In general, communication between generations was limited. The teenagers repeatedly reported that they did not really have anything that they 'have to', 'need to', 'want to' or 'like to' say to their parents.

I [his emphasis] want to discuss with my parents? I don't particularly want to

discuss anything with them. Or do you mean what should children discuss with

their parents, or me?

(Boy3, aged 19)

I don't really have anything to ask them. Not really, because you probably, you

get it from school anyway or your friends. If you ask the questions, they would

probably help you, but I don't really ask my mum.

(Boy19, aged 16)

However, the teenagers did talk to their parents about certain topics. This section reports 'trivial' topics, topics of social life, relationships and sex, the barriers of communication and improvement of parent-child communication.

5.3.1 'Trivial' topics

The teenagers repeatedly noted that they usually talked to their parents about 'something trivial', 'random things' or 'nonsense'.

I have talked to them about certain subjects, usually just something trivial, you

know, like, how my day went over, things I enjoyed doing, but we don't really talk

much about it.

(Boy10, aged 18)

I talk to her, like, general talking, but we don't discuss anything because arguments with, you know, with talking. So we don't really discuss, we don't talk a lot, but we talk, like nonsense, what happens in Glasgow.
(Boy18, aged 16)

They talked about nothing serious with their parents; however, it was these simple conversations about daily life that helped them know each other better. They talked about things surrounding their lives or things in general, and there was not an allocated time for such conversation.

I think the things that I'd like to discuss with my parents are just problems, problems, their problems, just what happened everyday, like, what you've done today.
(Boy9, aged 17)

We don't really talk about any specific things. We just talk about whatever is said at the time, you know. It could be about dinner arrangement or anything, but we don't like set a specific time to talk about a particularly topic or anything.
(Girl17, aged 19)

Similarly, the parents highlighted these general talks in their families. For example, Mother16 was pleased with the good communication with her children, who told her about everything, such as their whereabouts and things they had done.

The teenagers felt that limited communication with their parents was not necessarily because of the lack of opportunity, but because of the difficulty in finding a general topic that their parents were interested. For example, Boy19 said:

> *I can see them, but I don't really talk to them, well, I do talk to them, but I don't have a conversation unless there is something in general. I don't know, maybe like, we need to fix the kitchen floor, or something, or so and so, but nothing like what's on the new CD, nothing like that, just something that's happening, like the house or the family.*
>
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

Besides the talk about daily life, education was another topic that the teenagers still discussed with their parents.

> *I don't really, but sometimes we just talk about things, just random things, like school, church and family.*
>
> *(Boy15, aged 16)*

> *I think the main things to better talk about are education and future plans.*
>
> *(Boy7, aged 19)*

Like the teenagers, the parents described similar experience. Mother20 noted that education was still a topic that her sons talked about to her, although communication became less and less when they were older. She felt it easier to talk to her sons when they were young.

In general, parent-child communication was limited. The teenagers tended to talk about trivial and general subjects to their parents.

5.3.2 Topics of social life, relationships and sex

Parent-child communication was commonly around everyday life and education. There were certain subjects that the teenagers rarely talked about to their parents, such as social life, personal relationships and sex.

The teenagers repeatedly expressed the difficulty of discussing social life with their parents. But the parents were less aware of this difficulty and perceived that their children often talked about their friends, or even their friends' problems with them. The teenagers highlighted the difficulty this way.

JY: What sorts of things would you like to be able to talk with your parents?

Like my social life to my mum. I would like to because a lot of time she guesses them, and then pretends she knows everything, like, would you tell me. So it's become annoying, if she does that.
(Girl14, aged 17)

It's like sometimes I might go to a bar, sometimes with a few friends and have a few drinks. I don't think I could always come home and tell her that, you know that, I went out and had a few drinks. But I am getting more used to telling her

that because I turned 18 and I feel I could be more open about these things. But

it's still kind of difficult to talk to your parents like that. She knows that I like

going out dancing, and I'd let her know that I'm going whenever.

(Girl1, aged 18)

In addition, they felt it difficult to discuss their personal relationships with their parents. The girls, who had good communication with their parents, stressed that they could talk about everything to their parents, except for boyfriends or boys.

I tell my mum everything, well almost everything. So there isn't anything that's

difficult to tell my mum, unless it's like, I have a boyfriend or anything, but I don't

<laugh>. So I can't really tell her that, but now I don't think there is anything

that I hide from my mum.

(Girl12, aged 16)

Maybe sexual topics, we still talk about them, but just, not as like detailed. I'd

say, like, I just talk about it. We do sometimes talk about it. But not all, just half,

half (...) When it's just discussing sex in general and not personal sexual

relations, not personal, then I can talk about anything to everybody. I just talk a

lot. But when it's like personal sexual relationships, maybe just close friends.

(Girl2, aged 16)

These two girls did not have a boyfriend, and were not allowed to have one until they were 20. Perceiving parents' disapproval might have stopped them talking about these issues. This was also the case for the girls who had boyfriends. Girl1, whose parents

did not agree with her going out with boys, felt it difficult to talk about her Scottish boyfriend to her parents.

Oh, I can't really talk to, like, my mum about, like, my boyfriend, something like that, because he is not, you know, because he is Scottish and I'm going out with a Scottish guy. She doesn't really like that, and she doesn't really like me going out in the first place, you know. I just let her know that I am going out with someone. (...) I think if I have kids, I would like them to talk to me about it, you know. But to me, I don't think I would be ever able to talk to her about it unless when I am married or something.
(Girl1, aged 18)

This girl explained that she was not ready and did not feel comfortable talking about relationships with her parents before marriage. However, during the interview, she recounted that she felt very comfortable discussing these issues with her friends.

Exceptionally, the teenagers noted that they told their parents about their relationships because they felt they should. A 16-year-old girl, who had a boyfriend before, recounted her parents' reaction in a typical way.

At the moment, we do actually talk about everything. I think the only thing we don't talk about is boyfriends and sex. That's it. My mum is OK about boyfriends sort of because I, when I was, I think when I was 15, I told my mum I had a boyfriend <laugh>, because my, my second brother, he, he got married at 17, and he started, like, going out with his girlfriend at 15. So I started going out,

like, I had a serious relationship when I was 14, and when I turned 15, about 7

month later, I was still with my boyfriend. So I told my mum because I didn't want

to keep it from my mum and dad. So I thought I just told them, and I knew even if

I didn't tell them, I still got shouted at. But I felt it's the only right thing to do by

telling them. But they were... they didn't shout at me or anything. It's like OK.

They were OK about it. They didn't agree to it, but they didn't say no either. (...)

And my mum was OK about that. I think it is because she got over the shock of

her children having boyfriends and girlfriends at a very young age because of my

brother. So, like he is a dentist now, even though he got married at 17. So it's, my

mum is OK, fair enough.

(Girl11, aged 16)

This girl indicated the need for telling her parents rather than discussing it with them. Her mother 'got over the shock' of her children's behaviour, and did not shout at her, but said nothing. When asked whether she discussed personal relationships with her parents, Girl11 replied:

<laugh> Sort of, yeah, not, not really in detail or anything sometimes. Like, she,

I won't bring the subject, normally it's her. She would ask me something, then I

just like, I give her one-word answers or something <laugh>.

(Girl11, aged 16)

These data suggested that discussion about sex and relationships was infrequent and one-sided in these families. It was rare for the parents to bring up the topic; however,

when they did, it was normally about warning their children. For example, Mother11, who had a brief talk about sexual relationships with her children, explained:

> *I said to them that they should be serious and not do it for fun. If they have sex and have babies afterwards, they should be responsible for the rest of their lives. I just told them very briefly. Chinese people are too conservative and embarrassed to talk about these things. I just talked a little bit, and let them to think about it themselves.*
> *(Mother11, *Chinese)*

The parents tended to have such a brief talk when they became aware of their children having a close relationship. For example, Father17 warned his older son about not doing something wrong when he had a girlfriend. Similarly, the teenagers were aware of the warning of their parents.

> *They've never spoken about it. The only thing, they just say being careful, and stuff like that. But like, I don't think they mean to me. (...) Like they say 'don't do anything stupid'. But they never just say directly. They just hint it.*
> *(Boy3, aged 19)*

Boy3 was the only boy and the oldest child in his family. He indicated that his parents warned his younger sisters, but not him, about being careful. The girls seemed to be vulnerable and to be a great concern to their parents. For example, not knowing her parents' view of teenage sex, Girl14 perceived that her parents were worried about her being sexually active and pregnant.

I don't know. They don't really say, but obviously they would worry thinking I am

pregnant in secondary now, and then I have to get married. But they would, they

keep their fingers crossed, and hope that I'd wait until the right time and not do

it, like, at my teenager's age.

(Girl14, aged 17)

The girls repeatedly reported that their parents did not discuss their sexual values, but they were told it was not right to have sex as a teenager.

Not really. I mean they said kind of like brief things, such as like, you know, don't

sleep with a boy <laugh>, or make sure you don't, you know, let the guy, let the

boy touch you, or whatever. It's just like, really, like, you can imagine if, maybe

an eight-year-old understands that rather than actually they don't go into depth

thing.

(Girl11, aged 16)

I think they have, quite a long time ago. But I think they know I understand it

anyway, so they've not really talked about it, not recently anyway. (...) I think,

maybe just as a parent, they want to inform their child just things to look out for.

I don't remember. I remember that they've said about it.

(Girl20, aged 19)

Like these girls, the parents presented particular worries for their daughters. For example, Father2 told his 16-year-old daughter, but not his 23-year-old son, about 'no sex before marriage'.

I had a talk with my daughter. She is a girl, so I talked about this with her when we were watching TV. She told me it's not good to do this. I said 'yes, it's not right. You should not do this even when you are older and have a boyfriend. It's OK to do it after marriage'.
(Father2, *English & Chinese)

When asked why he did not talk to his son, Father2 said that it was because he was 23 and he did not watch Chinese television programmes. His son went to his room after dinner and he and his daughter normally watched television together for a while, so that they could have a chance to talk. However, it might be questioned that this father brought up the topic because 'she is a girl'. Parents' double standards were still apparent. When asked about her views of teenage sex, a mother commented that she did not know, because she did not have a daughter. She continued:

We had a survey. One of my friends said that if she had had a son, she would not be against him with someone's daughter. But she didn't want her daughter to be with boys. (...) Cantonese people say that it is acceptable if our sons have sex with girls because they are our own sons, but other people's daughters are at a disadvantage.
(Mother12, *Chinese)

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The double standards might prevent girls talking about their relationships with their parents. It was not only personal relationships, but also any sex-related topics, such as puberty, sex education and sex, that teenagers were less likely to talk about to their parents. Exceptionally, the girls reported that their mothers had talked about puberty before their first periods. However, they consistently noted that they just told their mothers when they started periods.

Actually, I've never talked to them about that apart from I had my first period. (...) That's the time that I really had to say 'mum I have to get things', you know, because you get at school as well when you are at primary 7, you get told about puberty, you know that. So I didn't really have to ask my mum about it. I just needed to like, tell my mum, I needed to giggle, gave me some towels, too embarrassed to get them.
(Girl1, aged 18)

Puberty? Have I discussed with somebody? I think I've talked to my mum about it, but then again it's not a really frequently discussed topic. So I mean apart from, just like, I talk to my friends about that, if there are any problems that arise, I talk to my friends.
(Girl20, aged 19)

Mirroring the teenagers' reports, the parents also did not feel confident or comfortable talking about puberty. The mothers, although sometimes talking briefly about it with their daughters, expressed difficulties in discussing it with their sons. As indicated by

Mother7, they might borrow a book for their teenage children to avoid 'going into the nitty-gritty'.

Regarding sex education, it was also not a common topic in the family. The teenagers repeatedly noted that their parents were unaware of the sex education they had at school, as they had not talked about it at home. Exceptionally, they perceived that their parents knew, through the information given by school.

I don't think they know actually, because I've never talked about that sort of subjects to my parents, because they just think it's either maths, or English, a language, or art I do at school.
(Boy9, aged 17)

I don't think I actually told them, but I am sure they knew because it's part of the curriculum of our school. So I am sure they knew, but I never went up and said, oh, I had sex education today at school or anything.
(Girl17, aged 19)

The teenagers thought that sex education at school, as a course for them, was not of interest to their parents. Therefore, they felt that it did not matter whether or not their parents knew.

They won't want to know anyway, because it's kind of for me. I don't think they are bothered about it if they don't know about it.
(Girl8, aged 16)

I don't really discuss my school life with them, because it's nothing really, I don't find school interesting enough to tell them.

(Girl2, aged 16)

Similarly, the parents reported that they did not know what was involved in sex education, although they might be aware of the course taking place.

According to the data presented, parent-child communication had covered certain topics. The teenagers were more willing to talk about everyday life, education or future career to their parents, but less willing to talk about social life, personal relationships or sex-related topics, which they talked about with their friends. A few barriers influenced these conversations with their parents.

5.3.3 Barriers of parent-child communication

As reported in section 5.2.1, parents' lack of available time significantly influenced the opportunities for parent-child communication. There were a few other obstacles identified by the teenagers and parents, which contributed to the insufficient communication, including language barriers, embarrassment, understanding between generations and different interests.

5.3.3.1 Language barriers

Language barriers were the major issues presented by the teenagers. Born in Britain, the teenagers regarded English as their first language, which they spoke to most people except their parents. They preferred to speak English, but they perceived that their parents' English was not good enough to understand 'too big words and too difficult words'. With thought and effort, they might be able to express themselves in Chinese, but they were not very keen to make this effort. For example, when asked about the language spoken to his parents, a boy reported:

Chinese, but I am quite bad at it sometimes and they don't speak English. Then they don't understand what I am saying. So it's a dead-end. (...) I am not really good at Chinese. So sometimes I've to use English words, but they don't understand me. So I am going to talk to somebody else. (...) They can understand some English words, but it's just if I go too fancy, you know, like, too big words and too difficult words, they won't understand me. Sometimes I can get through to my point in Chinese. I just gradually go step by step, but sometimes like, a lot of times I don't get it through. I just leave it.
(Boy19, aged 16)

The teenagers learned Chinese mainly from their parents. They felt it difficult to discuss a topic that had not been talked about by their parents. For instance, a girl felt more comfortable talking about personal relationships with her friends rather than with her parents, recounting the difficulty in a typical way - she did not know enough Chinese to discuss the topic.

I think it'll be harder with your parents. And again there is also the language that I find as well, which is quite hard sometimes, because obviously, most of my Cantonese is developed from speaking to my parents. So if some sort of, like a big topic, I haven't spoken to them, I don't really know the language to describe it. (…) I am not that fluent in Cantonese. So something that I don't know how to express it as well as I could be in English. So therefore I probably feel more comfortable talking to my friends because they speak English.
(Girl20, aged 19)

Boy4 expressed the same view, and stressed that his parents wanted to speak Chinese to him all the time.

My parents want to speak Chinese to me and my first language is English. It kind of makes discussing things a bit harder, because you know, I speak Cantonese and it's not very, that good, or it'll get me by. So, sometimes it's quite hard to discuss things with my parents because they are speaking Cantonese. Sometimes I don't have the vocabularies to use, to speak to them. When it's more complex, it's kind of difficult to speak Chinese.
(Boy4, aged 18)

In fact, his parents, a lecturer and an English-Chinese interpreter, were more than capable of speaking English. It was of interest to note that neither of his parents referred to the language barriers. Exceptionally, the parents indicated this difficulty. For example, Mother15 reported:

I speak Cantonese to him, but the communication is not that good. If you say open the door, he might shut the door. If you want him to take something, he doesn't know what you are saying. But he is good at English. If he has questions to ask, I make sure I understand the meaning. It is difficult to communicate with him. I have to guess what he is saying. I have to ask him if it is like this. I have to explain to him before I answer his questions.
(Mother15, *Chinese)

Compared to the teenagers, the parents were less aware of the language barriers. Born in Hong Kong or Mainland China, the parents preferred to speak their first language, Chinese, to their children. They realised to some extent that their children, born or raised in Britain, were more willing to speak their first language, English. For example, a mother of two girls moved to Britain with her 4-year-old daughter and her younger daughter was British born, expressing the unwillingness of her daughters to speak Chinese and the necessity for her to speak some English.

I prefer to speak Mandarin with them, but sometimes they answer my questions in English. If there is something that they cannot understand, I have to explain it in English. (...) They are not willing to speak Chinese. My younger daughter can speak very little Mandarin, and my older daughter can speak a little.
(Mother4, *Chinese)

These data showed the language barriers between generations. There was little problem for them in talking about daily life, nonetheless it was hard to discuss topics, such as

puberty, personal relationships and sex-related topics. If the parents were not able to or not willing to speak English, the teenagers found it difficult to discuss these issues with their parents. The ability and willingness of the parents to speak English influenced the quantity and quality of parent-child communication.

5.3.3.2 Embarrassment

Embarrassment was another barrier preventing parent-child communication about puberty, sex education and any sex-related topics. The teenagers felt it too embarrassing to talk about these topics to their parents.

> *I don't think that sex is an easy topic for us, for any parents, I think, unless you have, unless you do have, want to come to that issue.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

> *No. I don't think many people would talk about it with their parents. I think it will be very embarrassing, even if they get on well with their parents.*
> *(Boy3, aged 19)*

According to these data, it was difficult for 'any parents', no matter whether or not parent-child relationships were good. For example, when asked his parents' views of teenage sex, a boy with a good parent-child relationship, replied:

I think they are pretty embarrassed to talk about it. So I am not really that sure.

But if they talked as well, and I think they would have the same view as me.

(Boy6, aged 19)

This boy perceived that his parents, instead of him, were embarrassed to talk about it. This was indicated in another boy's report.

I think they discourage it, but we don't talk. Their views are not very open. (…)

They are always very shy to talk about it.

(Boy10, aged 18)

Similarly, the parents highlighted the difficulties and embarrassment. They repeatedly noted that 'we Chinese are too conservative' to talk about these things. The mothers described how difficult it was to tell their children how babies were born. Mothers referred to both stone and the anus.

<Laugh> Hong Kong people always say we are from stone. He asked me one day

'mum, didn't you tell me I was from stone?'

*(Mother12, *Chinese)*

When my son was young, he asked me where he was from. He told his classmates

he was from the anus. His western classmates all laughed at him, and said he was

so stupid and silly. My son came home and told me that his classmates told him

that he was not from the anus, but from there. I just felt it too difficult to tell him.

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I told him he was from my anus. It's too embarrassing. But I told my daughter

where she is from, of course, not from my anus.

(Mother5, *Chinese)

These data suggested that both teenagers and parents felt too embarrassed to talk about sex-related topics.

5.3.3.3 Understanding between generations

Understanding between generations was another barrier. The teenagers considered that their friends understood them better than their parents. They described their parents as 'misunderstanding', 'misleading' or 'not smart'. The lack of understanding had an impact on general family communication. The teenagers avoided discussing things with their parents because they did not want to end up with an argument.

I don't think they are that smart. If I discuss with them, they would just say things

are stupid. Like if I say that you should move the furniture like this, they'll say

you should move like that, and it wouldn't be right. (...) Their idea is not as

good, normally, isn't it? So I just leave it out. If they say, I think, you should do

this for, or yeah, OK, a lot of times we just argue about it.

(Boy3, aged 19)

Understanding was related to trust, which enhanced the quality of communication. For example, a 17-year-old girl reported good communication with her father, rather than her mother, because of the understanding and trust. She explained:

My dad quite understands me, and he does trust me. But my mum, she is a bit wobbly, like, when I go out, when I go to a guy's house, she might get worried and think I've been raped. You know, she knows his parents, and they are quite nice people, but she still doesn't really trust them. So it's a bit hard to communicate with her sometimes. (...) If I've argued with my dad, at the end I would realise that he is right, no matter what it was. I think what he says, I think it makes sense. I think I communicate with him better.
(Girl14, aged 17)

The parents were regarded as 'a protective shell'. They might over protect or worry too much, which resulted in lack of understanding and trust between generations. Girl14 further explained the worries of her mother this way.

She worries about me. It's quite hard to get her to believe me in something that I do. Or sometimes she could just guess and say, oh, you are going out with a boyfriend then. And I am like, I have no boyfriend, but sometimes she pretends she understands it, so that to force me to say, yeah, I've got a boyfriend, but really I don't. (...) Or sometimes she is trying to get me to trust her in something. And I would think and say, oh, 'why don't you trust me, if you want me to trust you?' (...) Sometimes I try to, like compromise with her, and like, be honest to her. But sometimes when I am too honest, she doesn't like what I'm saying.
(Girl14, aged 17)

Her father was also worried about her, but the understanding between them made the communication easier. Her mother forcing her to say that she had got a boyfriend annoyed her. She could say anything to her mother no matter whether or not she was listening. In the later part of the interview, this girl gave a vivid example of her parents' different reactions to her fake tattoo after her holiday.

If I say some stuff to my dad, he would go, oh, I don't really care, it's up to you, really it's your life, he would say that. He would worry, but he wouldn't worry in such way to shout at me. Like, I got this little henna. It's just like a herbal thing, a herbal dye. It's going off now. It was really black when I came back from France. I said to my dad in the car. It's like don't worry, it's not real, it'll fade. That's like, oh, I don't care. It's like, ok, my mum would, and I remembered my mum said, she's like, I know is that real? Is that real? I was like, oh, no. She thought it's a real tattoo. She though it was a tattoo. I said 'no, mum, it's not'. But she's, like, I would kill you if you got one.
(Girl14, aged 17)

She perceived that her father gave her more freedom to choose what she liked. Nonetheless, although she reported that her mother did not give her many rules, her mother's reaction indicated that she was worried and wanted to have some control over her. However, the lack of understanding between them and her mother's way of expressing her worries influenced the quality of their communication.

Different values between generations had some impact on parent-child discussion of personal relationships and marriage. For instance, Girl17 said:

I think it's because back then when my parents got married, things would be a lot different. It was like when you met a girl, you knew like, a month or something, or months, and your parents agreed and you could get married, and then you got married. But now it's a lot different. You could be with someone for ten years and you couldn't, you don't need to get married. You could just stay with them, and just live as a couple. So it's maybe because our views are quite different, so I don't really want to talk to them about it, because they would just say what they think is right, but I won't think it's right.

(Girl17, aged 19)

The teenagers thought that their parents had different attitudes towards sex and marriage. However, they were not willing to discuss these different values with their parents, in order to avoid conflicts.

Compared to the teenagers, the parents were aware of little about this lack of understanding. Exceptionally, they indicated this phenomenon. For instance, Father19, having a better relationship with his son than his wife, as he spent more time with his son when he was young, indicated the difficulty of understanding.

We watch TV, or sometimes talk. He seldom shares things with me because I don't understand, so I can't help him. He asks us questions sometimes. He is growing up, and he rarely tells us his inner feelings. We start sharing things with him. ...We only talk about general things, but he doesn't tell us his big problems.

(Father19, *Chinese)

This father and his wife, Mother13, described their son as a very introverted boy, who talked about his inner feelings neither to friends nor to parents. The ability to understand and to help his son was not reported by his wife, but she implied that her son's character might result from the limited time she spent with him when he was young. She complained that her son spent most time on his computer rather than with her although she had time now. It was evident that the lack of time resulted in lack of opportunity to know each other, and thus in turn influenced parent-child communication, especially when the children were getting older.

5.3.3.4 Interests

Parent's lack of time might lead to their lack of attention to their children's interests. When there was less parental interest, the teenagers tended to seek help and advice from their friends. Thus the time and communication with parents became less and less. For example, an 18-year-old boy wished to talk to his parents about his daily life and hobbies, indicating his parents' lack of interest.

> *I don't really have much I want to talk to them, I guess, because usually it goes no where. They are just not interested. They don't have time to be interested. (...) They're just too tired, sometimes. They come back from work. They just want to relax, sometimes. So we don't talk much usually.*
>
> *(Boy10, aged 18)*

However, when their parents did have time, it did not mean that the teenagers and parents would spend time together. For instance, a boy gave a typical illustration of this phenomenon.

My mum just watches TV. I just go into my room and play on the computer, something like that, just in the same house. So because my mum gets nothing to do, she just watches TV. That's what you do when you get older. You don't have much to do, and you get older and older.
(Boy18, aged 16)

This boy felt that his mother had nothing to do, but to watch television and get older. His parents separated when he was eight and his two half-sisters moved out. Only he and his mother were living in the house. His mother presented the similar picture and expressed a sense of sadness and loneliness because of reduced interaction when he grew up. It was not until the dinner was ready that this boy was called out of his room.

He talked to me when he was young. He is older now, so he does his own things and I do mine. I watch TV all day, and he plays on his computer. I am getting older and he has grown up, so it is not possible to be as close as we used to be. I feel a little bit lonely.
(Mother15, *Chinese)

A 16-year-old boy, whose parents run a Chinese takeaway, described another picture. Although he could see his parents sometimes, such as after their work or in the shop when he helped them out, they might talk about something in general, but nothing like

new CDs. When his parents had a day off, three members of the family did three different things – he playing on his computer, his mother sleeping and his father watching television.

> *We have a day off, Monday, but if they are in the house, my mum normally sleeps. (...) She is tired, or just like sleeping. And my dad watches TV, my dad watches his TV. That's what he likes. And I'll be upstairs to my room to play on the computer or something. And then sometimes I just go and see a film.*
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

The parents felt that their children did not need their company, now that they were grown up. Consistent with teenagers' reports, they noted that playing on computers was the favourite activity of their children at home. Due to parents' available time, they had little time to pay attention to their children's interests and hobbies, and thus in turn influenced parent-child communication.

5.3.4 Improvement of communication

Communication is a two-way process. Considering the barriers of parent-child communication, the teenagers and parents noted various ways of improving their communication. The teenagers indicated that communication would be better if their parents could listen to them a bit more.

My mum doesn't listen. My mum goes angry easily. So I don't really talk to her

very much.

(Boy18, aged 16)

I would like to if she would listen. (...) I am really honest to my mum, but a lot of

time she doesn't really listen. She goes mm, mm, mm. You're not listening, mum,

mm.

(Girl14, aged 17)

The teenagers stressed that it was the parents' responsibility to initiate and teach their children how to communicate. Boy3, having lived with his father since his parents separated, was not satisfied with the communication with his parents. He commented:

I think it should be parents' job. The children won't go straight to the parents and

say 'can we talk about something?' The parents should always say if there is

anything you want to say. If you tell us, we are happy to help you. (...) But for a

lot of children, they'll have to learn to do it first. If the parents, they should be

older and they should be wiser. So, if they tell them first time, then the children

might want to, like easier, for them to talk to them next time.

(Boy3, aged 19)

As argued by this boy, parents, being older and wiser, should initiate communication when children were young. On the other hand, it might be hard for children to initiate a conversation first, as Girl1 indicated.

Sometimes we don't really have much to say. So I have to like, find a way of

making conversation with them.

(Girl1, aged 18)

However, the parents expressed a different point of view, reporting that they tried to

help their children when they were troubled although their children did not want their

help sometimes. Mother7, at home all the time to look after her disabled child, spent

limited time talking to her two other children, but she did ask them about their

problems and tried to help them. Although her daughter did not report this help from

her mother in the interview, Mother7 noted:

If they are unhappy, I would ask them, you know, 'what's the problem? can I

help?' you know. They don't want me to help. I try to think 'what could I do to

help them'. I do talk to them a bit, you know, when I see they are puzzled, they

are not happy or they are stuck with something, but my children always tell me

things as well. (...) It's communication in that way, but very lack of time in

communication with sort of just talking deeply about, you know, how they feel.

(Mother7, *English)

As far as sensitive or uncomfortable topics, such as sex education or personal

relationships, were concerned, the teenagers indicated that they felt a little embarrassed

if their parents brought up the issues first.

If they ask me, I'll tell them. But I wouldn't just go and come back home and say that today I had sex education.

(Girl2, aged 16)

I think it could be a lot of things. I don't know. Like you mean on the sex topic, I think we don't bring up like that much. But then again if my mum starts to talk about it, I don't really have a problem to talk about it. I don't know. It's like, we don't, I don't think we're shy of talking about it. We just don't bring it up that much some of these topics, (...) like boy-girl relationships, and like all women problems, things like that. We've talked about it, but it's not that often.

(Girl20, aged 19)

Media in the form of television played a significant role in parent-child communication. Commenting on television programmes was another chance for talking about sex-related topics between generations.

<Laugh> We don't often talk about it, but let's say if there is something on the news about teenagers, then we start talking about it. But if not, we don't talk about it. (...) Well, they tell me like that it's too young. But I know it's too young as well. It's just kind of criticism, like, or they say, you know, their parents are not looking after them well, you know. You know their lives are miserable, like that because young teenage mum, it's like, because she goes out of school early, and so her life would be really bad. If she has drug abuse, it will be hard as well.

(Girl8, aged 16)

Similarly, the parents used media to assist communication. They reported that although they did not directly talk about their sexual values, they let their children acknowledge their values by discussing television programmes.

Sometimes they watch a lot of soap operas, you know, soap thing, you know, from television. It gives you an example of how these people have sort of relationships, how they behave with each other, how they get on with each other. We sort of say, oh, that's a good case, oh, that's a bad case, a sort of. We discuss through the television's soaps.
(Mother7, *English)

Exceptionally, the teenagers might play a leading role in communication, using every single chance to talk to their parents. For example, Boy6 noted that he talked to his parents for about 10 minutes whenever he went out. He explained this way.

Usually what I do if I go out for fun, I'd tell them, like if we play football and someone did some really cool, then I'd tell her. They may not really care, but this is what I think anyway. I think I should communicate with my parents quite a bit more.
(Boy6, aged 19)

This boy still talked about football to his parents although he realised that they might not be really interested. However, the ability to communicate with his parents increased somewhat with age. Boy6 did not feel comfortable asking his parents about certain questions when he was young.

If you asked me this question three years ago, when I was 16, I had a lot to say,

because I didn't know back then. I didn't know I could ask my parents about girls,

about life in general what I am supposed to be like. Then, yeah, I would ask about

that, but now there is nothing, there is not many, there is not much I don't ask my

parents.

(Boy6, aged 19)

This boy felt close and understood his parents more when he got older, and his parents

even asked him for advice when they had troubles or arguments. Communication

increased mutual understanding and interaction between generations.

In addition, the parents were perceived to be more concerned about their children's

educational achievements, but not others, such as sporting achievements.

I tell my parents the parts they want to know when I get As, you know that. I don't

tell them about smaller things. That's just not necessary.

(Girl2, aged 16)

They don't really understand what the achievement means, or they don't really

care. They only care about my own personal school or uni education

achievement. They don't really care about my other sporting achievements, you

know that. I think it's the only thing that I want to speak to them, but they don't

reply to me at all.

(Boy7, aged 19)

The teenagers and parents presented various potential ways of improving parent-child communication. The teenagers highly valued initiation of conversations by parents. Thus, they implied that they could have learnt and developed their communication skills. In addition, the teenagers felt that they would be more willing to discuss their inner feelings and values if their parents were active listeners and paid attention to their achievements, other than education.

5.4 Summary

This chapter focused on three themes, parental sexual values, parent-child relationships and parent-child communication.

Compared to the sexual values of the teenagers (section 4.1), the parents presented a more conservative view, which was influenced by both Chinese culture and religious beliefs. Premarital sex or sex outside a loving relationship was not acceptable. They expected their children to concentrate on education and have a girl/boyfriend at a later age. Unlike the teenagers, who were restrained in their own sexual behaviour, but tolerant of others, the parents disapproved both of their children having sex and of teenage sex in general.

The teenagers had a close relationship with their parents, which was influenced by time with parents, understanding between generations and communication. The teenagers tended to talk about trivial topics to their parents, while social life, personal relationships and sex were rarely discussed. Language barriers, embarrassment,

understanding and different interests contributed to limited communication about these topics. Although direct communication about sex or relationships was not common, the parents transmitted their sexual values indirectly through hinting, warning or commenting on television programmes. Through these means, they felt that their children realised parental values.

Lastly, the teenagers and parents provided perspectives on the improvement of parent-child communication. The teenagers valued highly conversations initiated by parents, so that they felt that they could have learnt and developed their communication skills from their parents. In addition, parents' interests in matters other than their educational achievements were highlighted.

CHAPTER 6: THE INFLUENCE OF CHINESE ETHNICITY

Ethnic differences in teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour were reported in the literature. This chapter examines the influence of Chinese ethnicity on the sexual attitudes and behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers.

Chapter five presented the influence of family, by examining parental sexual values, parent-child relationships and communication. Direct parent-child communication about sex or relationships was rare, and various factors influenced such communication, but the parents transmitted their sexual values indirectly. The Chinese environment at home further explains how parents influenced sexual values and behaviour of the teenagers.

In section 5.1, the parents highlighted the influence of Chinese culture on their sexual values. This chapter explores how Chinese ethnicity influenced the teenagers. Firstly, the language patterns at home and the teenagers' Chinese language ability are presented. Then Chinese identity of both generations is discussed, and lastly the focus is on how the parents passed on Chinese values to their children by supervising outings and friendships.

6.1 Languages at home

My parents, usually Chinese, but mixed with a bit of English as well, and with my

brother, it's usually English, mixed with a bit of Chinese.

(Girl17, aged 19)

This was a typical picture of the languages teenagers used at home. They considered

their parents' English was poor or did not speak English at all, so that they had to speak

Chinese with them most of the time. This phenomenon was shown in the parents'

reports as well. Mother13, who moved to Britain when her 17-year-old son was 5, said:

He doesn't speak English with me because I cannot speak English. I've been

speaking Cantonese with him since he was young, so he speaks Cantonese with

me.

(Mother13, *Chinese)

The teenagers might speak a little English to teach their parents, as indicated by Girl11

- 'Cantonese with my parents, sometimes English, just to teach them'. Exceptionally,

English was used if parents' English was good, or if the teenagers did not know how to

express themselves in Chinese.

I speak English and Chinese. I sometimes speak English to my parents because

they can understand, and sometimes Chinese as well.

(Boy9, aged 17)

Normally Cantonese. Sometimes if they don't know how to describe things in

Cantonese, they speak English to me. Normally, we use Cantonese, because my

English isn't that good.

(Mother8, *Chinese)

These data suggested that parents' ability in English had an impact on the languages used at home. However, proficiency in English did not always mean that parents would speak English to their children. For example, Mother18, a primary school teacher, commented:

The rule is to speak Cantonese because although my husband and I are all

Mandarin speakers, we thought that the children here spoke Cantonese. If they

don't know Cantonese, it would be difficult to communicate with other children,

so that we speak Cantonese at home. It's turned out that they can speak three

languages.

(Mother18, *Chinese)

As a bilingual schoolteacher, it was no problem for this mother to speak English. However, Cantonese was the dominant language at home because she and her husband were concerned about their children's ability to communicate with other British Chinese children. It is interesting to note that none of the parents were worried about their children's ability to speak English, as they believed that their children had plenty of opportunities to use English beyond the home context. They felt that if they did not speak Chinese at home, their children would have a limited chance to learn and practise

the language. Mother16, an English-Chinese interpreter, commented on why she preferred to speak Chinese this way.

> *I tend not to speak English with them, so that they will speak fluent Cantonese.*
> *Because they speak English no problem, if I don't speak Chinese with them at*
> *home, they would just forget. So now they speak fluent Cantonese.*
> *(Mother16, *English)*

This mother moved to Britain in her teens. Like Mother18, she spoke fluent English, but it was Chinese, rather than English, that she had been using with her children. These mothers' comments indicated that the parents wanted their children to be able to speak fluent Chinese and considered home as the major place for their children's exposure to the language.

In terms of the languages between siblings, English was indicated as the predominant language. The teenagers spoke English most or all the time with their brothers and sisters because they felt more comfortable in English and spoke it more quickly. For example, a 19-year-old girl recounted a typical view.

> *I think it's because I grew up, grew up here. So all the people that I've been*
> *seeing and the culture, it's all like English based. I always use English, and when*
> *I go to school, I use English, and when I go to uni, I use English. So it's just been,*
> *it's been more familiar because it's been used for longer. But Chinese, I am not as*
> *familiar, even though I hear it at home. (...) If I were in Hong Kong, I would go*

to school and I'd learn Chinese. But it's the opposite. I went to Chinese school,

but it's only once a week. So I didn't really, so it's not as fluent as English.

(Girl20, aged 19)

Exceptionally, they spoke Chinese to their siblings for making jokes or due to their siblings' ability in English.

My sisters only speak rough English, but mostly Cantonese because my sisters'

English isn't that good enough, so mostly Cantonese.

(Boy18, aged 16)

Speaking Chinese also made the teenagers feel 'like a family' and closer to their families.

With my brother? It's sometimes English, sometimes Hakka, because it feels more

like a family when you speak Hakka, you know, it feels closer. My granddad

really talks to me in Hakka.

(Girl1, aged 18)

Born and raised in Britain, the teenagers felt that they were 'born to speak English', and were more willing to speak English. However, Chinese was the dominant language that the teenagers spoke to their parents because their parents wanted them to speak fluent Chinese. They switched the languages naturally and quickly, as indicated by a mother of three boys.

Yeah, they can understand [Cantonese]. They can speak a bit. They speak

Cantonese with me and [her husband's name] as well, but they speak English

between them. They can change very quickly.

*(Mother20, *English)*

The teenagers also learned how to write and read Chinese in Chinese language school at weekends when they were young. They started as young as age five, or learned Chinese at GCSE or A-level. However, none of the teenagers indicated that they were good at reading and writing because they went to the school only weekly and did not have much chance to practise.

I've forgotten now. I don't practise reading Chinese, so I can't remember. It's

easy to forget it.

(Boy10, aged 18)

Very little, not fluently, just I can read some, like, simple Chinese. I can't

understand really complicated, like, Chinese.

(Girl20, aged 19)

Learning Chinese was a big challenge for British born Chinese children. They might give up learning Chinese, in order to concentrate on their English. For example, Boy6, expressed the difficulty in continuing his Chinese learning.

Yes, I went for seven years, and I was taught by my grandma quite a lot. When I

did my homework, I would go over her house. She would teach me. But after

seven years, I've found that learning English and Chinese together is quite hard.

So I stopped Chinese to continue my English.

(Boy6, aged 19)

Living in Britain, the teenagers did not care about learning Chinese. Compared to English, Chinese was considered less important and less necessary, as it was hardly used beyond the home context. A 16-year-old boy provided a vivid picture, in which he described how he had not been bothered about learning or writing his name in Chinese.

Some words, but no, I can't read many. I can't even write my name in Chinese characters. I can, but it's just I can't, you have to, you have to give a thought. (...) It's not difficult. It's just I don't really care. I don't, I don't see myself using my name in Chinese or anything, like, because I was born in England. I was born in Britain, so I don't really need Chinese, apart from if I talk to my parents and stuff, and relatives. I don't see myself going back to, like Hong Kong or anything, to do a job or anything.

(Boy19, aged 16)

They might be sent to Chinese school by their parents although they were not interested in learning the language.

Yeah, they want me to do Chinese, but you know, I don't care. They brought me up in England, so they brought me up in Britain, so I was born to speak English.

(Boy19, aged 16)

While growing up, the teenagers became to appreciate their Chinese culture and wished they had learnt more in Chinese school. A 17-year-old girl, who had attended Chinese school for six years and left, was planning to return. However, most of the time, it was very difficult to return, as indicated by a university girl.

I didn't really like it back then, but I sort of wish I continued really because I really want to learn how to write Chinese, but it's too late now. (...) So much to do, but I forgot everything I've done there. So well, I can still speak Chinese. I can read like a bit, a few words, but I would like to learn how to write it, but I don't think I have time any more.
(Girl17, aged 19)

Generally, the teenagers had limited ability to write and read Chinese because they had little time to learn and practise or they might not be bothered to learn. However, it was no problem for them in speaking Chinese, the dominant language spoken to their parents.

6.2 Chinese identity

Chinese language ability was related to their ethnic identity. The issue of ethnicity was complex and debatable. This section presents various perspectives on Chinese identity. Teenagers' views are reported first, followed by the parents'.

'British born Chinese' was a repeated term used by the teenagers to describe their ethnic identity.

British born Chinese. If I was asked my nationality being British, but my ethnic

origin being Chinese.

(Girl11, aged 16)

In terms of Chinese identity, the physical difference partly contributed to the sense of this identity, as they were 'born to be Chinese'. For example, Girl14, who expressed a strong Chinese identity, said:

I think it's quite important because I am born to be Chinese, like, even though I

went to a different place, with full of different people. I still, I like being Chinese.

It's different, unique. (...) Yeah, I like it, because I look different anyway, so why

should I pretend to be someone else I am not.

(Girl14, aged 17)

Similarly, Boy3 stressed the distinguishing features as a reason for his developing Chinese identity.

British born Chinese in the UK. You are still British. But you've always been

Chinese because people won't look at you and think, oh, he is British right away.

They will think Chinese first because you look like.

(Boy3, aged 19)

On the other hand, in terms of British identity, the teenagers felt more comfortable being British/Scottish rather than being Chinese.

I don't mind. I really see myself a Scottish person. I don't really see myself Chinese. I mean obviously, of course, I mean I am Chinese, you know, because sort of the way I look and the way I speak sort of, but I just, I see myself Scottish more than Chinese. I do go back to Hong Kong. I just sort of blend in as well.
(Girl17, aged 19)

I've still got some Chinese. But I feel that I'm more like, I'm more like adapted to the Scottish culture rather to the Chinese, not so much the Chinese. Because I was born here and I just got used to the culture here. So like I've been back to Hong Kong a couple of times for a short time. Because I am so used to living here that going back to Hong Kong and adapting to that culture seems totally different. So it's much different. So I am not saying that Chinese is bad, but I think, I feel much more like, it's, I think being in Scotland like my comfort zone. I feel more comfortable, like speaking English, you know that.
(Girl20, aged 19)

In these cases, they saw themselves as predominantly Scottish/British and considered Britain as their home country, as they were more familiar with English and western culture. Born and raised in Britain, they found it difficult to adapt to the Chinese culture where their parents came from.

However, regardless of how British/Scottish they felt, they still had some Chinese identity. They did not consider themselves as pure British because their parents were Chinese.

I don't know how to describe the national identity. I think I would have a mixture

of both, like, being born here and my parents being Chinese. So I would try to

keep them level.

(Boy9, aged 17)

I don't really classify myself as totally British, so it's like because like, I was born

in Britain, but my family actually are Chinese. So it's kind of hard to say I am

British, and I can't say I am Chinese. I always, I think to myself that probably

like half, half kind of thing.

(Boy18, aged 16)

At the same time, they did not see themselves being pure Chinese, because they were

not good at Chinese, although they could speak Chinese. They considered it difficult to

be called Chinese because their English was better than Chinese.

Chinese, but can speak English fluently, British born Chinese, because it's quite

hard to describe, because we are same Chinese, you might think I am really good

in writing and reading, but not really, I could be better in English. It's quite

complicated to describe it.

(Girl14, aged 17)

These teenagers tried to balance their British identity and Chinese identity. They

appreciated the benefits of living in two different cultures, remembering where they

were from and being proud of the rich Chinese culture and western culture as well.

Well, it's quite important. It does, it does make my perspective on life different, like my thinking and my thoughts. Like, more well races, for example, and also more well for different cultures as well, from both sides, like western and eastern. So it feels more informal as well.

(Boy10, aged 18)

I think it's really important. I sort of stick a lot from Chinese traditions, a lot of things. I still think quite, like, old fashions, well like, I think, I guess, I am really Chinese for someone was born in the UK. (...) I think it is because my parents are quite, a lot, well, they are quite a lot older than me, they had me quite old, and because both of my big brothers, one is 11 and one is 7 years older than me. So the age gap is quite big, and so I can learn from them. They are also old fashioned as well.

(Girl11, aged 16)

These two identities were hardly connected. Being Scottish or being Chinese depended on situations, groups of friends and environments. For example, the teenagers presented an indoor and outdoor phenomenon, in which they saw their identity differently.

I see myself as Chinese to my parents and to some of my friends. But I see myself as a Scottish person because I go to, I was born here, I go to Scottish school, and my friends, all, most of my friends are Scottish. So I call myself, I call myself a Scottish person, or British person.

(Girl8, aged 16)

I don't think it's a really big problem not until you, not until you realised that you are Chinese. Sometimes you don't think you are Chinese. (...) Like there was an incident that I was the face, I was the only Chinese girl there, and then, a guy shouted out something Chinese. I go, oh, no. <laugh> Don't look at me. Don't look at me. It's only when, you know, in situations that you would find yourself, you are Chinese (...) because you look like Chinese, but sometime she might not act as Chinese, as you do like two different things. You go out you're a Scottish person, in the house you're a Chinese person.
(Girl1, aged 18)

These girls saw themselves as Chinese to their parents indoors, but Scottish to other people outdoors. When outside of the home context, they hardly realised their Chinese identity because they had adapted to the western culture and acted as Scottish people.

These data reported how the teenagers saw their ethnic identities. There were a range of views, from those who saw themselves as predominantly Chinese, to those who saw themselves as predominantly Scottish, with some complexities for all. The identities were also defined according to different contexts.

Compared to the teenagers, the parents presented a slightly different perspective. No matter where they were living now, they considered themselves as Chinese because they had 'Chinese blood'.

I am still proud that I am Chinese. I won't say I am not Chinese because I am

here for so long. I still trust myself as pure Chinese, but it happened to be I am in

the UK.

(Mother16, *English)

My nationality should be British, but in my mind I am still Chinese. (...) Holding

a British passport does not mean that you are British. It's not like that.

(Mother4, *Chinese)

According to these reports, having a British passport did not interfere with their

Chinese identity. Having lived in Britain for many years and understanding British

people's perspectives, they still found it difficult to adapt to British culture. For

example, a college lecturer, who had been in Britain for nearly 30 years, considered

himself British officially and Chinese culturally.

I am a teacher. When I am going out, to say, for an official engagement, then

probably people will look at, well, you are coming from a British institution.

Culturally, then I think, well, they, everybody would look at me as Chinese. Yeah,

so I think I am also looking at myself in this way. Culturally, I am representing

Chinese, the Chinese culture in this country, yeah, in Britain. But to say, in some

official manner, we are Chinese representing Britain.

(Father1, *English)

However, the parents felt that it was difficult to change their Chinese values and the

way of thinking and doing things, no matter how long they had been in Britain.

I am Chinese, of course. I came here in my twenties, not very young. I had grown

up, so I have Chinese thinking and everything.

(Father14, *English & Chinese)

Yes, it's important. If you ask me how, it's very difficult to answer. (...) I think it

directs my ways of thinking, or my thought, or my value. When we look at things,

then probably we're very naturally, but we'll look at all these my background, the

influence, the way I'm looking at things. Of course, being living in this country

for so long, I also appreciate why people, why the western people would behave

in another way, or different from Chinese way, and I also learn their perspective.

(Father1, *English)

These two fathers moved to Britain in their twenties when they had formed their

concept of values. However, the parents who came to Britain in their childhood, shared

the same view. For example, Mother7, who had been living in Britain from age 10,

highlighted the importance of Chinese culture to her and wanted to pass on the culture

to her children.

Very important to me. I think I like to teach my children the attitudes of Chinese

original culture. I think it's very important to remember that culture and to pass

it on to your children.

(Mother7, *English)

The degree of integrating with British culture and the importance of Chinese origin was related. For example, Mother11 moved to Britain at age 17, considering her Chinese origin less important, as she did not have any 'special needs'.

> *I don't know how to answer. It doesn't matter as if I was British. I don't have*
> *any special needs. (...) I've adapted to the life here. I am integrated with this*
> *society.*
> *(Mother11, *Chinese)*

These special needs might mean language barriers, as indicated by Mother9, who expressed her wish to be good at English when she came to Britain at age 23.

> *Yes, I am getting used to it. I wished that I were not Chinese when I started living*
> *here. As living in this foreign country, I wished to integrate with the main stream*
> *society, and I wished to listen to and speak English as well as the British. But*
> *now I've been here for so many years. I've got used to. It doesn't matter.*
> *(Mother9, *Chinese)*

All these data demonstrated different attitudes towards Chinese identity between generations. Parents appeared more likely to retain their Chinese values and tried to pass them on to their children. Exposed to two different cultures, the teenagers were trying hard to bridge the gap between the Chinese culture of their parents and the western culture of the society they were living in.

6.3 Parental supervision

Parental supervision is an important practice for parents, which has significant influences on sexual attitudes and behaviour of teenagers, as established in the literature. This section focuses on how parents passed on Chinese values to their children by supervising their behaviour. Living in Britain, the parents highlighted the importance of Chineseness of their children, such as speaking Chinese and behaving as Chinese regarding outings and making friends. They regarded these behaviours as part of being Chinese and had some special rules for their children. Supervision of outings and friendships is explored in the following section.

6.3.1 Supervision of going out

The teenagers reported that there were few strict rules at home regarding their outings. However, they told their parents their whereabouts and the time of return before they went out, because they understood that their parents were worried about them. In this section, rules at home, telling parents their whereabouts and time of return are reported in turn.

6.3.1.1 No strict rules

None of the teenagers reported that there were any strict rules at home although there might have been some when they were younger. For instance, before age 16, they had to ask their parents' permission to go out and be back by a certain time; if they did not come back on time they might be punished; if their parents did not agree, they could

not go. After they turned 16, however, their parents started to allow them to go out more often and stay out later in the evening. The teenagers felt that they had been given freedom and independence, because their parents could not control their lives, but could trust them.

> *Well, I suppose they believe they don't have control of me, and so they just have to trust me, I guess. (...) They can't control every aspect of my life. So I guess, so they, I guess they have to give me some freedom.*
> *(Boy10, aged 18)*

Similarly, this boy's sister said:

> *My mum says that she doesn't give us rules, to try to give us independence, so that we decide what's right, what's wrong. Because if they give us rules, we might break them anyway, or not like them. But I kind of worry anyway if I was to go home late. So they don't really give me any rules.*
> *(Girl14, aged 17)*

In line with the teenagers, Mother5 said 'you have to trust them. If you don't trust them, it'll give you much pain. (...) I had no choice, but let them go'. The parents repeatedly indicated how difficult it was not to allow their children to go out, and complained that they could not stop their children going out by saying no, but none of the teenagers presented this phenomenon. For instance, Mother9 reported:

Sometimes I say you can't go, but they don't listen. They still go. Sometimes if I say a little more, they would say to me 'We want to go. Why don't you allow us to go? Why can't we go'? They always say a lot to persuade me. Sometimes I don't want them to go, but they always go. They don't pay attention to what parents say. They just tell you where they are going.

(Mother9, *Chinese)

The parents were aware that they should give their children more freedom, as too much control might result in rebelling against them or cheating them. They felt that the only thing they could do was to warn their children.

I could say no before, but not now, because if you say no, he might cheat you, or not tell you. I let him go out now. If I know the person with whom he goes is not very good, I'll tell him to be careful. I didn't give him much freedom before, but I give him more now. I ask him to tell me where he is going and with whom he is going out.

(Mother15, *Chinese)

According to teenagers' reports, parents' poor ability in English was a reason that they had to give their children some freedom. These parents might not be very familiar with the world outside their home and felt less able to control their children's lives due to the restriction of poor English. In addition, they depended on their children's help. As a consequence of this help, they gave their children more independence as a reward, as indicated by Girl2.

It's because like they don't know English. So I've always been brought up to be

independent, because I have to help them, because they don't know English. So, I

think they give me that kind of freedom.

(Girl2, aged 16)

In addition, the teenagers noted that they were allowed to go out, if they did not go out

a lot and were responsible.

They would let me go. It's just like, I don't go out a lot. They know I don't drink

or something. So that's OK.

(Boy19, aged 16)

Not really because I don't go out that often. I hardly really go out. So if I come

home and say 'mum, can I go out?' she will let me go.

(Girl12, aged 16)

Similarly, the parents explained that they never had to say no because their children did

not go out often and always let them know their whereabouts. They even encouraged

their children to go out more with friends and stay out longer if they found their

children were introverted and stayed at home most of the time.

However, not all teenagers, especially girls, perceived their parents to be permissive

towards their outings. When not allowed, they might 'find a way' to go out -

persuading their parents until parents gave in at the end.

I would find ways to go out. If she won't allow me, I would, like, nag her, moan at her and make her, like, can't be bothered listening to me. (...) Like, I just keep saying 'mum, I want to go', just to annoy her until she says yes.
(Girl1, aged 18)

The teenagers said that their parents did not want them to go out in the evening and tried their best to keep them in, such as by giving them a limit or using an excuse.

I don't really go out as often as I like, I suppose. It's like if I go out last night, then I couldn't go out Sunday night, you know. (...) I've got a limit. It's like how many times I can go, probably like, twice a month or something, you know.
(Girl1, aged 18)

Another girl's parents gave her a task every day at 6 o'clock, therefore; she was required to be at home by then.

She doesn't like me going out now. I have to be home quite early. But it is also because in my house we have our own, kind of altar, to like with the 'Pu Sa' [idol] in our house. We have to 'Xian Xiang' [light joss sticks]. It is like every, we need to do every day at 6 o'clock. So I need to be home for 6 o'clock to do it because I am the only one at home every day. That's why a lot of the time I have to come home at 6 o'clock to do that. Whereas, I can go out at night, well, but I need to get my brother to do it for me. My brother is next door. My brother lives next door to me, so he can do it as well, but my mum prefers if I do it because I

am the nearest. She sees it and I think she uses it as a sort of excuse to get me

come home early. When it was before, I can come home quite late.

(Girl11, aged 16)

This girl was fully aware that her mother was using this as an excuse although her mother did not mention it in the interview; however, she was happy to do so every day.

These data suggested that the girls perceived that they were monitored more than boys. The parents' reports were consistent with these girls' perceptions. They expressed their great concerns for their daughters' safety. For example, a mother called her daughter right away to ask her not to go out at night when she heard a girl had been murdered.

Sometimes I tell her to be careful, as she is a girl. A 14-year-old girl in Dalkeith,

near Edinburgh, was killed the day before yesterday. It has been continually

broadcast all day yesterday. I went out last night and heard the news in the car. I

called home right away.

(Mother4, *Chinese)

The parents did not want their children to go out in the evening and laid stress on the frequency of going out. For example, Mother16 allowed her children to go out more as they were growing up, setting a limit because she did not 'want them to go wild'.

If I say no, they cannot go. But now I am more, give them more freedom because

they are like 14, you know 16, before that when they were younger, like 12 and

13, it's not every time I let them go. Even if they ask me 'if I can go', OK, you can

go maybe once a week or something, you cannot go too often. But now like this year, I let them go more frequently because I think, you know, you cannot control them too tight, otherwise they can be very 'fan pan' [rebellious]. (...) Sometime they would say, 'oh, my friends, they are allowed to go any where', you know, like the Scottish friends. I say, well, different culture, they have different, you know, background to be brought up. I say, well, Chinese people is, you know, in this way is different. (...) I don't think it's a nice way to bring up children, you just let them go anytime and, you know, stay quite late. Even if they go out, I have to let them know they have to be back such, such time.
(Mother15, *English)

The cultural difference in bringing up children was highlighted. These parents indicated the importance of bringing up their children in the context of Chinese culture - not going out at any time they wished and staying out very late, as Scottish children did. With regard to going out, they generally let their children know how to behave as being Chinese. Although few strict rules applied to the teenagers when they grew up, the parents closely monitored their children's behaviour, especially their daughters'.

6.3.1.2 Telling parents

In general, although there were no strict rules at home, the teenagers informed their parents before going out, no matter whether or not they were asked. 'I just tell them' or 'I just say to them' was a common answer.

I tell them when I am going out and what time I would be back, then they can

trust me more. (…) It's only to let them know I am safe.

(Boy9, aged 17)

I tell them, but like, there isn't, like, something I have to ask, apart from if I go

out and stay overnight at people's houses. But if there is normal going out, I don't

need to ask as long as I am not working.

(Girl14, aged 19)

Unlike the teenagers, the parents stressed that their children were required to tell them before going out. However, they felt informed, rather than asked, although their children let them know their whereabouts.

He tells me whom he is going out with, but he doesn't ask me if he can go. He just

tells me, not asks my permission.

(Mother11, *Chinese)

The teenagers reported that they were not required to ask for permission, but they let their parents know where they were going and when they were expected to be back because they knew their parents would worry about them.

Well, when I go out, I tend to let them know, so that they don't worry and they

know what I've been doing. But it doesn't seem to be required.

(Boy10, aged 18)

Well, there is none being set, but I do always ask, tell my mum when I am going because I don't want my mum to worry at the end. I just say, oh, I am going out today with whoever, and then she is fine with it because she knows I am like, oh, I am responsible and I can take care of myself.
(Girl17, aged 19)

The teenagers felt that they were old enough to just tell their parents instead of asking their permission to go out.

There are no rules as such, but they just a kind of like know where you are going. There are not really any rules, not really. (...) I think, you kind of ask their permission, but I think, we kind of think we're old enough now to be able to, just kind of, tell them. We do kind of ask their permission.
(Boy4, aged 18)

They don't have any rules because I am a bit older now, probably when I was younger, you know. I didn't go out, I didn't go out much anyway, so I wouldn't have much problem if I go out, but I have to tell them when I go out.
(Boy19, aged 16)

Similarly, a mother reported that her children did not need to ask her permission because 'after 18 they became adults. You can't treat them as children. You can't say no because they have their own self-esteem'.

However, telling parents did not always mean telling both their fathers and mothers. The teenagers consistently indicated that it was their mothers whom they usually told.

I've to call her. I've to tell her I'm going somewhere before I go. That's it. And when I stay too long, like too late, I've to tell her, at least give her a call.
(Boy5, aged 16)

Well, if she asks me, yeah. Usually I do. I don't really mind to tell her, like, whom I go with, well like, as like, but yeah. It's fine. I always ask mum like, if I go, and my mum trusts me, but I don't go out that often.
(Girl12, aged 16)

When asked if she did not need to ask her father, Girl12 explained that it depended on who was at home. She did ask her father sometimes, but it was her mother whom she saw more. Similarly, Boy3, who did not need to ask his parents' permission, as he was the oldest boy in the family, presented the same account.

How much younger? When I was 14, I didn't ask to go out. I just told them I went now because there were never any problems. They always said OK, you know. I never had to ask my dad because he was working. So I used to ask my mum.
(Boy3, aged 19)

It was not surprising, given the fact that fathers were always busy (section 5.2.1), that the teenagers were more likely to ask their mothers' permission. These data indicated that fathers were less available, and that mothers played an important role in

monitoring their children's everyday life. Interestingly, however, the fathers portrayed a different picture where the likeliness of telling mothers appeared to be related to the close mother-child relationship. For example, Father14 had a negative relationship with his oldest daughter, reporting:

> *My wife asks her where she is going and when she is back. She tells her mother*
> *that she is going to the friend's party or something and comes back tomorrow. If*
> *she doesn't tell her mother, her mother asks her.*
> *(Father14, *English & Chinese)*

This father and his oldest daughter had not spoken to each other for a while, so that it was less likely for his daughter to ask his permission, no matter whether he was available. Similarly, Father2 reported that his daughter usually asked his wife for permission although he was at home in the evening, while his wife was working.

> *She tells her mother, like 'mum, it's my friend's birthday today. I am going to the*
> *cinema with her'. Her mother would say OK. She usually calls when she is ready*
> *to go home after the film.*
> *(Father2, *English & Chinese)*

His daughter, Girl8 explained that she had a close relationship and good communication with her mother and found it difficult to talk to her father. These data suggested that even if the fathers were available, their children might still prefer to tell their mothers about their outings, as parent-child relationships had partly influenced this process.

6.3.1.3 Time to be back

The teenagers reported that their parents did not want them to be back home too late. They were asked to be home for dinner, or no later than 10 o'clock, or occasionally they were allowed to be back after midnight.

> *Normally back for dinner, but sometimes I phone home and tell them that I am not going back for dinner. That's OK, but I have to go back around 9 or 10 at least.*
>
> *(Girl14, aged 17)*

> *Well, there're not any strict rules because my mum's nice. But I think myself, I have, I think I have to make a rule myself, like, not to go that late because my parents will get worried about me. But if I, sometimes I come home about 6 or 7. I always come back before nine.*
>
> *(Girl8, aged 16)*

If public transport was difficult, they knew their parents were worried about them travelling a distance and returning home at night. In this case, they were strict with themselves about catching bus/train in order not to arrive home late. They might ask their parents to pick them up either in town if possible, or at the bus/train station near their home.

Although no particular time was set, the teenagers understood their parents were not pleased if they got home late. They felt that although their parents might not speak out

directly, their reaction told more about what they expected from their children, as indicated by Girl14.

> *But I don't go home too late anyway because if I get home really, really late, then they might get really angry. But they wouldn't say you can't go out until this time. But I have gone out at night late before, and my mum would just shout at me and say how much she worries. But she doesn't really say no, you can't go out at this time.*
>
> *(Girl14, aged 17)*

In another part of the interview, this girl said that her parents did not set rules for her and her brother and let them decide what was right or wrong. Nevertheless, the data here illustrated the conflicting attitudes of her mother. On the one hand, she wished her children to make their own decisions independently; on the other hand, she was frightened of the consequences of such autonomy. 'Get really angry' and 'shout at me' vividly revealed her mother's worries and concerns. Although her mother expressed her feelings in such a way – shouting at her, this girl understood that her mother wanted to protect her and keep her safe. It was because of this understanding between generations that the teenagers normally got home on time.

> *If I say I'd be back on time, they would expect me to be back on time, but generally no. They will just question me why I am late, but they don't have any rules because I am a bit older now.*
>
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

Yeah, I have to come home at a certain time. Usually, I come home quite on time or a bit earlier, and then she is OK. She doesn't mind. If I am late, then she goes 'where have you been? I think you need to be at home so many days'.
(Girl1, aged 18)

However, the parents, especially the mothers, presented more worries than those perceived by their children. They might wait for their children until they came back, no matter how late it was. Interestingly, the teenagers indicated that they normally got home before their parents finished work.

If I say that I'd back at 2, but I came back at 3, then they may be asking why I was an hour late, you know. But I don't, normally I wouldn't come home late anyway, so I'd be home when they are home. So I wouldn't have that problem. I don't really go out that much.
(Boy19, aged 16)

I mean she hasn't set a certain time, but obviously I have to be back to sleep or everything. (...) I don't go out that often anyway. But when I do, I'm in the house by about 10 o'clock anyway. I am usually home before she comes home from work.
(Girl17, aged 19)

However, none of the parents reported that they asked their children to be back before they finished work. Although the teenagers implied that they told their parents before they went out, it might be questioned whether they did let their parents know. All the

teenagers, except for one, whose parents run a catering business, reported that their takeaways/restaurants were far from their home. The parents might not notice their children's outings without being told.

In general, there were no strict rules at home. The parents highlighted the importance of raising their children in a Chinese way and closely monitored their outings. They did not want their children to go out often and stay out late. The teenagers normally informed their parents of their whereabouts and got home on time to avoid worrying them.

6.3.2 Supervision of friendships

In addition to supervision of going out, the parents also supervised their children' friendships. The teenagers reported that their parents normally knew their friends, especially close and Chinese friends, as their parents had met these friends, or they talked about them often.

> *I mean I told them about them. They know all, basically they know most of my church friends and they know my really close Chinese friends at school, and they've met most of my other friends as well, my close ones, I mean. They know most of my close friends, but not my, you know, just friends' friends, just general friends, not all of them.*
>
> *(Girl17, aged 19)*

The teenagers were less likely to talk about their British friends; therefore, their parents knew less about them.

> *My Chinese friends, yeah, my English friends, they don't. They do know about*
> *some of them, but not all, because I don't mention them a lot.*
> *(Girl12, aged 16)*

Similarly, the parents presented this phenomenon. They indicated that they knew little about their children's school friends, as their English was not good. The teenagers repeatedly reported that their parents did not mind their friends' ethnic background. It was up to them to make friends with either Scottish or Chinese people.

> *I think they figure that I just make friends on my own. So they don't really look*
> *into that sort of side. It's OK because I don't think I really need any of that kind of*
> *encouragement anyway.*
> *(Boy4, aged 18)*

They believed that their parents were more concerned about their friends' behaviour rather than their ethnic backgrounds. In fact, this was a concern of most parents. The teenagers implied that their parents would not worry whether or not their friends were Chinese, as long as they were good people.

My mum's worried what kind of friends I'm mixed with. (...) She always says so, watch what kind of people you are mixing with and make sure they are good people or they are not bad people.
(Boy18, aged 16)

It's up to me unless those friends are really bad, but yeah, generally no, they don't really, they don't really interfere with that.
(Girl20, aged 19)

Exceptionally, they reported that their parents preferred them to make **Chinese friends**. For instance, a 19-year old boy described his father as 'old fashioned' and 'out of use', as he considered Chinese people more reliable.

My dad just wants me to have Chinese friends, and my mum, I think she was the same as well. But like, she likes my some other friends because they come over a lot and they talk to her. (...) Because he is old fashioned, that like he is out of use. And I think that he thinks that Chinese people are more trustworthy, and they don't think that's very unfair for other people.
(Boy3, aged 19)

This boy did not agree with his father. He believed that friends' ethnic background did not matter and he made friends with anybody nice and friendly. Similarly, the girls also noted their parents' preference. For example, a 17-year-old girl indicated that her parents did not mind her making non-Chinese friends in general, but they preferred her future boyfriend to be Chinese.

They are OK with them, but they wouldn't want me to have a boyfriend that's a

different nationality. They wouldn't really like it, but if I have to, they can't stop

me, but they prefer me to go out with someone Chinese, (...) because they

communicate with them, and then they would know them more, and like, can talk

to them.

(Girl14, aged 17)

Unlike Boy3, who thought his parents considered Chinese people trustworthy, this girl believed that it was because of the communication that her parents preferred her to have a Chinese boyfriend. Similarly, the parents showed this preference. For example, Mother10 reported:

I would like them to be with Chinese people because we share the same culture.

But if they make friends with westerners, they would have their reasons. I can't

help. Never mind. But I prefer Chinese, so we can communicate in two

languages.

(Mother10, *English & Chinese)

However, there was a phenomenon completely absent in the teenagers' reports. Apart from the languages, the parents highlighted this preference because they believed that western girls were too open and casual, as reported by Mother15.

He is not dating at the moment. I don't like him dating western girls because of

the language. The western girls are too promiscuous. They can be with this one

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and that one as well. Western girls have their life styles and Chinese people have

theirs. Even the British born Chinese are different from the western girls.

(Mother15, *Chinese)

This mother indicated perceived differences in sexual behaviour between Chinese girls

born and raised in Britain and western girls. It was because of this concern, rather than

the language, that she wanted her son to have a Chinese girlfriend.

Regarding the gender of friends, none of the boys noted that their parents interfered in

this matter. They perceived that their parents were not concerned if they made friends

with girls or had girlfriends. However, the girls portrayed a different view. They

believed that their parents did not mind if they made friends with boys in general, but

the parents were seen to discourage their daughters from making close friends with

boys.

They don't think that I should be separated from males, you know, because I

mean, they see me making friends, because they don't see me just being in an

entirely female environment, because otherwise if I go into the real world, I am

just being all strange to them. They don't mind whether I make friends with males

or females.

(Girl17, aged 19)

Genders? Oh, I think it's got to link back with my mum, like, different cultures

that kind of thing. Because generally, my mum, my parents are a wee bit more,

they think twice about me making, like, close friends with male friends rather

than female friends. (...) It's not really like that now because we can like, in this generation it's different, you can make friends with males, females and males without how, you know, thinking about anything further.
(Girl20, aged 19)

However, as far as boyfriends were concerned, the girls consistently highlighted their parents' disapproval. They felt that they were given freedom to make friends with boys, but not boyfriends.

It's up to me, they say they don't mind. But they don't want me to have a boyfriend right now. But they don't mind like other races or genders.
(Girl2, aged 16)

My mum said that if I make friends, just like, guys, like male, and it would be OK, as long as it's just for friends. So now I don't think they will stop me making like friends with a male person. So it's OK, as long as it's not like boyfriend and girlfriend.
(Girl12, aged 16)

The parents strongly disapproved of not only their daughters, but also their sons having girl/boyfriends. They felt that their children were not mature enough to deal with relationships although they might not discourage them from making friends of different genders. However, if their children did have girl/boyfriends, they indicated that they might try, but they could say or do nothing to stop them.

I don't want you 'pa tuo' [dating] at the moment. And they say, 'oh, of course, I

am not', you know. I say, well, I mean if you are, I cannot, you know, stop you,

but I would like to stop. But I don't want you to start, and then end up, you know,

with problems.

(Mother16, *English)

In general, the parents monitored their children's friendships more than their children

perceived. They did not disapprove of their children making friends of different

genders or ethnic backgrounds. However, they discouraged them from having a

girl/boyfriend at the moment and preferred their children's future spouses to be Chinese

because of the language and the concerns of different sexual values and behaviour of

people from other cultural backgrounds.

6.4 Summary

This chapter explored the influence of Chinese ethnicity. The languages at home,

Chinese identity and parental supervision of outings and friendships were discussed.

The teenagers spoke fluent Chinese although they were not good at reading and

writing. Chinese was the dominant language which they spoke to their parents; English

was the main language which they used with their siblings because they felt more

familiar with it. They learned Chinese from their families and Chinese school, but they

had little opportunity to practise Chinese beyond the home context. The parents

highlighted the importance of speaking Chinese as a way of maintaining their

children's Chineseness. However, this language preference limited parent-child communication about puberty, personal relationships and sex-related topics.

Regarding their Chinese identity, the teenagers and parents presented diverse views. The teenagers who were proud of being Chinese highlighted that Chinese identity made them remember their roots; those who were less proud felt nothing special because they were born with it. They appreciated both Chinese identity and British/Scottish identity. Compared to the teenagers, the parents tended to have a stronger Chinese identity and wanted to pass on Chinese values to their British born children by speaking Chinese at home and monitoring their outings and friendships.

In addition to Chinese language, supervision of their children's going out and making friends, was considered as an important aspect of being Chinese. The parents wanted their children to be raised in the Chinese context and to let their children understand the cultural differences in the ways of being brought up. As being Chinese, the teenagers were not expected to go out often, stay out late or have girl/boyfriends at this time. Although there were not specific rules set at home, there was a general understanding between generations. The teenagers told their parents about their whereabouts and were back home on time in order to avoid their parents being angry or worried. The parents did not mind their children making friends with different gender or ethnic backgrounds; however, they encouraged their children to have friends of the same gender and cultural background, and discouraged them from making girl/boyfriends or having future spouses from other ethnic backgrounds.

CHAPTER 7: THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS

Chapter five explored the influence of family on the sexual values and behaviour of the teenagers, followed by the influence of Chinese ethnicity in chapter six. In addition to the family and ethnicity, the influence of friends on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour has been reported in the literature. When children move into adolescence, they generally move away from home and spend more time with friends. The influence of friends becomes increasingly significant in guiding sexual values and behaviour.

This chapter examines the influence of friends on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. Firstly, general information about friends is discussed. Secondly, the chapter explores the time teenagers spent with friends, in which activities and communication with friends are illustrated in turn. Then it focuses on sexual attitudes of friends, followed by their sexual behaviour.

7.1 General information about friends

This section focuses on general information about friends. Age and gender of friends are described briefly, followed by ethnic backgrounds of friends.

First of all, the teenagers reported that most of their friends were around their age or a few years older. However, they spent less time with older friends and their close friends were normally about their age. However, sometimes they wanted to have friends a bit older so that they could discuss problems and ask for advice from these friends, as they

were more experienced and understood more. For instance, a 16-year-old girl expressed her preference thus.

> *They are usually about five years older than me. The girlfriends, one of my best friends, she is Indian and she is the same age as me. And another one, she is 19. And all my other friends are usually about 20 or 21. I think, people who are my age are too immature. They think about things, they are only at surface level. It's like, usually, they always talk about boys, or make-up, or fashion. It just doesn't interest me as much. You want someone older, who can understand.*
> *(Girl2, aged 16)*

She commented that people of her age were too immature to look at things deeply. As in this case, making older friends might make the teenagers feel grown up and mature. They appreciated the understanding and support obtained from these friends, which was not easy to get from friends of the same age.

Then in terms of the gender of friends, the teenagers consistently indicated that they had friends mainly of the same gender. They might have friends of the opposite gender, but their close friends were the same gender. The girls particularly highlighted that they made friends with boys 'for fun rather than for talking'.

> *Yeah, I've got close friends. Most of them are girls, I would say. I've still got a lot of boy... friends with boys. But they're just for fun rather than for talking.*
> *(Girl2, aged 16)*

The teenagers made friends with the opposite gender sometimes, but they did not feel as close or talk as much as they did with friends of the same gender.

Lastly, the teenagers repeatedly noted that their Chinese background did not affect them making friends with non-Chinese. They usually had a mixture of friends from different backgrounds.

> *Like uni friends, in the same uni obviously, but people outside, they are usually Chinese and we're not in the same uni or something. I just see them in the church. Or I met them through school, some of them. (...) Well, they are either Chinese, either Scottish, either Indian or whatever, Pakistan. They are all mixed.*
> *(Girl17, aged 19)*

The teenagers did not think it hard to make friends from other backgrounds. Actually, they shared different interests with friends from different groups regardless of their cultural backgrounds. In addition, the teenagers who had not had experience of racial discrimination tended to have a positive view of making friends with non-Chinese.

> *I guess making friends wasn't really a problem in school. It's always been fine because people I've got on with aren't racist or anything. So they are really kind and they just treat me like a native Scottish person really because I can speak quite well English.*
> *(Girl14, aged 17)*

Exceptionally, they found their Chinese background affected them making non-Chinese friends because of their English.

Sometimes it does, because obviously my ethnic background because I am just, I am Chinese. I don't think my English is as good as them because they are already Scottish and their parents are Scottish. But I am British born Chinese. So it's a bit hard for me in English. And it depends on what kind of people you meet because some of the people, they are kind of racist. But most people in my school are not racist.
(Girl8, aged 16)

They tend to, like, talk about, quite a bit things, like different things, and probably because my English is not that good that I can't really talk to them that much. And it just seems that we are different.
(Girl16, aged 17)

In fact, these two girls spoke very fluent English. 'We are different' was repeatedly reported as a factor affecting them making friends with people from other backgrounds. It might be this cultural discrimination that brought them close to their Chinese friends. For instance, they consistently indicated that their close friends were Chinese although they did not have problems in making non-Chinese friends. They preferred to watch Chinese television programmes, as their friends did, and speak Chinese with them.

I think my closest friends usually do come from ethnic backgrounds. My friend is Indian, Asian. So we have like some, same cultures. She understands the things I

have to go through. And my other friend, she is Chinese. So, she understands as well. Whereas, like Scottish people, they don't seem to understand as much. (Girl2, aged 16)

You can't talk to English people as much about my interests because they won't understand, because I watch, I watch Chinese TV, not British TV. So whenever they talk about British, I won't understand what they say because I don't watch it. So we share different interests. So I feel closer to Chinese people than to English people, because it's easier to like, to talk to because we share the interests. (Girl12, aged 16)

These data suggested that cultural identity played an important part in making friends from similar ethnic background and Chinese media provided common ground in friendships. The teenagers highlighted that Scottish/English people did not understand them as much as their Chinese friends did because of the cultural backgrounds. A 16-year-old boy felt it easy to talk to his Chinese friends, presenting the similar view. 'Crazy' was the word he used to describe his Scottish friends.

I've got friends outside church as well, but they are more than, well, I think we're not as close friends, but we just say hello. Well, I can't really do things with them because they are a lot of party people. They're like crazy things. They're like school friends. But I've got, like, my close friends and my best friends are in the church because like, kind of like, it's easy to talk to them. I think I get the message across them. They understand me more than my friends at school do because

they're just crazy. (...) They like, may go out a lot, they party, they drink and

stuff.

(Boy19, aged 16)

The awareness of cultural differences increased when they were growing up. For example, a 19-year-old boy reported that he started to make more Chinese friends when he learned more about Chinese culture at high school. Cultural similarity in friendships was emphasised and Chinese media helped him to understand the culture.

I used to have as many English friends as I did Chinese friends. But it got to the

point we were, during high school, I would think to myself I am Chinese, but why

I don't have Chinese friends. I mean I speak Chinese to my parents, so therefore I

should actually have some Chinese friends. Then I think to myself 'would having

Chinese friends be that different?' Then I realised by watching VCDs and tapes,

or Chinese films. I think that's quite interesting because it's really different how

Chinese people have fun and how English people have fun. I tended to think that

English people aren't as close as Chinese people. (...) I do have friends in the

university, but not as close, just because I think the relationship with BBC and

English. I don't know. I think about...I tend to, like, hang about with Chinese

people more, just because the personality is different.

(Boy6, aged 19)

These perceptions of the teenagers presented cultural differences between Chinese and British friends. They were close to other BBCs, as they felt as if they were 'in the same

boat', as described by Girl17. Born and brought up in Britain, these teenagers believed that they were still Chinese somehow, which helped them to make Chinese friends.

Even though I am British born, you know that, I am still Chinese. I am still having some Chinese, like things in me. So like, in that way, with Chinese people, I can like familiarise with them. But with other English people, they probably don't understand as much.
(Girl20, aged 19)

Even if we live here for all of my life, I still go back to HK and I still know a little bit about HK life. I've been in HK lots of times. And I just, I think the same of all my friends as well. They have that back in their mind. They like, they think, oh, I am Chinese. I should, maybe have some Chinese friends. And it's actually really cool, as you walk around the streets, and you talk Chinese <laugh>, and other people can hear you, but they don't really know.
(Boy6, aged 19)

In this case, speaking Chinese with friends reinforced Chinese identity of the teenagers. They had friends from different cultural backgrounds, but their close friends were normally Chinese. They felt close to and spent more time with these friends, which is the focus of the next section.

7.2 Time with friends

As the teenagers grew up, the amount of time they spent with peer groups and family changed. The teenagers enjoyed the time with their friends and in fact, they spent as much time as possible together. They might see their friends as often as four or five times a week.

> *Quite often as much as I can. Apart from working, I think I have been spending quite a lot of time with them.*
> *(Girl20, aged 19)*

> *As often as I can, really. It's obviously, during the holidays, you try to see them mostly about four or five times a week. But during like, say, when it's not the holidays, you maybe see them once or twice a week. Then maybe see them on weekends.*
> *(Boy4, aged 18)*

Similarly, Girl17 met friends outside university often during the summer holidays.

> *During term time, my Chinese friends, you know, upstairs, I'll get to see them about once or twice a week. (...) I'd say what I called my really good friends of these guys here, I see them about four times a week or something, because I don't know. But that's only in summer. When we go back to uni, it'll be reduced, to meet, see a lot of my uni friends, but less of my out of school friends.*
> *(Girl17, aged 19)*

During term time, the teenagers went to the same school as their friends, meeting each other at school.

Five days a week I would see them because most of my friends are at the school with me, so I see them every day in the school. There are other ones that I don't see at all until I go out, like dancing or something, you know.
(Girl1, aged 18)

Normally, like, it's, it's just at school. So that's like 6 hours a day. But if we are out of school, it's normally, just like, during holidays or whenever, because I don't really go out during the school time, because it's, because I live quite far away from Glasgow.
(Girl11, aged 16)

They might not spend time with friends after school, because they had to go home, or their friends were busy.

My Scottish friends, they are kind of not really that close any more. But I usually hang around with my other Chinese friends. We don't, because she has to work. She's got a takeaway, so she, no less work for, like three days. So we don't, we go out about once or twice a week, but not really that often.
(Girl8, aged 16)

If they were not able to go out together, they might contact in other ways, such as talking on phone or Internet. Keeping in touch was stressed as a principle of being friends, as noted by Boy3.

I see at least one of my friends like every two days. Like they won't be the same one. They might be a different one. (...) But like almost the same time because the principle is to keep in touch.
(Boy3, aged 19)

All these data suggested that the teenagers preferred to spend as much time as they could with their friends. If not possible, they kept contact by phone or Internet, as they considered the principle of being friends as keeping in touch.

7.2.1 Activities with friends

The teenagers spent a considerable amount of time with their friends. This section explores how they spent time together. The boys repeatedly reported:

Sometimes we just go and play badminton or computer games when we are free. (...) we enjoy playing badminton, we share time playing badminton, computer games, sometimes football.
(Boy10, aged 18)

We just hang about, really. We just, maybe go to my friend's house, just watch TV or play on computers or something, or go out and just walk about town, or play football or something.

(Boy4, aged 18)

In these cases, sports and computer games were the boys' favourite activities, and they spent most of their time engaging in these interests. These data suggested that the boys' friendships were based on companionship, i.e. doing things together. Exceptionally, the boys talked to their friends, as explained by a 19-year-old boy, when asked about what he had in common with his friends.

In common? Jokes and things, ideas, agreements, see what we agree on and what we don't agree on, helping each other, very helpful, talking, if you like to be really happy to talk each other.

(Boy7, aged 19)

Contrary to the boys, the girls reported their enjoyment of talking to their friends whenever they met together. For instance, a 17-year-old girl recounted:

A lot of time we talk about things, opinions or you can make each other laugh and have a nice time, you know. If we say anything, we can catch each other even though you don't know, you can't really say things private like that. You can talk to them about everything and give, like short names to things. We can understand, but other people don't know.

(Girl14, aged 17)

In addition to talking to each other, the girls enjoyed shopping with friends, but none of the boys indicated this.

[We] go shopping, and sometimes go to the cinema or sometimes we just have lunch and talk loads to catch up and what's been happening that stuff. (Girl14, aged 17)

The girls did go shopping, go to the cinema or do some sports with friends. However, compared to talking to each other, these activities were a secondary consideration. These findings demonstrated that communication or intimacy was the key theme in the girls' friendships, which was different from companionship in the boys' friendships.

7.2.2 Communication with friends

The concern of this section is the content and context of communication with friends. The focus is mainly on communication of personal relationships and sex-related topics. The perspectives of the boys are reported first, followed by the girls'.

7.2.2.1 Boys' communication with friends

The boys started to talk about girls, such as good looks, who fancied whom or past relationships, when they were younger.

Yeah, they do, we do so, who like, from youngest, we just like, who fancies who, fancies who, (...) about pop stars, you know that, and some girl you see today or you speak to today.

(Boy7, aged 19)

Well, they are like, good-looking, you know that, but then they usually, like dump you, and they just tell me the reasons and stuff like that.

(Boy15, aged 16)

The boys stressed that they did not talk about girls and their girlfriends in the same way because it was not right to make fun of girlfriends, as indicated by Boy3. They repeatedly reported that their friends, especially Chinese friends, tended to keep their girlfriends to themselves.

About girlfriends sometimes, or boyfriends, not much, I don't think so. (...) We don't really talk much about these things, because they tend to be with them.

(Boy5, aged 16)

We don't go further detailed information about it. It's like you have your own girlfriend, or you have your own boyfriend, then that's it. We don't ask any more questions. (...) Sometimes they do tell us when they are unhappy or if they want to tell us, but most of time they just keep it to themselves.

(Boy18, aged 16)

Interestingly, a 19-year-old boy's report may partly explain why the boys wanted to keep their relationships to themselves. Boy6 highlighted the embarrassment of talking about girlfriends with the friends who did not have girlfriends.

The ones they do have girlfriends normally talk about them, but the ones they don't, they feel, I think we [his emphasis] feel awkward about talking about our girlfriends, and they feel awkward about us talking about our girlfriends because they don't have any. We don't talk about girlfriends, our girlfriends, in front of our friends who don't have girlfriends, our friends who are single.
(Boy6, aged 19)

According to this report, the boys tended to talk about their girlfriends with the friends who had girlfriends, but they found it difficult to discuss their relationships with friends who had not had girlfriends. Exceptionally, the boys emphasised the importance of sharing values with friends.

Yeah, all the time. It's important to talk about it because then like, you know what other people think. And it's not just your ideas. Or like you share different opinions, and then you might find out that I wasn't right, or make sure which part was wrong.
(Boy3, aged 19)

This boy stressed the importance of acceptance by his friends and the development of his own values and attitudes by evaluating the perspectives of his friends. These data indicated the influence of friends on sexual values and behaviour of the teenagers.

In addition, the boys repeatedly noted that they would like to turn to friends rather than parents if there were any problems in relationships. They looked for advice from close friends around their own age because they felt that these friends understood more and knew what they were thinking. In contrast, they considered their parents as 'a protective shell', who might misunderstand them. Friends were regarded as the easiest person to discuss personal relationships with. For instance, a 16-year-old boy, who had a girlfriend, commented:

Probably my close friends. Easy to talk about at the same age because we both understand each other, because parents, they are a bit misunderstanding, misleading, and they wouldn't like it. So I think my friends would be a good idea to talk to them.
(Boy18, aged 16)

Another boy reported that although he and his friends talked about girlfriends sometimes, it was Play Station that was the more attractive topic between them.

They just say who was she, like, who she is. They won't go any further. We'd rather talk about Play Station, like, games or anything, games. We talk maybe like, we talk about girlfriends, but we just ask the girl who she is, what she likes things, and if she is nice, and then we won't go any further. And we just stop that conversation, and then we are going to another topic, like games, games in TV.
(Boy19, aged 16)

These data showed that the boys talked about girls or girlfriends sometimes, but it was not common for them to share their personal experiences. They did not tend to have a long conversation with friends about their deep and inner feelings in relationships; they were more likely to talk about sports and computer games.

7.2.2.2 Girls' communication with friends

The girls, on the other hand, were more likely to talk with friends about boys or boyfriends. They regarded friendships as intimate personal relationships, which were different from the companionship of the boys. The girls enjoyed talking with close friends daily on the phone or Internet even if they went to the same school. When asked about what they talked about, a 16-year-old girl stated:

Mostly boys, because my friend, she is quite funny. So she doesn't, we don't like being too serious, because it's scary, if you get too serious. She thinks about too much. We just talk about really like, stupid things in the world. If you have exams, you don't want to talk about your serious things. You just want to relax. (Girl2, aged 16)

In this case, the girls without boyfriends talked about boys in general for fun in order to release the stress from exams. Similarly, another 16-year-old girl indicated that she and her friends did not discuss personal relationships seriously, but as a joke. When asked to give an example, she explained:

For example, well, my friend, she did have a crush on someone. We talked about

like who we like, like, in school or out of school, as a joke, like, for example, we

say we like this person as a joke, but we don't really like him. We just like saying

that for fun.

(Girl8, aged 16)

The girls without boyfriends also described how willing their friends were to share their feelings of being in love. For example, a 19-year-old girl reported:

Just talk about how much they love them or everything. I've got one friend, she

just keeps talking about her boyfriend whenever she rings me up. (...) And then

my other friends, they do talk about their boyfriends, but not all the time, you

know, it's not like blah, blah.

(Girl17, aged 19)

Compared to the boys, the girls were more willing to discuss their experiences and personal problems and share their feelings with friends. For instance, a girl, who had a boyfriend, answered the question about whether girls talked about their boyfriends as follows.

They do. Sometimes like we have, they have an argument or something. (...) I

hate him, blah, blah. There are things that we're talking about it. We did do

things like that. Talk about the problems, how to get on, you need a new guy,

something like that.

(Girl1, aged 18)

The girls who did not have a boyfriend might share the worries of their friends who had a relationship, as recounted by the following girls.

Sometimes we talk about the problems that we have in a relationship, or we talk about the good things that are happening in our relationships, but we don't go on and on about it all the time every time we meet.
(Girl20, aged 19)

It's when they had an argument and falling out, yeah. If not, then it's, they don't really talk about it that much. It's, it's as a group, you won't talk about it, but if it's just like, for example, like, there is just three of them or just one or two of them, like, if they are really close, then they talk about a lot about it. If not, then they don't really, really say a lot as, as a big group.
(Girl11, aged 16)

In these cases, the girls preferred to discuss intimate feelings in a small group with a few close friends. Similar to the boys, the girls considered friends as the easiest persons with whom to discuss personal relationships. When asked about the reasons, a girl replied:

Yeah, very comfortable. I think it's like if you are married, then you are a real adult. And like, you know, it's a normal thing that might happen at that time. So you can talk to them about it. But before that age you would think everything

should be just covered up until you are ready to talk to them about it after you

are married or something.

(Girl1, aged 18)

During the interview, this girl mentioned several times that she was not ready to talk to her parents about her relationship. She perceived that her parents would definitely not accept her sexual behaviour – having sex before marriage at age 17. For instance, when asked about her parents' attitudes towards teenage sex, she said 'that would be chop down, chop down to pieces'. However, she felt very comfortable discussing sexual relationships with her friends. Her perception of parents' rejection might lead her to look for advice and support from friends.

Furthermore, the girls highlighted the age of their friends, with whom they shared their values. For example, Girl11, who had had a boyfriend before, explained:

I think it depends on the age of your friends as well. For example, I am actually

really good friends with [her friend's name]. I get on quite well with her. I've

known her for four years now, and become quite close. She is like seven years

older than me, you know. But I can talk to her about everything as well, and we

are really close. But apart from her, I'd say that it's easier to talk to people of my

own age as well because sometime there're always things you think silly, or

stupid, or whatever. If you, like, she won't want to talk to someone older, but

someone of your own age, she feels that she actually understands a lot more

because they are going through the same thing and the same stage. And you

know, they, although, OK, they might not give you very good advice, but at least,

at least they understand, if you know what I mean. They won't think, oh, no, you

are really young, you are really stupid, or whatever.

(Girl11, aged 16)

Interestingly, this girl was well aware of the possibility of not getting good advice from friends of the same age, but she still preferred these friends to parents or older friends. She felt that friends of the same age were more understanding and supportive, and there was no direct criticism from them. These data showed that the girls were more willing to discuss what had happened in their relationships with friends, especially with close friends of the same age, so that they could share worries or problems and get support from one another.

In general, the teenagers enjoyed and spent as much time as they could with friends. Gender differences in activities and communication with friends were apparent. The boys highlighted the companionship in their friendships; they spent more time playing sports or computer games than talking about girls or girlfriends. However, the girls enjoyed intimate relationships with friends; they enjoyed talking about boys for fun if they did not have boyfriends; they talked about boyfriends and shared problems in relationships if they had boyfriends.

7.3 Sexual attitudes of friends

The teenagers presented a range of sexual attitudes of their friends, although exceptionally they were not sure about their friends' views, because they had not really talked about it. Friendship similarity in sexual attitudes was common. The teenagers

with a strict view of sex perceived their friends to be conservative. For instance, a 16-year-old girl reported that her close friends, being strongly against teenage sex, were not comfortable talking or even listening to other people talking about sex, a view which she herself shared. They described teenage sex as 'disgusting' or 'sick'.

I think my friends think the same as me that we are too young to be, even thinking about having sex, hate doing it. But because my best friend and my other Chinese friends, they don't have boyfriends, and every time when my other friend talks about sex and things, my best friend is kind of getting uncomfortable because she thinks it's too young. (...) She thinks it's just kind of disgusting, well, right now. But because people at school, they, well, Scottish people, they kind of, we hear rumours, like, who did and who had. That's what me and my friends, just, talked about, you know, it's sick, you know. You shouldn't be doing it at this age, you know. You know you are not even working yet, and what will happen if you get pregnant, and things like that.
(Girl8, aged 16)

This girl highlighted the conservative sexual values she shared with her best friend, who did not have a boyfriend. These values were different from those of her friends who had boyfriends or those of her Scottish school peers. However, having boyfriends or kissing did not mean having sex, as sex was not considered important in girl/boyfriend relationships. For example, Girl12 explained:

They know that they are not going to like have sex right now, like, at this age because most of my friends are about my age. So they know that they are quite

young to do that right now <laugh>. And they are quite serious about it. Like

they do, they do have boyfriends, you know that. They do kiss them, but they

don't, like, going to, like, sexual desire or like having sex.

(Girl12, aged 16)

On the other hand, the teenagers with an open view considered their friends permissive as well. For instance, a 16-year-old girl had sexual experience at age 15, illustrating her friends' attitudes thus.

What my friends think about it? <laugh> Well, in a, in a way, they know they

shouldn't be doing it, if you know what I mean, just in case, if they do get

pregnant, or something happens. But I don't, I don't really think they think about

what they are doing. I think they just kind of, it's like, they just get into the

moment. (...) Well, I think they do, because I believe that quite a lot of my friends

are really, you know, they do think quite maturely for their age, and they do

*know, they **do know** [her emphasis] what they are doing. It's just, you know,*

being teenagers you do things that you shouldn't be doing, anyway. So I think

they are, they are quite open-minded about it. I think people now are quite open-

minded about sex, actually having sex and stuff.

(Girl11, aged 16)

In this case, her friends' open attitudes towards sex were consistent with hers. The teenagers not only shared their sexual values with friends, but also offered advice to friends who were sexually active or intended to have sex. For example, a 16-year-old girl with a permissive view noted:

I think they don't mind. I think as long as it's safe and like it's up to the person, as

I have said. You've given your advice and I feel it's up to the person. Just make

sure it's safe. That's all my advice. It's not something that you just want to

because everybody is doing it. You don't want to just do because everybody is

saying, yeah, sex, it's a new thing and you should do it.

(Girl2, aged 16)

The teenagers also reported a mixture of views of their friends. Some of them

considered sex as something 'amazing' 'cool' or 'normal', while others believed it was

an 'important' or 'big thing'. For instance, a 19-year-old boy descried his friends'

attitudes:

Something, oh, is amazing. Something is cool, something, yeah, they want it, but

at the end of the day, they think it's a normal human thing. They don't think it's a

big, big issue that people think, oh, you know they have sex or something. They

think it's a normal thing. But to me, I do think it's a big thing. It's a very

important for each person to together, to go together. So my western friends are

kind of more open, oh, yeah, easy casual. But all my other friends and, like,

myself, we think it's quite important.

(Boy7, aged 19)

This boy considered sex as a big step in relationships, which should be left until after

marriage. He had been with his Chinese girlfriend for six months, but they had not had

sex, as he did not feel ready for it. These data suggested that the teenagers were more

tolerant of different sexual attitudes and behaviour of others (see also section 4.1.4). They had friends who shared their sexual values and friends who did not, such as their western friends. For example, Boy19, who believed in 'no sex before marriage' according to his religion, spoke of his friends' openness.

> *'Oh, they say that they can't wait to have sex. (...) They want to have sex as soon as possible'.*
>
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

He continued to explain that these school friends with very open sexual attitudes did not go to church. When asked about the view of his church friends, he replied:

> *'I don't really talk to them about sex because we have the same views anyway'.*
>
> *(Boy19, aged 16)*

This phenomenon was repeatedly reported by the Christian teenagers, who perceived that their Christian/Chinese friends believed in 'no sex before marriage', while their non-Christian/school/Scottish friends considered it acceptable. For instance, a girl, whose church friends believed that sex, as a commitment, should not happen before marriage, presented different opinions of her other friends.

> *I think a few of my friends would like sex before marriage, like, they prefer, like, to know it instead of never have it done right after you get married, so you only do it to one person.*
>
> *(Girl14, aged 17)*

These reports suggested that the teenagers perceived that their friends either shared the same view, or held a mixture of views. Differences in sexual attitudes of their Chinese/Christian friends and western/non-Christian friends were emphasised. Their Chinese or Christian friends tended to have a conservative view, while their non-Christian or western friends were more likely to have a permissive view.

7.4 Sexual behaviour of friends

When asked about the sexual behaviour of their friends, the teenagers provided a relatively brief answer and none of them reported it in detail. They highlighted that their friends did not have girl/boyfriends or they rarely talked about personal relationships or sex-related topics. Sexual experience of friends was considered confidential.

Not really because they think it's quite confidential. I don't, like, I don't tend to learn about if they had sex or not because it's quite confidential. (…) They just mostly keep it to themselves until I do ask something like that, like if I ask them, but I guess it's quite confidential, so that's why they don't share.
(Boy18, aged 16)

Sexually inexperienced teenagers consistently reported that their friends had not had sex yet. Religious beliefs had an impact on sexual behaviour of their friends, as they did on them.

No, actually because, because being, I think some, most of my friends are

Christians, like, and we believe that it's, it's right to have sex after marriage.

(Boy9, aged 17)

This boy continued to explain that none of his non-Christian friends had had the experience, as they did not think it possible for teenagers to find true love. Like the sexual values of their friends, their sexual behaviour also differed. Some of them had not had sex, while others might have had. For example, a boy with conservative views said:

Oh, the person who had sex, I know someone who is having sex, but they won't

tell me unless I ask them, but there will be other friends that would tell me that so

and so did this.

(Boy19, aged 16)

However, they repeatedly stated that these sexually active friends were not their close friends, as indicated by the following.

I won't say my close, you know, but we just hang around a lot. We don't, you

know, like, talk a lot. Oh, we do talk a lot. It's just that we won't, like, say as close

as a boy and a girl. We just, you know, we are really good friends. That's what I

would say. We hang around all the time as a group. (...) I wouldn't know from the

person who had it. Someone would tell me they did something. Then I would ask

that person who did it, but they wouldn't, like, be offended if I ask them anything.

I just, like, I don't really question them. You know that anyway. So if they have

sex, that's OK. It doesn't matter. It doesn't affect me. It's their business, their

choice.

(Boy19, aged 16)

No, it's my other friend. My best friend told me because I don't really talk to

boyfriend, but she doesn't, she usually talks as a joke about kind of funny things,

funny things, but she has had sex.

(Girl8, aged 16)

In general, the teenagers, perceiving their friends to be conservative, indicated their friends had not had sex. On the contrary, those, who believed that their friends had permissive attitudes or a mixture of views, reported that they had sexually active friends, but these friends were not their close friends.

7.5 Summary

In this chapter, general information about friends, activities and communication with friends, sexual attitudes and sexual behaviour of friends were discussed.

Generally, the teenagers made friends of the same age and gender. Although they did have older friends or of the opposite gender, their close friends were normally of the same age and gender because they considered these friends more understanding and supportive. In terms of friends' ethnic backgrounds, they did not consider it hard to make friends from other cultural backgrounds; however, they felt closer to Chinese friends as they shared the same culture and understood each other better. Making

Chinese friends, speaking Chinese with friends, and watching Chinese television programmes, like their Chinese friends, reinforced ethnic identity of the teenagers.

The teenagers spent a lot of time with their friends especially during the holidays. The boys enjoyed their time playing football and computer games with friends, while girls enjoyed talking with friends although they did go shopping, go to the cinema or play sports sometimes. Gender differences in friendship patterns were evident. The girls' friendships were based more on conversations about personal issues, while the boys' friendships put more emphasis on companionship, such as sports and computer games. In addition, the girls tended to talk about boys, boyfriends, and problems in their relationships. However, the boys tended to discuss sports, interests, and computer games although they did talk about girls and girlfriends sometimes, but it was not common to share personal problems in relationships with their friends, especially with those who did not have girlfriends.

Friendship similarity in sexual values and behaviour was apparent. However, the teenagers also had friends who were different, but these were not their close friends. Differences between Christian/Chinese and non-Christian/western friends were highlighted. Generally, non-Christian or western friends were described as more open to sex or as having experienced sex.

CHAPTER 8: THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL SEX EDUCATION

The teenagers initially developed their sexual values at home; the parents played a significant role in their children's sexual attitudes and behaviour. When growing up, the teenagers spent more time outside the family and peers became more important. In the previous chapters reporting the findings, the influences of family (chapter five), Chinese ethnicity (chapter six), and friends (chapter seven) were presented. These factors had an impact on the sexual values of the teenagers. However, as holistic human beings, in addition to the interaction with parents and friends, another important issue raised from the literature is the influence of school sex education.

This chapter presents the teenagers' and parents' views of school sex education and its influence on the sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers. Similarities and differences between the generations are highlighted. The chapter is in three sections. The first focuses on positive views of sex education, followed by negative views. The last section explores suggestions for improvement of sex education.

8.1 Positive views

The teenagers and parents who were in favour of provision of sex education at school highlighted the values and necessity of this education. In this section, the ways in which school sex education was considered as an important source of sexual knowledge are discussed first, followed by the necessity of providing sex education.

8.1.1 Source of knowledge

The teenagers with positive views of school sex education reported that they obtained accurate and sufficient information about what they wanted and needed to know from school, including physical changes during puberty, consequences and risks of having sex and methods of having safe sex. For example, when asked about whether he discussed puberty with someone, an 18-year-old boy said:

> *I think a lot of that came from sex education, I guess. I learned that. So I don't really talk about. I don't really need to. I don't think I really noticed much about puberty, maybe just some hair in different places. It's quite natural.*
> *(Boy10, aged 18)*

This boy indicated that he did not need to talk about puberty with his parents or friends because of the knowledge he got from school and the normal process of his body's development.

Similarly, the girls reported that they got knowledge of menstruation from school rather than from their parents. They felt embarrassed telling their mothers about their first periods. Like the teenagers, the parents assumed that their children gained too much information about sex from school, so that they thought they did not need to talk about puberty at home.

> *Seldom, because their schools taught them too much. (...) They have learnt at school, so that I haven't talked a lot. My daughter already knew about*

menstruation before I told her. She learned from school and knew how to deal

with it, so that I didn't need to tell her.

(Mother18, *Chinese)

As schools provided accurate sexual information, the parents felt that they did not need to worry about the influence of other sources. For example, a mother reported that due to provision of sex education at school, young people would be less likely to look for information from pornography, so that its negative influence was avoided.

I think it's very important. It's OK because they should know these kind of things

for their future life. The schools tell them what it is like. This is not from the

pornographic magazines. They learn it in the right way, so it's acceptable.

(Mother9, *Chinese)

The teenagers reported that schools provided relevant information not only about physical function of bodies, but also about the fact of sex; therefore, they understood the risks of having sex. For example, they noted:

In a way, it was helpful because you know, at least you know some facts and

knowledge about sex. I think it's quite helpful.

(Boy18, aged 16)

It's very useful. Let me know what it is about or what sex is. It... kept me very

informed about it.

(Boy10, aged 18)

The teenagers repeatedly pointed out that school sex education provided them with knowledge of the dangers or risks of having sex, such as getting pregnant and sexually transmitted diseases. They commented:

I think it helps because it lets us know what would happen if we did do something wrong, like, having sex and stuff like that, because the results like pregnancies or HIV, AIDS.
(Boy9, aged 17)

I think it's necessary, yeah, because I mean now lots of girls have sex without, you know, using contraception or anything. And they have no ideas, you know, what to do if anything happens, if you get pregnant, or if they do catch something, if they do get any, like, sexually transmitted diseases. At least they know, when they have, if they have it, what kind of symptoms to look at for, and also, you know, where, who to go to, if they do have problems.
(Girl11, aged 16)

The parents knew little about what their children learned from sex education; however, they were aware that their children had it from the consent form from school, television programmes, their children or the sex education they themselves had at school. Those who supported the course emphasised that they trusted the school curriculum and were not worried about whatever their children learned from school. For instance, the parents explained:

No, not in detail, in great detail. Then I myself usually just, well, trust the school curriculum. Then usually the school will tell us they are going to have special sections, then ask our consent. (…) Then I usually just sign yes.
(Father1, *English)

I don't know what's involved in it, but I think that in general what the school teaches them should be OK. They are relatively open in western countries. They learn at school, so he should understand. I am not worried about what he learns at school.
(Father19, *Chinese)

These data illustrated the teenagers' and parents' positive views of the sex education schools offered to their children. In addition to education on physical development and sexual risks, the parents emphasised the importance of education on personal relationships. For example, a father of three boys reported:

The school offered sex education to children. But what I say is that sex education is to say just physical or…because I think what sex education is not just the physical aspect, say the body of boys and the development etc, but also involves, well, the personal relationships, emotions, etc. Then usually, as far as I know, the school sex education programme also covered these. So then besides the, what we call the physical science of puberty, the body of boys and girls, and the difference between boys and girls. They also mentioned about the relationships, emotions. I think these are very important part of the sex education.
(Father1, *English)

However, unlike this father, none of the teenagers indicated that they learned how to deal with personal relationships and emotions from school. In a Scottish Executive report, it is clearly noted that one of the key components of sex education at early secondary stages is 'skills to make and maintain friendships and relationships' and at middle to upper secondary stages is 'responsibility and commitment within relationships' (Scottish Executive, 2000). However, none of the teenagers stressed it, including the son of Father1.

8.1.2 The necessity of providing sex education

In addition to the consideration of sex education as a proper source of knowledge, the teenagers and parents who expressed a positive view stressed the necessity of providing sex education at school. The teenagers noted that they needed to be aware of the dangers and safety of sex before they actually went out or had sex.

It lets us, it just teaches us what would, teaches us about sex at school, and what we, what we need to know about if we do it or something like that.
(Boy9, aged 17)

Yeah, it's because we learn about all these diseases, you know that. We should know about that before we go out actually.
(Girl13, aged 16)

These data suggested that the teenagers wanted to have the accurate information. This information obtained from school might have some impact on the delay of sexual initiation, as indicated by a boy.

Yeah, it was because even though you were embarrassed at the time, it's also sticking in the back of your mind and you know you don't want to do, because something everyone thinks about it.
(Boy6, aged 19)

Sex was recognised as a 'taboo subject', which was not discussed openly in everyday life, as noted by a boy.

Because it's a quite taboo subject, so in normal conversation you won't learn much about it. (...) Like, it's not talked openly among people regularly. It's not a subject you would bring up.
(Boy10, aged 18)

As a taboo subject, the teenagers learned little about sex from their friends, as it was not a frequent topic of conversation. A 19-year-old boy illustrated how embarrassed he felt when he was taught how to wear condoms in sex education class because he had never discussed it with his friends.

Yes, because you never talked about these things in front of your friends. You never talked about wearing condoms or actually doing it, and you would never

think about that. So the first time I think, you just laughed about it because you were embarrassed.

(Boy6, aged 19)

At the same time, the teenagers found it difficult to obtain 'the truth' from their parents, and highlighted the importance of knowing correct sexual information from somewhere. For example, a girl commented:

I think it's good, because you know what you're heading for it, you know, instead of like being blind, what's going on, you know. I think it's quite good to have sex education at school because there are a lot of people that they don't talk to their parents about it. They just like imagining things, you know, and they are all wrong sometimes. It's like, you know that the teachers tell you the truth, you know it's not like lying anything. They are not hiding anything, you know.

(Girl1, aged 18)

Similarly, none of the parents regarded themselves as sex educators to their children. They highlighted that it was difficult for Chinese parents to fulfil this task, and preferred schools to do so.

I think it's good to have sex education at school because it teaches children some knowledge. I don't talk about sex with my son because being Chinese, I mean I am an ordinary Chinese, we don't discuss it at home.

*(Mother13, *Chinese)*

Periods? I don't know if western parents talk about this with their children, but Chinese people are relatively conservative and we seldom talk about this with our children when they are young. It's too embarrassing. It's good to have sex education at school.

(Mother4, *Chinese)

These data suggested that the mothers found it embarrassing offering sex education to both sons and daughters. In addition, the lack of sufficient knowledge and skills was highlighted, which prevented parents providing sex education for their children. For example, a mother of seven children from age 5 to 23, reported:

I talked about it very little because my mother never talked about that with me, so that I don't know how to talk with my children. However, they learn it from school, so they know.

(Mother10, *English & Chinese)

This mother experienced difficulty, as she had not learnt the skills from her mother. In this case, the teenagers of today might face the same difficulty in the future when they provide sex education for their children. Mother8 indicated the same difficulty and preferred the school to provide sex education, so that she did not need to make a great effort.

I think it's good because I don't know how to tell them. The school has taught it for me, so I think it's good. It's very difficult for me to teach them about it. I don't

know how to explain to them. I hope the school can do it for me, so that I don't

need to use my brain <laugh>.

(Mother8, *Chinese)

However, as parents became older, knowledge and communication skills might be improved by their own learning. For instance, Mother3 had talked about puberty with her 16-year-old daughter, but not her 21-year-old son, commenting:

Yes, because I am getting mature. I read books and I know how to talk about it to

my daughter. But when my son was young, I didn't read books and I didn't know

those kind of things myself.

(Mother3, *Chinese)

These mothers expressed their difficulties in talking about sexual issues to their children and the lack of confidence and ability to do so. They were aware of their children's need to understand factual sexual knowledge, and preferred schools to fill this gap due to their lack of knowledge and sufficient skills to provide effective sex education themselves. They reported:

If schools don't teach them, like safe sex, they would not know how to protect

themselves, or what to do if something happens. It's not easy to teach them at

home. I think it's not easy for Chinese parents to talk about these things with

their children.

(Mother4, *Chinese)

Oh, sometimes it's more difficult for parents, I think, to talk about this, for the father anyway, to talk to the children about sex education. So if the schools fulfil the function, that's very good.

(Father17, *English)

All these data suggested that not only the mothers, but also the fathers had such difficulties. The teenagers considered sex as a taboo subject, which was normally not brought up in everyday conversation with their parents or friends. Both the teenagers and parents highlighted the importance of acquiring accurate sexual knowledge from school, as the parents were not perceived to be effective sex educators and the parents themselves expressed the difficulties of proving such education for their children.

8.2 Negative views

In contrast, those who had a negative view of school sex education reported a different attitude. The content and effectiveness were criticised by the teenagers and parents. This section begins with comments on the lack of information gained from school. Then criticism of the lack of refusal skills provided by school is presented. Lastly, the lack of effectiveness is discussed.

8.2.1 Lack of sufficient information

The length of school sex education was criticised. The teenagers with negative views reported that they had not acquired enough knowledge in such a short period of time. They commented:

I did not think it was enough, you know, because it's only one period. Like we

only had like one period to do this sex education.

(Boy18, aged 16)

We did get some, but it's a long time ago. You didn't get taught about that much

at school.

(Girl2, aged 16)

When growing up, the teenagers showed interest in knowing more about sexual issues.
If schools did not provide sufficient knowledge of what they were eager to learn, they
looked for other sources, such as magazines, Internet, friends, siblings, television or
films.

Yeah, I think they should, like, teach more about it because obviously it's not

enough. But when you grow up, you do eventually realise how and what else to

know. There's a lot, like, magazines and websites you can go to, if we're unsure

and you want to know more.

(Girl14, aged 17)

There's nothing special. You learn more from your friends, and from TV,

anything than from school.

(Boy3, aged 19)

Where did they learn? I think they learned from brothers and sisters, older

friends, because that's where I learned from. It's like everywhere, like films,

Internet. You know everything. It's just everywhere. You just really know about it

before you actually get taught about it.

(Girl2, aged 16)

In these cases, school sex education was not considered as the major source of sexual

knowledge. The teenagers were critical, saying that they learned more from outside

school or knew about it already before they were taught at school. According to these

comments, it appeared that at school too little sex education was provided, and too late.

However, the teenagers provided a conflicting view of this issue. For example, when

asked if she thought the sex education at her school was not provided early enough,

Girl2 said:

I think it's too early, because like if you get taught at first or second year, you're

still only at 11 or 12. And most people won't be reaching puberty by then. And

like, they are still really young and immature. They don't take in. Like, they don't

listen at all. Just sit there and you don't listen. I think it's much better you'll be

taught when you are, I think you should be, like, taught a little bit when you are

young, like first and second year. But when you are older, I think it's better

because you really do consider it. When you are younger, you just like, oh, I don't

care, it's just nothing.

(Girl2, aged 16)

These data highlighted the importance of offering a range of programmes to young people at different ages. At young and immature ages, the teenagers felt that young people did not listen to or take in what they were taught in sex education; however, when older, they were concerned about sexual issues and more willing to learn. Similarly, a 19-year-old boy noted:

It never bothered me back then because I wasn't having sex back then. So I didn't care.

(Boy3, aged 19)

According to his report, sexually inactive teenagers were less interested in sex education. In other words, teenagers, who intended to or had been sexually active, were keen to obtain sexual knowledge, such as different methods of contraception and the dangers of having sex.

However, all these criticisms of insufficient knowledge provided by school were completely absent in the parents' reports. None of them perceived that their children did not get sufficient sexual knowledge from school.

8.2.2 Lack of refusal skills

Unlike the teenagers, the parents criticised different aspects of school sex education. They appreciated the factual knowledge their children acquired from school because they felt it difficult to act as sex educators themselves. However, they found it hard to

accept the safe sex strategy, as they were afraid that it might lead to their children becoming 'too open' and 'too free' about sex.

The parents criticised the lack of refusal skills taught in schools. For example, a few days after the interview, Mother6 wanted to add her views of sex education, expressing her strong objection to it. She explained that she neither liked the school sex education, nor agreed with what was taught, as the course only showed how to have sex safely, which gave her the impression that teenagers could do it as long as it was safe. Other parents supported this view.

In this country they are free, very free. (...) They don't discourage them to do this sex thing. They just say that you have the safe sex. It's OK for them. I think it's a bit dangerous because they know it's OK to do only once it's safe.
(Mother20, *English)

I think they tell them how to prevent from being pregnant, but they haven't told them how to say no. They teach them not to have babies, but they don't tell them not to have sex. So a lot of young people have sex with boys at a very young age. (...) It seems too open. It's like you can do anything as long as you don't have babies. I think they shouldn't be like this. They tell them it doesn't matter if it's safe. I think they haven't taught them properly.
(Mother3, *Chinese)

These mothers commented that schools should put more emphasis on teaching young people how to refuse sex, rather than how to avoid pregnancy or diseases. In addition,

the timing of sex education was criticised. The parents felt that it was offered too early and too openly when young people were not mature or well prepared.

> *It is too open and too early to talk about these things, so that most children don't have any preparation in mind. They become curious and want to know more about sex by watching movies. I think children should not have been given sex education that early when they are not mature. (...) They want to have a try. It is not surprising that there are more and more single mothers. For example, the teenagers are not mature, but they have been taught how to do it. Sometimes they don't know how to choose, but have become involved in sex.*
>
> *(Mother18, *Chinese)*

This mother indicated that when the safety of sex was taught too early, young people became curious and wanted to have the experience. This comment was contrary to the view of the teenagers who believed that sex education was more effective if provided early when young people were curious about learning, as reported by the following.

> *I thought they could have talked more about it when we were a bit younger as well, like be a bit more open about it. When in fifth and sixth year, I am pretty sure that most boys and girls know about it anyway.*
>
> *(Boy4, aged 18)*

Maybe sex education could be made a bit sooner to prepare. ... Yeah, I think it might be too late because it is not bad being talked earlier about it. It can only prepare you earlier.

(Boy6, aged 19)

Not only the mothers, but also the fathers criticised the provision of education about safe sex at a young age when teenagers were too young to deal with the consequences of having sex. For instance, Father1 commented:

Yeah, too young to deal with the situations. So that's why, I think, from the experience of this country or from the western world, OK, then teenage sex is more common than that in China, much more common. Then you will see there are a lot of, well, social problems associated with it, such as teenage pregnancy, etc. Some countries are saying, well, they do sex education better, but in the way tell them, well, how to avoid pregnancy.

*(Father1, *English)*

Interestingly, this father suggested that the low rate of teenage pregnancy in some western countries was due to the provision of education about safe sex rather than sexual abstinence, and differences in teenage sexual behaviour between China and western countries were highlighted. None of the parents considered safe sex as a dominant topic of ideal sex education. On the contrary, they noted that schools should address the moral aspects of having sex.

I don't know very much actually. But I think sex education in western countries is too open. They teach them how to use condoms when they are very young. It seems that the young people are encouraged to have sex. However, the government has no choice but to do something because a lot of young girls get pregnant. It seems to be that you can have sex as long as it's safe. They don't consider the moral aspect. I hear that nowadays most young people are topsy-turvy. Thirteen or fourteen year olds laugh at their friends saying nobody is interested in them because they are still virgins.

(Mother11, *Chinese)

These data indicated that the parents considered it more important to teach young people how not to engage in sex rather than how to have sex safely. They thought teaching the safety aspect might encourage young people to have a try, especially if it was taught at a young age. However, this predominant view of the parents was almost completely absent in the teenagers' reports. Exceptionally, the teenagers wanted to learn refusal skills. For example, when asked about what kind of information he wanted to gain from sex education, after a short pause, Boy6 commented:

...Preparation for how the situation would be like. I mean in sex education, they told you what to do when the time comes, like, but they never told you how you could deal with the situations. (...) I think when the time comes, a lot of people, they think we just do it, (...) just keep the relationship going, but that's actually not the right thing to do. I don't think, I think they should talk more about that, about you could say no when the situation comes.

(Boy6, aged 19)

The view of this boy was consistent with that of the parents who criticised the lack of teaching of refusal skills in schools. Realising that their children were not taught these skills, the parents might bridge this gap. For example, a mother of three boys pointed out:

Yes, to have safe sex. I think it might be the problem. I don't like this. I told my boys don't do that. Because [her oldest son's name] got a girlfriend, when she comes to our house, they have to stay in the lounge, or if they go to the bedroom, the door is open. I told them this. They know that.
*(Mother20, *English)*

In general, there was a widespread criticism of the lack of teaching of refusal skills in schools, according to the parents' reports. However, this criticism was almost entirely absent in the teenagers' reports.

8.2.3 Lack of effectiveness

The teenagers criticised the insufficient knowledge they acquired from school, while the parents commented on the lack of refusal skills taught. In addition, there was a widespread criticism of the effectiveness of sex education. The teenagers felt that sex education was not interesting, they did not care, or they knew the truth already. As sex education was not compulsory and there were no examinations for it, the teenagers felt bored in the class and ignored what was taught. For example, Boy3 explained:

Suppose, more people should know about the dangers, like getting diseases. But it

would be getting bored because from a lot of people, when they are in the sex

education class, they just talk during the period, and then ignore it. It's not a

compulsory class, OK, like you get a choice. Anyway, people just ignore it

because they think it's boring.

(Boy3, aged 19)

Out of date resources partly contributed to the ineffectiveness of sex education, as the following boys reported.

I thought the teachers tried their best, what materials they had, but the materials

weren't really good enough.

(Boy4, aged 18)

The resources they used at school, a lot of the times are quite old than up to date,

because like ten years ago, you talk about sex severe, like, no, don't do that, but

now it's like a little easier. And like other things, nowadays like sex is just more

open.

(Boy3, aged 19)

These comments indicated that sex education was less interesting and less effective if the values talked about in the class were inconsistent with those of teenagers or the wider society. Consequently, education about sexual abstinence might not be effective if society held an open view of sex.

Furthermore, the timing of sex education was criticised. The teenagers believed that sex education was less interesting if they were taught information which they already knew.

Some don't attract them, right, and some know the actual reason already. And me, at the end of the day, don't really care. It's, it's not interesting at all. (...) I think sex education, actually for youngsters, you can be excited. It's a curiosity issue, if it tells me more about that. When you're telt you've already known stuff, you've already known, it doesn't matter, or excite any more. The students tend to walk away from that. If you learn from younger to older and more detailed, I think that, in that way, the students may tend to pay attention to what you say.
(Boy7, aged 19)

Yes, I think most people have heard about it. I think they should probably know about like, the safety of it, the contraception, you know that. But I don't think it's that helpful because people have already known about it.
(Girl2, aged 16)

These data highlighted the importance of the timing of sex education. The teenagers noted that sex education would attract their attention, if it was provided before they had acquired knowledge about sex and safety. However, sexual knowledge might have little impact on teenage sexual behaviour, as argued by the following boys.

It's necessary, and suppose it's helpful for some, but like you still have some

problems. Like teenage pregnancy, stuff like that, I don't think that will ever

disappear, no.

(Boy3, aged 19)

It's necessary. I don't know. I would say if you can have it in class, have it, but at

the end of the day people still do it. (...) It's still not getting to people because

there are still under age pregnancies. I guess, you know, people, like nowadays,

you know, probably they make their own minds to have sex before they are 16 or

whatever. I don't think it's helpful. Oh, it's helpful, but it just, it doesn't, you know,

bear in mind. It won't be, it won't be in their head when they have sex. They just

do it. They won't, they won't think of what was said, you know, during that class.

They won't think of it. They just have sex. They would listen to it, but it's just that

they won't care really because we are a bit, it's just we are older now, just do

what you want.

(Boy19, aged 16)

In these cases, although the necessity of providing sex education was pointed out, the

effectiveness was criticised because it had little influence on preventing under age sex

and teenage pregnancy. These comments indicated that more sex education was not

enough and the giving of information alone had little impact on sexual behaviour.

In summary, the teenagers were critical that school sex education did not stop young

people from sexual initiation or pregnancy, as it was not interesting at all or they did

not care.

8.3 Suggestions for improvement

The teenagers and parents offered a variety of suggestions for improvement of school sex education, which indicated their expectations from this course. In this section, suggestions for timing of school sex education is presented first, followed by the content.

8.3.1 Timing of school sex education

The most suitable time for providing sex education at school was debated by both the teenagers and parents. However, there was little agreement between generations. The teenagers implied that it was not bad to be taught earlier rather than later, as it could prepare them earlier, as commented by a boy.

> *I don't mean there are anything that I would want to get from it. I guess the kind of stuff they tell you, you can learn anyway a kind of through your life. I think what could be done is they could just, they could try to help people and tell them about things, like, some of the dangers or something earlier rather than later. (Boy4, aged 18)*

Similarly, the benefits of early preparation were highlighted in the parents' reports.

> *I think it's good to give them this, you know, when they are young. I think my son, he gets, I think he gets the sex education at primary seven, started at primary*

seven. I think it's good to let them know younger, so that, you know, they know,

you know, what's about because sometimes when you get into, like, age 12 or 13,

if they still don't know what they are exactly, they might have done something

wrong.

*(Mother16, *English)*

The perception of earlier body development of western children was considered as a
reason for early provision of sex education at school, as indicated by a mother.

Our friends think it's too early to start at primary five or six. Actually it's not too

bad, but it's not good if too early. Why does it start early? I think it's because

relatively speaking, western children grow up earlier. In this country, girls start

periods at 11 or 12, or as early as 10, or even at 9. If you don't start sex

education at primary 5, they wouldn't know what it is when girls start periods.

*(Mother4, *Chinese)*

The teenagers who were not in favour of early sex education highlighted the negative
effect. For example, Boy18 noted that young people should not be given sex education
at a very young age, such as at primary school, when children did not have the ability to
control their behaviour.

If they know too much, then like, people would obviously want to try it, and stuff

like that. But I guess in a way it could teach children quite badly if they were at

their younger age, since you said to me that if I've got taught at primary school.

Then it might be quite bad. Secondary school would be quite OK. So our opinion

is that at secondary school is quite OK to teach them. But don't teach them too much obviously, you know, children might think it in a wrong way, you know.
(Boy18, aged 16)

This comment was consistent with reports of the parents who believed that early provision encouraged children to initiate sexual activity. Unlike this boy, a 19-year-old boy recommended a progressive strategy, which provided different programmes from a younger age to an older age.

First of all, I think it should be started earlier, because sometime we goes, some like, other words like, menstruation words and sex, you know that, some words, learn wrong terms. It's hard to, like, observe and understand what is happening. I think it's better to start at a younger age to an older age. Like every year to go up and then you realise what is impossible and what is not important. And I think that the sex education in secondary school is also quite very brief. Sometime what they talk about, sometimes what they teach us, we actually learn from outside school.
(Boy7, aged 19)

This boy laid particular stress on early provision of accurate information from school to avoid children obtaining wrong information from other sources. He noted that sex education could be more exciting and interesting if it was provided from a younger age when children were curious and eager to learn.

In summary, the teenagers and parents highlighted different aspects of the timing of provision. The teenagers tended to support the early provision, while the parents were less certain. Age sensitive sex education programmes were highly valued.

8.3.2 Content of school sex education

The timing of provision of sex education was debatable; equally, if not more importantly, the content of it was worth discussing. There remained many arguments on what should be taught in schools.

> *I think the course should be, like, has a limit, you know. They don't explain too much and don't explain too less, you know, a bit like this, you know, both, you know, just stick in the middle. (...) So people don't know too much, and people don't know too less.*
> *(Boy18, aged 16)*

In this case, it was not good to let young people understand too much. However, what was meant by 'too much', 'too little' and 'in the middle'? It might be worth looking at the actual meaning of sex education to the teenagers. The statement of a 16-year-old girl was typical.

> *It was probably about four lessons because it was called personal social education. In these classes, it's split into, for example, in these 12 classes. It's split into four classes about sex education, then about four classes about drugs and alcohol, and another four classes about something else. So it wasn't a very*

long time, but in these four, it's four hours or something, they did teach quite a

lot, they brought in quite a lot, like all the contraception you can use, or kind of

talk about AIDS, talk about all about sexual transmitted diseases everything. So

it's quite intensive.

(Girl11, aged 16)

Although she only had four classes of sex education, this girl was satisfied with what

she learned, as it was intensive and covered what she wanted to know. In this case,

methods of contraception and risks of sexually transmitted diseases were considered the

main content of sex education. This perception was also presented in discussions with

the boys. For example, Boy4 reported:

We had kind of sex education from primary and at the beginning of high school.

But it wasn't really, it's more discussing things like feelings and stuff, and but not

really going into what kind of things can happen or safety and stuff when you

were at that kind of age. They can't be left quite late, I think, to talk about

contraception, sex and stuff like that.

(Boy4, aged 18)

Having had some sex education at primary and at the beginning of high school, this boy

did not consider it as 'real' sex education, as it only covered 'things like feelings and

stuff'. To this boy real sex education meant information about sex and contraception.

According to the interpretations of the teenagers, sex education meant mainly acquiring knowledge of consequences, risks and safety of sex. The need for knowing more about contraception was pointed out by the girls.

You want to know about contraception, you know that, because I mean, what happens if, you know, when, you know, things happen, all right, and then you don't have a clue, and then you get yourself a really big mess. Especially, if you're Chinese, you know how, you know, disgrace your family, if you're like pregnant or something. I think it's really important that you get information from places, you know, and it's not like, you know, it's not like lying or anything, like fibs, you know.
(Girl1, aged 18)

It could be more, like, more about the contraception because they are all quite brief, because they would go, like, the product does this, the condoms do this, the percentage is this. But they say it so quickly that you turn round and you forget it.
(Girl14, aged 17)

Given the fact that the major concern of the girls having sex was getting pregnant (see section 4.1), it was not surprising that they wanted to have more knowledge of how to prevent pregnancy. In addition, family reputation and Chinese ethnicity were highlighted. As being Chinese, Girl1 noted that getting pregnant would bring disgrace to one's family. Chinese ethnicity became a factor promoting practice of safe sex for the girls. Unlike the girls, how to avoid the dangers of catching diseases was the major concern of the boys.

Suppose, more people should know about the dangers, like getting diseases.

(Boy3, aged 19)

They could try to help people and tell them about things like some of the dangers or something earlier rather than later.

(Boy4, aged 18)

Exceptionally, the need for knowing more about the dangers of diseases, especially having sex with several partners, was a concern to the girls, as reported by Girl8.

Well, just like the consequences, like, if you had, like, sex with a few partners, you know, it could, like, cause disease, things like that, and what kind of diseases can cause, like, how dangerous it is, or could be, like, cured, like, medication. (...) They told us about the disease, but not in detail. They just kind of told us what would happen, but they didn't tell us, like, is it dangerous, or could be cured.

(Girl8, aged 16)

These data indicated that the teenagers were concerned about learning more about contraception or risks of sexually transmitted diseases; however, there was less concern about sexual abstinence itself. Unlike the teenagers, the parents highlighted the importance of moral aspects in sex education. The Christian parents believed that it would be more effective if sex education was taught in a religious and moral context, as suggested by Mother18.

*If you want to teach things about sex, is moral education successful? Their moral education is becoming less and less successful because they don't have a religious standard. (...) They need to know their body, but they also need to know moral standards. This is God's teaching, but they rarely talk about this. (Mother18, *Chinese)*

In summary, the teenagers and parents presented different aspects of the content of sex education. The girls expected to learn more about contraception and risks of sex from sex education; the boys tended to highlight the aspect of risks; the parents laid their stress on the provision of sex education in a moral context.

8.4 Summary

In this chapter, the influence of school sex education was presented. Positive views, negative views and suggestions for improvement were discussed.

The teenagers and parents who were in favour of provision of sex education at school highlighted its values. The teenagers reported that they needed to acquire accurate sexual knowledge from somewhere; however, as a taboo subject, they learned little from their parents or friends. They considered it important, therefore, to get the accurate information from school. The parents also wanted schools to play a major part in sex education of their children, because they felt too embarrassed to do it themselves or felt lack of confidence or ability.

As far as the negative views were concerned, the teenagers and parents laid different emphasis. The criticisms included insufficient information provided, lack of teaching of refusal skills and lack of effectiveness. The teenagers considered they did not get sufficient knowledge from school, so that they looked for other sources and learned more from outside school. However, the parents criticised too much sexual information provided at a young age and the lack of teaching of refusal skills in schools. There was a widespread criticism on the effectiveness of preventing sexual initiation and pregnancy, because sex education was not interesting and teenagers did not take in what they were taught.

Lastly, various suggestions for good sex education were presented. There was little agreement on the timing of provision. Those who supported early delivery argued that sex education was more effective if provided before young people acquired the knowledge from somewhere else, as it could prepare young people early in order to avoid unwanted consequences. Those who were opposed felt that it might encourage young people to experiment with sexual activity. At the end, the teenagers argued that ideal sex education might include providing sexual information progressively, starting from an early age. In terms of the content of sex education, the girls were more concerned about the provision of contraception and sexual risks; the boys tended to focus on the risk aspect of catching diseases; the parents highlighted the importance of the moral aspect.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

This study has presented the sexual attitudes and behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and identified the factors influencing them; the interaction of family, Chinese ethnicity, friends and sex education at school. Previous research identified these influences, but little was known about the processes, due to lack of a holistic approach to studying teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and previous emphasis on quantitative approaches. The current study adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach by examining teenage sexual values and behaviour in the context of family, Chinese ethnicity, friends and school sex education. It has provided a fresh insight in how and why the teenagers were influenced by their surrounding cultures.

This chapter attempts to provide some explanations for and possible implications of these findings in the context of the research questions and previous literature. The research questions were:

1. What are the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers?
2. How does the family influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
3. How does Chinese ethnicity influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
4. How do friends influence teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?
5. How does sex education at school impact on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour?

This chapter is in four sections. The first addresses research question one. Section two explores question two. The third section focuses on question four, and the last section

discusses question five. Chinese ethnicity, the focus of question three, was complex and inter-related with other influences. However, the influence of family on ethnicity of children was evident. Chinese ethnicity is addressed particularly in the subsection on the influence of family (section 9.2.3), but it is also discussed in relation to the influence of religion and friends.

9.1 Sexual attitudes and behaviour

This section addresses the first research question. The sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers, presented in chapter four, are compared with the parental values, reported in chapter five (section 5.1). Conservative and permissive views are explored in turn, followed by tolerance of teenage sexual behaviour.

9.1.1 Conservative views – 'only have sex with this guy'

Attitudes towards teenage sexual behaviour were divided into two main groups, widespread conservative views and less typical permissive views. The teenagers and parents, who presented a conservative view, believed that sex should be left until after marriage, when it would be something special and related to love, commitment and marriage. Therefore, sex outside these contexts was not acceptable. Except for two girls, the teenagers had not experienced sexual activity.

Sexual behaviour outside marriage is considered highly inappropriate in most Asian cultures (Okazaki, 2002). The present study provides some support for studies of Asian teenagers in the USA (Chan CS, 1994; Schuster et al, 1996, 1998; McLaughlin et al,

1997; Upchurch et al, 1998; Feldman et al, 1999; Okazaki, 2002), Canada (Meston et al, 1996, 1998), and Britain (Rudat et al, 1992; Wellings et al, 1994; Bradby and Williams, 1999; Hennink et al, 1999). These studies demonstrated that Asian teenagers were more likely to have conservative sexual attitudes, be virgins, initiate intercourse at a later age, or have fewer life sexual partners than non-Asian peers. Although Chinese teenagers were normally included in studies of Asian-Americans, they were excluded from studies of Asian teenagers in Britain, which generally included those from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian backgrounds. In addition, none of these studies focused on American born, Canadian born or British born Asian teenagers. The conservative sexual attitudes of British born Chinese teenagers in the present study are consistent with those among these groups.

However, although previous studies revealed ethnic differences in teenage sexual values and behaviour, they demonstrated little about how and why this variation occurred. The present study, which adopted a qualitative approach, has provided some explanations for this conservative view from the perspectives of the teenagers and parents. Reasons they gave for this view included religious beliefs and Chinese culture.

9.1.1.1 Religion

Religious teaching of 'no sex before or outside marriage' was repeatedly presented in the reports of both the teenagers and parents. They highlighted that premarital sex, a key concern for them, was against their religions. Getting married, having sex and then having children were regarded as the natural and progressive process.

The influence of religion has been reported in numerous studies. In general, religious participation and religiosity are negatively related to permissive views and premarital sex (see chapter two, section 2.3.1.2). Religious obligations are particularly important for Asian teenagers in Britain, and are considered the main reason for sexual abstinence (Bradby and Williams, 1999; Hennink et al, 1999). The religions of the teenagers in Bradby and Williams (1999) and Hennink et al (1999) included Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. There may be slight differences in sexual behaviour of teenagers among diverse religions (Thornton and Camburn, 1987; Sheeran et al, 1993; Wellings et al, 1994). However, particular religious affiliation is less important when comparing sexual attitudes or behaviour in religious groups with those of non-religious groups (Miller and Olson, 1988; Thornton and Camburn, 1989). The present study supports these arguments, as Christian and Buddhist teenagers all emphasised the religious influence.

Although the influence of religion was reported, its protective effect was poorly understood. The qualitative analysis of the present study has offered a number of possible explanations for this influence on British born Chinese teenagers. First, religion *per se* was important. Religious teaching about sex and marriage had a direct impact on the sexual values of the teenagers, who accepted and followed the religious beliefs.

Second, the religious environment in these Chinese families played an important role in the sexual values of both parents and children. Other research suggests that religious participation and commitment influence parental sexual attitudes, which in turn has an impact on their children (Thornton and Camburn, 1987). In the current study, the

teenagers who went to church with their parents perceived that they shared similar sexual values which they learned from the church. Religious activities, such as praying, also increased the opportunity for parent-child interaction. Thus, in this study, religion functioned to reinforce the quantity and quality of parent-child interaction, and may have made the teenagers more willing to share parental values.

Third, religious attendance provided the teenagers with opportunities to make friends with those who shared the same sexual values. At the same time, interaction with those who had different values was limited. Religious teenagers repeatedly stated that their close friends went to the same church. They met these friends in and outside church. This time together reinforced sexual values taught by the church. Thus, the current study adds more depth to findings of previous research that regular church attendance with friends is related to delayed sexual activity (Mott et al, 1996). On the contrary, although the teenagers had friends outside church, they felt less close to them and spent less time with them, and thus reinforced differences in sexual values with these friends.

In general, the influence of religion was evident. The religious beliefs *per se*, the religious environment at home, and increased interaction with friends sharing the same values all contributed to understanding the conservative sexual values of these Chinese teenagers and parents. In addition, Chinese culture was another reason for these values.

9.1.1.2 Chinese culture

The parents, in particular, highlighted the fundamental influences of Chinese culture, which they saw as being as important, if not more so, than religion. They indicated that the traditional sexual values of Chinese people were opposed to the perceived permissive views of western people. Born and growing up in the Chinese cultural environment in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Mainland China, they argued that they had shaped their sexual values based on Chinese culture before moving to Britain. These values were not easy to change, even although they had been living in Britain for twenty or thirty years. These findings support studies of South Asians in Australia (Ghuman, 2000) and Chinese youth in America and Australia (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992), where some external aspects of ethnic identity were eroded over time, but the inherent traditional values were more resistant to change.

Interestingly, unlike the parents, the teenagers were less likely to refer to Chinese culture as a major influence, although they did note differences in sexual values between Chinese and British people. The teenagers were aware of the Chinese values regarding sex and marriage. The girls indicated that as Chinese, they were expected to be 'pure' and 'clean' and to 'only have sex with this guy', their future husband, for the rest of their lives. However, they rarely related their sexual values to Chinese culture, especially if they were Christians. Exceptionally, when talking about the influence of religion and Chinese culture, Christian teenagers stressed both influences, stating that it was not right for teenagers to have sex. This emphasis reflects Ahmed's (1992) argument about the inter-connected nature of religious beliefs and ethnic culture values.

As with religion, Chinese culture played an important role in the traditional sexual values of both generations. The parents tended to use Chinese culture to explain their values, no matter whether or not they were religious, whereas the teenagers tended to highlight the influence of religion, although they were also aware of the Chinese values and the expectations of Chinese people regarding sexual behaviour. Overall, however, analysis confirmed that both factors were inter-related and complemented each other.

9.1.2 Permissive views of sex – 'perfectly normal'

A less typical view was the permissive attitude. Although none of those with such views agreed with casual sex, teenage sex or premarital sex was acceptable. These open views mirrored the dominant attitudes towards sexual behaviour in British society, where the majority do not consider it morally wrong to have sex in a loving relationship before marriage (Wellings et al, 1994; Vardy, 1997).

The parents with liberal sexual attitudes highlighted the acceptance of having sex in the context of love. They argued that sex before marriage could provide another chance for couples to understand each other better. However, sex outside the context of love or intention of marriage was considered inappropriate and unacceptable. Although this was not a dominant view, it indicated some Chinese parents' permissive attitudes.

Similarly, the teenagers with permissive views stressed that sex was 'perfectly normal'; however, they also felt that it should happen in a loving relationship and highlighted the need to take precautions. The readiness for sex was emphasised, including physical, mental and social readiness. Despite their permissive views, they did not feel socially

ready for sex, as they thought that they were not old enough to cope with the possible consequences of having sex, such as pregnancy, babies and leaving school. These negative consequences were in conflict with their high educational expectations and were seen as a deterrent for early sexual activity. These findings mirror studies of educational attainments of young Chinese people in Britain (Chan A, 1986; Cheng, 1992) and of Chinese families in the USA, where parents strongly emphasised their children's academic achievements (Lin and Fu, 1990; Gorman, 1998). Becoming "sam-si" (doctors, lawyers and accountants) was a dream of most young British Chinese people (Chan A, 1986). The findings of the present study also support negative relationships between academic performance and early sexual initiation, number of sexual partners, risky sexual behaviour, or pregnancy (Graham et al, 1996; Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; Battin-Pearson et al, 2000; Paul et al, 2000b; Magnusson, 2001; He et al, 2004). The high educational achievements of Chinese children in Britain (Office for National Statistics, 2004c) and the high educational expectations of both teenagers and parents in the current study help to explain why these teenagers had conservative views and did not want to have sex in teenage years.

In addition, exceptionally, the boys in the present study overestimated parental approval of teenage sex, perceiving that some parents wanted to have grandchildren from their 16-year-old sons. However, none of the parents expressed this wish. These findings support previous studies, where children tended to underestimate maternal disapproval of teenage sex (Jaccard et al, 1996, 1998; Dittus and Jaccard, 2000).

Although it was not a dominant view, the open attitudes of some British born Chinese teenagers and parents indicated the variation in sexual beliefs in a group, as in any

other cultural groups (e.g. Kinsman et al, 1998; Whitebeck et al, 1999; Santelli et al, 2004). This variation also reflects the view that ethnicity is not fixed, but varies and changes between individuals and across time and generations (e.g. Modood et al, 1994, 1997; Papastergiadis, 1998; Ahmad et al, 2002).

Due to the limitation of the sample, reasons for permissive views were not clear. Those who held such views might be less grounded in Chinese culture, but more in western culture, as they stated, 'sex is everywhere'. Further research on this area is clearly needed.

9.1.3 Tolerance of teenage sex – 'doesn't bother me'

Tolerance of teenage sex was reported in chapter four (section 4.1.4). The teenagers with conservative views were tolerant of other teenagers' sexual behaviour, as 'it doesn't really affect me at all'. When asked about the age for young people to start having sex, the teenagers repeatedly indicated an acceptable age for teenagers in general. However, this tolerance was absent in the comments of the parents, who emphasised 'no sex before marriage', irrespective of whether they were teenagers or adults. They were not tolerant of premarital sex for teenagers in general or for their own children.

On the contrary, although the teenagers were restrained in their own sexual behaviour 'no sex right now or before marriage', they showed relatively tolerant attitudes towards the sexual behaviour of others. The boundary between their own sexual behaviour and that of their friends or teenagers in general was clear. This supports studies in China,

where sexual intercourse was not acceptable to young people, but they were tolerant of others having sex (Kaufman et al, 1996; Zhang et al, 1999). This tolerance also partly reflects a study of Chinese American college students, where over 60% approved of sex in a loving relationship, but only 37% of the men and 46% of the women had actually had sex (Huang and Uba, 1992). The permissive sexual attitudes of these Chinese Americans did not lead them to sexual engagement. This might offer some interpretation of the findings in the present study that few teenagers were sexually active, although they were tolerant of the sexual behaviour of other teenagers.

The generational difference in sexual attitudes in the current study is consistent with studies in Britain (Wellings et al, 1994), the USA (Abramson and Imai-Marquez, 1982; Kahn, 1994; DeSantis et al, 1999) and France (Le Gall et al, 2002), where the younger generation held more permissive views than the older ones. Conservative sexual attitudes of Asian-Americans might be eroded with higher degrees of exposure to the mainstream culture and become similar to the White American norm (Okazaki, 2002). The more the Asian immigrants were acculturated, the more permissive sexual attitudes they had (Huang and Uba, 1992; Mclaughlin et al, 1997; Meston et al, 1998). However, the level of acculturation, measured by length of residency in Canada, was not related to various sexual behaviours, such as petting, intercourse, fantasy, masturbation, or number of partners/one-night stands (Meston et al, 1996). Meston et al (1998) argued that influences of mainstream culture on sexual behaviour were slower than influences on sexual attitudes. Findings of these previous studies have helped to explain generational differences, conservative sexual attitudes and tolerance of others having sex in the present study.

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Generally, the teenagers were more permissive towards and tolerant of teenage sexual behaviour than the parents. These parental attitudes indicated that they wanted to protect their children from the negative consequences of sexual engagement. The next section discusses how they influenced their children.

9.2 The influence of family

This section explores the second research question, how the family influenced the teenagers. Findings relating to this influence were reported in chapter five. Previous studies established the relationship between various family factors, such as parent-child communication, relationships, parental sexual values, parental marital status, parental supervision/control and socio-economic status, and teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. However, they failed to understand how and why these factors operated. The current study examined the context of this influence in order to understand how and why families had an impact on the teenagers.

The current study showed families were repositories of culture. The Chinese cultural environment at home had a great impact on the teenagers. As direct communication about sex was rare in these families, this section addresses barriers to such communication first. Then alternative strategies used to promote communication and pass on parental values are illustrated and discussed. Lastly, the maintenance of Chinese ethnicity is addressed.

9.2.1 Barriers to parent-child communication about sex

Communication about sex was rare among these families and the parents provided little sex education for their children. This was also reported by, for instance, Furstenberg et al (1984), Hutchinson and Cooney (1998), Rosenthal and Feldman (1999) and Weaver et al (2002). The teenagers and parents in the current study reported various barriers that they experienced, including lack of time, language difficulties, different values, knowledge and skills, and the gender of the teenagers and parents.

The first factor, as they saw it, was parents' lack of time. Eighteen of the 20 teenagers interviewed had at least one parent employed in catering businesses, although only 12 of the 20 parents interviewed had worked there. The long, unsociable working hours of the parents contributed to the lack of opportunities for general or sex-related communication with their children. The lack of communication partly influenced parent-child relationships, as indicated by the parents, but not by the teenagers. The parents vividly illustrated this negative impact by giving examples of their own families or their friends. These findings correspond with those of Atkin et al (2002), where the parents found it difficult to develop positive parent-child relationships when there was little communication in the family.

The findings regarding busy parents are in line with studies of British Chinese, where parents' limited time available with their children was reported (Song, 95, 1997a,b; Raschka et al, 2002). However, parents in these studies were not aware of the specific negative effect on parent-child communication, relationships and child development. None of them felt that Chinese parents in Britain should spend more time with their

young children, as did the parents in the current study. Due to the economic status and job opportunities, it might be not easy for Chinese parents to do so. However, as the younger generation in Britain are moving away from the catering businesses (Kenny, 1988; Office for National Statistics, 2004d), it will be possible for today's teenagers, tomorrow's parents, to fulfil their parents' ambitions.

Secondly, language barriers between generations were highlighted. These barriers consisted of the parents' poor ability in English and the language preference at home. Other research shows that the main problems facing Chinese people in Britain are not economic, but linguistic (Jones, 1987). Poor proficiency in English among first generation British Chinese, especially women, has been widely reported (e.g. Chan A, 1986; Wong and Cochrane, 1989; Furnham and Li, 1993; Chan M, 1994; Chan YM, 1994a; Smaje and Grand, 1997; Kwan and Holmes, 1999; Chan C, 2000). Although 90% of Chinese parents in Chan A's (1986) study stressed that they did not need to learn English, poor ability in English affected every aspect of their life, from psychological adjustment (Furnham and Li, 1993; Abbott et al, 2000; Eyou et al, 2000), utilisation of healthcare services in Britain (Chan M, 1994; Kwan and Holmes, 1999; Chan C, 2000; Green et al, 2002) to communication with their children (Raschka et al, 2002). Similarly, the language barrier is experienced by other ethnic minorities in Britain, such as South Asians, in accessing genetic services (Atkin et al, 1998; Atkin, 2003), participating in clinical trials (Hussain-Gambles et al, 2004), obtaining medical information (Atkin and Ahmad, 2000a; Bowes and Wilkinson, 2003), communicating with health visitors (Bowes and Domokos, 1998), and learning British Sign Language in order to communicate with their deaf children (Atkin et al, 2002).

In addition, in the present study, parents' language preference at home had an impact on parent-child communication about sex. The parents preferred to maintain their children's ethnicity by speaking Chinese at home, whether or not they were good at English.

The teenagers had little problem in everyday conversation in Chinese. However, they found it difficult to talk about topics little discussed at home, such as sexual issues, as they felt that they did not have enough relevant Chinese vocabulary to express their views. Occasionally, they wanted to express themselves in English. However, they perceived that their parents' English was not good enough to be able to understand them. Or even if their parents spoke good English, the teenagers argued that their parents wanted them to speak Chinese all the time at home. These factors had limited communication about sex-related issues. These findings reflect those of Atkin et al (2002), where the lack of a shared language prevented South Asian parents in Britain from talking about 'deep things', such as sex education and religion, to their deaf children.

Thirdly, the teenagers argued that one reason for not talking about sex with their parents was that they did not share the same sexual values. Consistent with other studies (Abramson and Imai-Marquez, 1982; Kahn, 1994; Wellings et al, 1994; DeSantis et al, 1999; Le Gall et al, 2002), different sexual values between generations were apparent. The teenagers perceived that their parents, holding traditional Chinese sexual values, did not agree with premarital sex, but the teenagers believed that sex in a committed relationship was acceptable. These value differences limited discussions about sex-related topics in order to avoid conflicts, especially if the teenagers were

sexually active. The perception of not being accepted by their parents and the fear of their parents 'chopping them to pieces' drove them away from such discussion, similar to those reported by Coleman and Hendry (1990) and Shoveller et al (2004).

Fourthly, knowledge or skills was seen as another factor. That 'we Chinese don't talk about sex', illustrated the general view of the parents, as indicated by the head teacher of a Chinese language school when the researcher approached the school. The parents considered that Chinese people were too conservative to talk about sex, a taboo topic, at home. Not only the parents, but also the teenagers, felt embarrassed talking about these issues, as did parents or teenagers in Britain (Rudat et al, 1992; Todd et al, 1999), the USA (Chan CS, 1994; Hovell et al, 1994; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Hutchinson, 2002; O'Donnell et al, 2003), and China (Cui et al, 2001).

This embarrassment was partly due to the fact that the parents did not have sufficient knowledge or skills, as they said that they had not had such education from school or their parents. Discussion about puberty, sexually transmitted diseases, or contraception needs specific knowledge (Katchadourian, 1990; Croft and Asmussen, 1992; Kahn, 1994; Walker, 2001). However, the parents in the current study did not feel confident in their knowledge, when and how to discuss these issues, although they realised the need for such discussion. Consequently, communication was limited. They either expected their children to initiate the discussion, or considered it was not the right time to talk because their children had not started dating. These findings parallel those of Rosenthal et al (1998) and Walker (2001), where the parents highlighted the similar reasons for limited parent-child communication about sex-related issues.

Lastly, the gender of the teenagers and parents was seen as a barrier. Despite the infrequency of discussion about sex in these families, the mothers played a more important role than the fathers. For example, menstruation was a topic between the mothers and their daughters, although they expressed the difficulties of such communication. This finding is consistent with that of DiIorio et al (1999), where menstruation was a topic frequently discussed. However, the mothers in the present study felt it extremely embarrassing talking about sex-related topics with their sons, and highlighted the fathers' responsibility. They reminded fathers of such communication and persuaded them to fulfil their responsibility. However, mother-son communication could happen, if their sons initiated the talk.

Like the mothers, the fathers also expressed the difficulties and highlighted the responsibility of mothers to communicate with their daughters. Therefore, they seldom talked about sexual issues with their daughters. However, this did not mean they talked more with their sons. Compared to the mothers, the fathers were reluctant to make such communication happen. If they did provide some sexual information for their sons, it might be the warning: 'Don't sleep with girls'.

These Chinese families followed parent-child communication patterns in other studies, where teenagers are more willing to talk about sexual issues with mothers than with fathers; mother-daughter dyads talk more than mother-son dyads; boys talk more with fathers than girls (Kahn, 1994; Hutchinson and Cooney, 1998; Raffaelli et al, 1998; DiIorio et al, 1999; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999; Hutchinson, 2002; McNeely et al, 2002; Raffaelli and Green, 2003). Although the parents in the present study experienced various barriers, there was a particular reason why more sex education was

provided by the mothers, as the mothers spent more time with their children; the fathers were less physically accessible at home. This time together made the teenagers feel close to their mothers and provided more opportunities for mother-child communication about school, friends or relationships. The finding regarding 'busy fathers' is consistent with that of a study of British South Asian families, where the fathers were too busy to learn British Sign Language to communicate with their deaf children; thus mothers played the lead role as communicators (Atkin et al, 2002).

These findings add to the literature explaining why fathers play a less important role in communication about sex. Although previous research offered some understanding in this area, fathers and boys were normally left out. Little research listened to the perspectives from fathers' point of view. Perceptions of paternal communication from teenagers provided only part of the picture. The present study has built on previous research and provided information of a new kind about barriers to parent-child communication about sex-related issues and gender differences in such communication from the perspectives of mothers, fathers, girls and boys.

9.2.2 Communication about sexual values

Various barriers prevented parent-child communication about sex. Direct discussion about any sex-related topics, such as puberty, personal relationships, sexual values, contraception, sexual intercourse, or sexually transmitted diseases, was not common in these families. However, the parents who realised the importance of such communication made it happen by using some indirect strategies.

The most common strategy used by the parents was to comment on the media. The media was used to assist communication about sexual values and other sexual issues within the family. The parents discussed stories on television or videos, for example, if 'it was a good case, or a bad case', while watching with their children. This strategy was also used by parents in studies of Kahn (1994) and Rosenthal et al (1998). The negative influence of the media on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour has been reported in other studies (e.g. Haferkamp, 1999; Kalof, 1999; Ward and Rivadeneyra, 1999). However, others have suggested that parents may influence their children's responses to the media, and thus moderate its impact (Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1995; Steele, 1999; Collins et al, 2003, 2004; Greenfield, 2004). The current study has confirmed the role of the media in promoting parent-child communication about the sensitive topic of teenage sexual behaviour and parents' role in children's responses to the media. Considering the barriers to such communication, the use of the media was of considerable importance for the parents in the present study in conveying their values and tempering the potential negative influence of the media. This suggests the need for future research to explore the context of media impact in order to understand how young people response to the media in the social context.

The second strategy was using books. The parents left a book somewhere at home for their children when they reached puberty. Therefore, books were used as a medium for initiating communication about questions that their children might have. The parents also used these books to increase their own sexual knowledge, so that they felt more confident in communication with their children. This strategy was similar to that used by parents in Kahn (1994) and Walker (2001).

The third strategy used by the parents was to bring up an issue in the context of an acquaintance's relationships or marriage. By looking at these examples, the parents generally led the conversation to their own sexual values and personal issues of their children. This parental strategy is reported in other studies, for instance, Rosenthal et al (1998) and Walker (2001). Lastly, in the present study, the parents joked about teenage sexual behaviour to overcome the embarrassment of directly talking about sex-related issues, similar to those reported in Walker (2001).

By using these strategies, the teenagers were generally made aware of the expectations and sexual values of their parents. These findings have contributed to understanding the content and context of parent-child communication about sexual issues and values. Although direct discussion about factual sexual information was rare between generations, the parents intended to pass on their sexual values by using the media or commenting on others' relationships. They warned their children about the possible consequences of having sex, such as pregnancy and leaving school, and discouraged them from having girl/boyfriends before they finished university. Communication about values and attitudes seemed to have a great impact on these Chinese teenagers.

Previous research considers little about communication about parental sexual values. The measure of number of sexual topics discussed, or parent-child communication in general, or about sex, is problematic (e.g. Kahn, 1994; DiIorio et al, 1999; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999). The present study has suggested the importance of considering the content of parental communication, and more importantly, measuring the impact of communication about sexual values. Other research shows that discussion about sex alone is not the only factor, as this impact is moderated by parent-child relationships

(Rodgers, 1999; Jaccard et al, 2000) and parental sexual values (Moore et al, 1986; McNeely et al, 2002; Jaccard et al, 2003). All these help to explain the findings relating to limited communication about sexual facts and conservative sexual values of the teenagers in the current study.

With research using quantitative methods, it is possible to know if the communication has happened, but know little about how it happened. It is the strength of the qualitative design of the present study that has provided some evidence of the contextual aspects of parent-child communication about sex and values.

9.2.3 Maintenance of Chineseness

Chinese identity of the informants was not fixed or monolithic. The teenagers presented diverse identities according to situations and contexts, for example, by showing Chineseness to their families and Chinese friends and Britishness outside the home context. This reflects the view that ethnic identity is not standardised, stable, objective and essential, but complex, flexible and negotiable (Modood et al, 1994, 1997; Parker, 1995; Papastergiadis, 1998; Tsang, 2001; Ahmad et al, 2002).

Other research has shown that the family has a profound influence on ethnicity of children (Modood et al, 1994). Language and communication are essential for reproduction of cultural and religious values (Modood et al, 1994; Ahmad et al, 1998). In the present study, the maintenance of Chineseness was greatly valued by the parents. They highlighted 'no matter where you are, you are still Chinese'. Having been in Britain for years, the parents still held strong Chinese traditional values and wanted to

pass these on to their children by speaking Chinese at home and monitoring their behaviour.

Speaking Chinese at home was regarded as an important tool to maintain their children's Chineseness. The parents considered themselves a major source of Chinese language development for their children, who had little chance to practise Chinese outside the home context. Therefore, the parents persistently spoke Chinese at home, whether or not they spoke good English. These findings support studies, such as Modood et al (1994, 1997), where parents highly valued the maintenance of their ethnic languages, although the use of these languages by their children was in decline. These findings also echo American studies, where speaking a language other than English at home was related to less permissive sexual attitudes or sexual initiation of immigrant youth (Huang and Uba, 1992; Mclaughlin et al, 1997; Santelli et al, 2004). However, these quantitative studies, narrowly focusing on language, but not on broad factors, provide limited understanding of language influences. By using a qualitative approach, the present study has shown contextual aspects of how the parents used Chinese language to convey their sexual values based on religion and Chinese culture to their children. This played a key role in teenage sexual attitudes. The language also helped the teenagers to explore the culture in Chinese and to share cultural values with Chinese friends.

Monitoring outings and friendships was regarded as another important way of maintaining their children's Chinese identity. The parents, having strong Chinese identity, highlighted the different perspectives of Chinese and Scottish parents on children's behaviour, and expected their children, being Chinese in Britain, to behave

differently from their Scottish peers. For example, their children were not expected to go out a lot, stay out too late, or make girl/boyfriends or have sex at a young age, like western teenagers. Being aware of their parents' expectations, the teenagers were restrained in their outings or making friends with the opposite gender.

In addition, the parents tried to maintain their children's Chinese identity by encouraging them to have more Chinese friends and discouraging them from making friends, especially future spouses, from other cultural backgrounds. The parents felt that they could communicate better with these friends, and were concerned about the influences of different sexual values of teenagers from other cultures. In fact, although the teenagers had friends from different ethnic backgrounds, their close friends were normally from the same ethnic background, as they felt that these friends understood them more. They spent a considerable amount of time talking and doing activities together, which reinforced their Chinese identity.

These parents' concerns regarding outings and friendships sometimes caused conflict within these families when the teenagers looked for more independence as their western peers. This may be explained by considering two factors: cultural differences and the nature of growing up. The parents wanted to bring up their children in the Chinese context and closely monitored their children's social behaviour, like immigrant Chinese families in the USA (Lin and Fu, 1990; Gorman, 1998). The teenagers, born and educated in Britain, were influenced by both Chinese and western culture. Different cultural values held by the teenagers and parents resulted in some tensions within these families, similar to those reported by Brannen et al (1994).

In addition, the conflict, to some extent, can be understood in the broader context of growing up. Although not controlled by strict rules, the teenagers negotiated their norms and behaviour within the context of families. For example, the parents were aware of their children's need for independence as they were growing up, something they had asked for little from their own parents. The parents adapted to this change and established a relationship with their children, emphasising giving advice and support, a strategy used by Caribbean and South Asian parents in Britain to negotiate their children's behaviour (Modood et al, 1994). The parents allowed their children to go out, but required their children to tell them about their whereabouts or gave their children certain limits. These findings are consistent with other studies, where parents tried to protect their children from perceived negative influences of western culture by limiting their contact with the dominant society (Lin and Fu, 1990; Modood et al, 1994; Gorman, 1998; Ahmad et al, 2002; Atkin et al, 2002).

Thus, to some extent, the British born Chinese teenagers looking for more independence caused some tensions in parent-child relationships similar to those of young people in general. The parents' setting rules caused arguments sometimes, consistent with the finding of a study of South Asian families in Britain (Atkin and Ahmad, 2000b). However, the conflict was limited and negotiable. This is similar to a study of Sikh girls in Britain, where more similarities in cultural identity were found between generations than tensions and conflicts (Drury, 1991), and a study of British South Asian young people, who were less likely to challenge religious and cultural values held by their parents, compared to their white peers (Brannen et al, 1994). All these findings, including those of the present study, may reflect Asian culture concerning family unity and respect for parents.

In summary, the parents played a fundamental role in maintaining their children's Chinese identity by developing their children's Chinese language skills and monitoring their outings and friendships. In addition, the teenagers shared cultural identity and religious values with Chinese friends and media was also used as a means to explore Chinese cultural values. Chinese identity mediated their sexual values and behaviour. The awareness of Chinese culture regarding sexual values and family unity had some impact on the teenagers. They preferred to have girl/boyfriends or have sex at a later age when they felt they were socially and mentally ready; they tended to take precautions to avoid becoming pregnant if they initiated sexual activity, in order not to disgrace their families. Although there was continuity in cultural values, sexual values and behaviour varied within generation and across generations.

9.3 The influence of friends

This section discusses research question four, how friends influenced sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers. This influence was reported in chapter seven. Similarity in sexual attitudes and behaviour between friends has been reported in previous research. However, processes relating to this similarity were poorly understood. The qualitative analysis in the present study has provided rich insights in this area. Friendship patterns, time with friends and friendship similarity in sexual values and behaviour are discussed here.

Firstly, friendship patterns were apparent. The teenagers had little problem in making friends from different backgrounds; however, they tended to have close friends of the

same gender and cultural background. Terms, such as, 'Scottish friends', 'British friends' or 'English friends' were used to identify friends other than Chinese, i.e. friends whose native language was English. These friendship patterns are similar to those reported in other studies, such as Clark and Ayers (1991), Rosenthal and Feldman (1992), Modood et al (1994), Way and Chen (2000).

Although the teenagers had friends of the same gender and race, their friends were normally not from the same school, but from the same Chinese language school or Chinese church. This is consistent with a study of Way and Chen (2000), who found that only a third of the Latino, Asian American, or African American teenagers had closest friends attending the same school. These findings in the current study suggest that it is important for future studies to move beyond examining influences of friends only in the same school and grade (e.g. Billy et al, 1984; Billy and Udry, 1985a,b; Smith et al, 1985; Udry and Billy, 1987).

Secondly, time with friends was considered. The teenagers spent limited time with their parents, but a considerable amount of time with their friends, talking or sharing activities. These findings are consistent with those of early studies, where the amount of time spent with family declines when young people moved from childhood to adolescence (Larson and Richards, 1991; Hendry et al, 1993; Larson et al, 1996; Shoveller et al, 2004). This family time was replaced by time alone for boys, and by time alone and with friends for girls (Larson and Richards, 1991). Besides the nature of growing up like teenagers from any other ethnic groups, there were a few other explanations for this phenomenon in the present study. As discussed in section 9.2.1,

parents' availability, language barriers and different sexual values between generations further explained why the teenagers shared more with their friends.

The boys, like teenage boys in general, spent their spare time engaging in their two favourite activities, sports and computer games. It was these games rather than girls or girlfriends that the boys usually talked about. These findings confirm others that boys' friendships are based on companionship, but not on intimacy (Bakken and Romig, 1992; Erwin, 1993; Golombok and Fivush, 1994; Heaven, 1994; Fehr, 1996; Martin, 1996; Hussong, 2000). In addition, the boys in the present study said they felt uncomfortable talking about their girlfriends in front of friends without girlfriends. This further explained why the boys had limited communication with their friends about sex and personal relationships. This finding is consistent with the indication that Asian-American teenagers rarely talk about sex with friends (Chan CS, 1994). Exceptionally, the boys in the present study indicated the importance of sharing values and getting support from friends.

On the contrary, the girls, as teenage girls in general, were more willing to share their feelings and experience with friends. They might go to the same school as their friends, but they still talked by the hour on the phone or Internet. They enjoyed talking to each other, shared their happiness or problems in relationships and looked for support from one another. If they did not have boyfriends, they talked about boys in general, or joked about boys. These findings reflect the pattern of intimate personal relationship in girls' friendships, as reported by Bakken and Romig (1992), Erwin (1993), Golombok and Fivush (1994), Heaven (1994), Fehr (1996) and Hussong (2000).

Differences in talking about sex-related topics between Chinese and Scottish friends were highlighted. Chinese friends were considered more conservative and uncomfortable talking about sexual issues. These differences contributed to understanding the friendship patterns of these teenagers. Consequently, they shared and reinforced their ethnicity by selecting Chinese friends and by spending more time with them.

Lastly, friendship similarity was evident. Other research suggests that friends play an important role for teenagers, and friendship similarity in sexual attitudes and behaviour has been reported (see section 2.3.2). In the present study, the teenagers, who were permissive or sexually active, indicated that most of their friends shared the same views or had had sex. On the other hand, those who were conservative and sexually inactive reported that most of their friends shared their values and had not had sex. This perception is similar to the finding of a study of Asian American teenagers (Schuster et al, 1998). The teenagers might also have a few friends who had different views or had experienced sex. However, they set boundaries to sexual attitudes and behaviour between friends and close friends, and between Scottish and Chinese friends. They highlighted that these sexually active friends were normally not their close friends or Chinese friends. This indicated that sexual attitudes and behaviour of the teenagers were similar to those of their best friends, i.e. Chinese friends, rather than less close friends. This suggests that future studies examining the influence of friends may more appropriately consider the values and behaviour of close friends, rather than friends or peers in general.

The teenagers highlighted the importance of choosing friends of similar values and behaviour. This finding support Billy and Udry's (1985a) study, in which examining peer influence, termination of friendships and friendship selection, selecting friends of similar sexual behaviour was found as a reason for friendship similarity in sexual behaviour. In the present study, 'they are different' was a typical description of the 'crazy' behaviour of their Scottish peers. The teenagers avoided selecting friends, especially close friends, of different values and behaviour. They went to the same church or Chinese language school together. This interaction with friends reinforced their religious beliefs shared or not shared with their parents and Chinese ethnicity influenced by their families. Similarity in sexual values with Chinese/church friends and differences with Scottish/non-church friends were increased. Religion helped to interpret the influence of friends.

9.4 The influence of school sex education

This section addresses research question five, how school sex education influenced the teenagers. This influence was presented in chapter seven. Previous research evaluated the effectiveness of various sex education programmes; however, few studies examined teenagers' views of school sex education provided for them. Without listening to their perspectives, sex education might not meet the needs of teenagers. This section discusses views and expectations of the teenagers and parents.

The parents and teenagers who had positive views considered sex education as a correct source of acquiring sexual knowledge. As communication about sex-related topics between generations was limited, they appreciated sex education provided by school.

The parents emphasised the important role of schools in providing sex education for their children, but they did not identify themselves as effective educators, similar to those reported in other studies (e.g. Denman et al, 1994; Cui et al, 2001).

On the contrary, the teenagers and parents expressed a negative view, criticising different aspects of sex education at school. The teenagers emphasised that they had not learnt what they wanted, as schools did not provide sufficient information about contraception and protection from risks of having sex. However, this finding was absent in the reports of the parents, who argued that their children obtained too much information from school at a young age. They criticised the fact that their children were taught how to protect themselves against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, but not how to refuse sex. This teaching was not seen in keeping with the values in their home, and they were worried about it leading their children to engage in sexual exploration. However, the research evidence fails to support the worry of these parents (e.g. Wellings et al, 1995, 2001; Somers and Eaves, 2002).

Both the parents and teenagers highlighted what they saw as ineffective sex education, as they thought that it should prevent teenagers from being sexually active or pregnant. This finding reflects a long-term debate on the purposes of sex education. In the guidelines for Scottish schools, none of the eight key aims of sex education indicates the task of tackling sexual abstinence or teenage pregnancy (Scottish Executive, 2000). However, a government paper criticises the ineffectiveness of sex education, suggesting that it contributes to the UK's high rates of teenage pregnancy, and calls for better sex education to 'halve the rate of conceptions among under 18 year olds in

England by 2010' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). This indicates that current policy and practice put emphasis on tackling the high rate of teenage pregnancy.

In general, the parents and teenagers were in favour of sex education in schools. Even those with negative views did not object to the provision, but they were more concerned about the timing and content of such education.

As far as the timing was concerned, earlier provision was considered. Reasons given included earlier puberty in western children and preparation of children earlier. Ethnic differences in menarche were reported in American studies of blacks, whites and Mexicans (Freedman et al, 2002; Wu et al, 2002; Chumlea et al, 2003). However, these differences were not found between South Asians and whites in Britain (Whincup et al, 2001). The median ages of menarche were reported 12.38 in Hong Kong (Huen et al, 1997), 13.7 in rural Mainland China (Graham et al, 1999), 12.92 in Britain (Whincup et al, 2001), and 12.54 in the USA (Anderson et al, 2003). These studies were conducted at different times and are impossible to compare, and there is little evidence to support differences in onset of puberty between British born Chinese teenagers and British teenagers in general. The argument that children should be prepared earlier supports early provision of sex education at school (Marsiglio and Mott, 1986; Zabin et al, 1986a,b; Roose and Christopher, 1990; Algozzine et al, 1995; Oakley et al, 1995; DiCenso et al, 2002), before young people enter sexual relationships (Weaver et al, 2002).

In contrast, the supporters of later provision believed that earlier delivery would increase the risk of sexual engagement. The parents and teenagers with this view

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argued that young people might want to explore sexual activity if they were taught how to have sex safely when they were young and less able to resist peer pressure. However, the need for sex education was also stressed. They suggested that it should be provided at a later age when young people were sufficiently mature to understand the possible consequences and to take the responsibility of having sex. These findings echo a study in China, where parents of unmarried children aged 18 to 24 suggested that sex education at school should start at age 18 (Cui et al, 2001).

The teenagers also highlighted the importance of providing different sex education programmes, according not only to age groups, but also to the levels of physical development. Provision of age specific sex education has been noted in a government report (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2000), and in research reports (Green, 1998; Somers and Eaves, 2002; Weaver et al, 2002). However, little research has indicated the importance of providing sex education for children at different levels of physical development. In British schools, sex education is provided according to grades. It might be not easy to separate school children into groups, according to their levels of development. However, it is worth considering the potential of this idea.

The teenagers and parents presented different views of school sex education, inconsistent with government policy. Generally, the teenagers thought that the purpose of sex education was to impart information about biological aspects or mechanics of sex. They wanted to learn more from school about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. However, the parents considered that schools offered too much information about how to have sex safely, but too little about sexual morality. They stressed the moral aspect and criticised the lack of teaching sex education in the moral

context. However, government policy indicates the aim of sex education is to address teenage pregnancy, by providing young people with skills of safe sex (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). This strategy was highly devalued by the parents in the present study. These findings suggest that school sex education may have different meanings to teenagers, parents and policy makers.

This chapter discussed the findings in the context of the research questions and the literature. The study will be summarised in the next chapter, which brings the thesis to a conclusion.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

This thesis has provided new knowledge about attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers and the factors influencing them. In this last chapter, conclusions are drawn from each chapter. The key findings are outlined first, followed by contributions, limitations and recommendations for future research.

10.1 Key findings of the research

Part two presented and discussed the findings. The teenagers presented a dominant conservative view and a less typical permissive view of sexual behaviour. However, no matter which view they held, they were more concerned about readiness for sex. Physical, mental and social readiness were highlighted. They considered they were not ready for sex, but their tolerance of teenage sexual behaviour was clear.

A variety of factors had an impact on the sexual values and behaviour of the teenagers. Family, Chinese ethnicity, friends and school sex education affected the teenagers in various ways. First of all, parents had a profound influence. The teenagers learned sexual standards and shaped their values consciously or unconsciously from their parents. Direct communication about sex between generations was rare, but the parents used various indirect strategies to talk about their sexual values. The media, such as television and videos, opened a channel to discuss views on teenage sexual behaviour within these Chinese families. Books were used to assist parent-child communication and increase sexual knowledge of both the parents and teenagers. In addition,

comments on an acquaintance's relationships or joking about teenage sexual behaviour enhanced family communication about sexual values. The parents used these strategies to convey their values. In addition, they maintained their children's ethnicity by speaking Chinese at home and monitoring their outings and friendships. As being Chinese in Britain, the teenagers were not expected to go out a lot, stay out too late, have girl/boyfriends or have sex at a young age or before marriage. The parents highly valued the educational achievements of their children. Getting pregnant and leaving school were seen as potential negative consequences of having sex and opposed to the high educational expectations of both parents and teenagers. This has supported the literature where educational attainment is a deterrent for early sexual activity. Chinese ethnicity, influenced profoundly by the parents and shared with Chinese friends, affected the sexual values and behaviour of the teenagers. Further, religious beliefs, either shared or not shared with their parents, had an impact on the teenagers. Although there was some conflict within the families due to cultural differences and the nature of growing up, cultural norms and values were negotiated between generations.

Secondly, friends, especially close friends, were considered important for the teenagers. Due to parents' limited available time, language barriers, different values between generations and the nature of growing up, the teenagers spent a considerable amount of time with their friends talking or sharing activities. The teenagers, especially the girls, talked about relationships and shared their worries with friends. They tended to select friends of a Chinese background, with whom they shared the same sexual values and culture. Friendship similarity in sexual attitudes and behaviour was apparent. Although they had friends with different values and behaviour, these were not their close friends or Chinese friends. However, differences between Chinese/church friends and

Scottish/non-church friends were highlighted. The time spent with Chinese/church friends reinforced their Chinese ethnicity developed initially from home and/or sexual values taught by the church and increased differences with their Scottish/non-church friends.

Lastly, school sex education had some impact on these teenagers. Although its effectiveness in preventing sexual initiation and teenage pregnancy was criticised by both the teenagers and parents, it was still an important source of sexual knowledge, as the teenagers learned little from their parents or a limited amount from their friends. The teenagers and parents presented different perspectives on sex education, and these were inconsistent with current government policy. The teenagers considered sex education should be about biological aspects or mechanics; the parents thought it should be for sexual moral education; the government put emphasis on a safe sex strategy to tackle teenage pregnancy.

Previous studies tended to use quantitative approaches to examine social influences separately, and thus failed to provide a holistic view of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. These studies identified social factors, such as the influences of family, ethnicity, friends and school sex education. However, with quantitative approaches, although the relationship between these factors and teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour was established, little was known of how and why these influences operated.

The present study, which adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach and included both genders of teenagers and parents, has provided an important insight into how social factors influenced the teenagers and has advanced existing knowledge about

teenage sexual values and behaviour. The findings have demonstrated complex and interactive influences of family, ethnicity, friends and schools. The teenagers negotiated their sexual values and behaviour in the context of family and social networks. Considering the influence of family, parental sexual values had a fundamental impact. The parents passed on their Chinese values by various strategies, which helped their children to understand parental values and generally to shape their own values. Friends provided the teenagers with important practical support, by sharing worries and problems in relationships, something they were less likely to get from school or parents. However, accurate and sufficient sexual knowledge from school sex education was important, as various barriers prevented parents offering such education. The teenagers were protected from the dominant cultural influences by strong family values, shaped by Chinese culture and/or religion, and by sharing values with Chinese friends. Thus, this study brought a holistic view of how family, ethnicity, religion, friends and school sex education influenced the attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers. Without considering the teenagers in the context of family and social networks, teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour would have been poorly understood.

Exploring the perspectives of British born Chinese teenagers and parents has demonstrated the complexity of social influences and provided an important insight into how the teenagers negotiated their sexual behaviour. Many of the issues raised by this study are relevant to those of young people in general. As with young people from other groups, the British born Chinese teenagers attempted to make sense of their sexual behaviour within the context of family, ethnicity, religion, friends, media and school. These similarities suggest that ethnicity does not greatly modify social

influences on teenagers and that it is important to study sexual behaviour of teenagers from minority ethnic groups in the wider context where they live. However, strategies used by minority ethnic teenagers to negotiate their sexual behaviour, to some extent, may differ from those of young people in general. The language barriers between generations, parents' limited time available, increased interaction with friends, high emphasis on academic achievements, stress on religious values and distinctive culture perceived and valued by the parents and teenagers, partly reflect different strategies used by the British born Chinese teenagers. However, the study has suggested that the process of negotiation is flexible, situational and individualised.

10.2 Contributions, limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has a number of strengths and several important implications for researchers, health professionals and policy makers.

Firstly, this study applied a holistic approach, by examining teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in the context of family, Chinese ethnicity, friends and sex education at school. Previous studies tended to separate these social influences either investigating one or two factors. However, as holistic human beings, teenagers live in a social environment and are influenced by diverse factors interactively. The lack of a holistic approach failed to understand the context of social influences on teenagers. This new approach has considered teenagers in a holistic social environment and provided better understanding of how teenagers are influenced by their surrounding cultures.

The study has demonstrated that these factors influenced the teenagers in various ways and how they interacted with one another. The analysis has highlighted the fundamental impact of parental sexual values, influenced by Chinese culture and religion. Although direct communication about sex was rare in these families, the parents conveyed their values, by using indirect strategies, speaking Chinese at home and monitoring their children's outings and friendships. The teenagers felt close to and had more Chinese/church friends, with whom they shared Chinese ethnicity and/or religious values. They talked about personal relationships, shared worries in relationships, and supported each other, something, which they were less likely to get from their parents. However, school sex education influenced the teenagers by providing accurate sexual knowledge, of which they got little from parents or friends. The study, thus, suggests the need for future research to move beyond examination of family, ethnicity, friends or sex education at school separately. Without considering them together, understanding teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour will be incomplete.

Secondly, the qualitative approach contributes to understanding the context of complex and interactive influences on teenagers. Quantitative approaches of previous studies examined whether these factors were related to teenage sexual attitudes or behaviour, but little was understood about how and why they operated. This small qualitative study, including 20 teenagers and 20 parents, afforded in-depth and intensive analysis that has provided an understanding of the context of the social influences, something that would not be obtained from a large sample survey. In terms of the influence of family, the study has demonstrated how various factors, including parental sexual values, parent-child communication, parent-child relationships, parental supervision,

religion and Chinese ethnicity, had an impact on the teenagers. Parental sexual values were the most important. The transmission of these values was moderated or reinforced by other factors, such as parent-child communication, relationships, media or religion. As with the qualitative data obtained, this study has found various barriers to parent-child communication about sex-related topics. However, the parents used a number of indirect strategies, such as using the media or books, commenting on others' experience or joking about teenage sexual behaviour, to pass on their sexual values. In addition, parent-child communication was regulated by parent-child relationships, whereas religion had some impact on parent-child interaction, which promoted communication and relationships. Religion also helped to interpret the influence of friends, as religious attendance increased interaction with friends who held the same sexual values. Without considering the interactive effect with parents and friends, religion on its own would have provided little evidence to understand such influence.

Previous studies of family influences on teenagers, relying on quantitative approaches, provided little understanding of the context of these factors. In addition, these studies tended to explore family influences separately. For example, studies of parent-child communication did not highlight parental sexual values, barriers to communication, what parents talked about and how they talked to their children. The current study has suggested the profound influence of parental values. It was these values, rather than communication about sex *per se*, that had a major impact on the teenagers. However, this influence was modified by other factors. This has implications for parents in all groups, who need to realise their fundamental influences on their children's sexual values and behaviour. The current study that adopted a qualitative approach has

suggested that social influences are complex, interactive, flexible and negotiable, and that future research needs to consider these complexities.

Thirdly, both genders of teenagers and parents were included, unlike many earlier studies that recruited only teenagers or parents, or a single gender. In the current study, two generations provided different perspectives on attitudes towards teenage sexual behaviour, parent-child communication, relationships, parental supervision and school sex education. The study has highlighted the importance of including both teenagers and parents in order to understand how parents influence their children's sexual values and behaviour. Furthermore, the study has advanced existing knowledge of paternal influences on children. The fathers' available time and father-child relationships influenced communication and supervision. As the teenagers spent more time with their mothers, they communicated more and had better relationships with their mothers. However, the views of fathers were underrepresented. The gender of the researcher and the practical difficulties resulted in recruiting only five fathers, compared to fifteen mothers. There was less coverage of the perspectives and influences of fathers. The influence of family on teenagers was covered only partially and should be read as such. Further research exploring family influences needs to have a balanced sample by encouraging fathers to take part.

Fourthly, this study has reflected important influences of ethnicity and cultural values. The Chinese environment at home and sharing of ethnicity with Chinese friends played a significant role in determining sexual values of the teenagers. Differences in sexual values of this group suggest the necessity of including minority ethnic populations in future research. Without particular attention to minority ethnic groups, research on

teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour will produce inaccurate generalisations, and the development of theories will be incomplete.

However, this study focused on only one minority ethnic group and the informants had particular characteristics within the group. The sample was limited in representativeness due to the use of snowball sampling; 11 teenagers and 15 parents were connected to Chinese churches, either directly recruited from or introduced by their friends from the church (see appendix 3). As the study was based on this specific group, Chinese people from other groups may have different views. This is an area that needs further investigation. However, many issues raised by this study are also relevant to majority group or other minority ethnic groups. The choice of British Chinese families was due to the lack of studies of teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour in this group and the Chinese background of the researcher. This study is the first of its kind. It has laid important groundwork for additional research, and will encourage others to do further research on this and other groups in order to refine this holistic approach.

Fifthly, this study has implications for health professionals involved in teenage sexual health. The dominant conservative attitudes towards sexual behaviour of these teenagers suggest the need for health professionals to support sexual abstinence and to assist the teenagers to develop skills to resist peer pressure. The impact of family, sexual values of parents, religion and ethnicity indicates that these are important elements of prevention efforts, which can be used by health professionals to promote the delay of sexual initiation.

In addition, the study has indicated that families from minority ethnic groups have specific difficulties in addressing teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. Apart from different values between generations, knowledge and skills of parents and the gender of teenagers and parents, these Chinese families experienced further difficulties, such as language barriers and parents' lack of available time. The teenagers felt that their Chinese was not good enough to talk about sexual issues with their parents, while their parents' proficiency in English or the language preference at home stopped the teenagers talking about these issues in English. Further, due to unsociable working hours, the parents had limited time available to communicate with their children, and thus in turn influenced parent-child relationships. However, the parents applied other indirect strategies to convey their sexual values.

Public health professionals need to understand how parents from minority ethnic backgrounds cope with teenage sexual values and behaviour, then culturally sensitive services can be provided for both parents and teenagers. They need to rethink the role of parents and their assumptions concerning how parents address their children's sexual behaviour. The additional barriers encountered by the parents in this study suggest that Chinese parents need support and assistance in how and when to communicate about sex-related issues to their children. Considering the importance of parental sexual values, public health professionals can support parents and help them to convey these values effectively.

Lastly, this study has important implications for policy and practice. The findings have suggested that school sex education may have different meanings for the teenagers, parents and policy makers. For the teenagers in the study, the purpose of sex education

was to learn about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, for the parents to teach sexual abstinence, and for the government, as suggested in policy documents, to tackle teenage pregnancy. Although government guidelines for sex education have pointed out co-operation between schools and parents, parents' voices do not seem to have been heard. Recent policy and practice place emphasis on the safe sex strategy in order to prevent the negative consequences of having sex, such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. This strategy was highly devalued by the parents in the current study, who highlighted the provision of sex education in the moral context by teaching young people sexual abstinence.

The lack of consideration of the complicated process of how young people negotiate their sexual behaviour in the wider social context is a further problem. When designing interventions, the policy makers need to rethink the interactive influences of family, ethnicity, religion, friends, media and school sex education, as this study found. These complex and interactive influences indicate that it would be difficult for school sex education alone to affect teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour. The fundamental influence of parental sexual values suggests the importance of involving parents to reinforce the effectiveness of sex education provided by school. Religious beliefs, shared or not shared with their parents, also had a great impact on the teenagers. Further, increased interaction with friends, shared sexual values and support from friends suggest that effectiveness might be increased if the influence of friends were considered.

Young people connect with society in various ways. The perspectives of the teenagers and parents in this study have presented a considerable challenge to the current policy

and practice concerning teenage sexual behaviour in Britain. It is essential to consider the perspectives of both teenagers and parents, to acknowledge how young people negotiate their sexual behaviour, to respond to their needs and expectations and to recognise the complex and interactive social influences on teenagers. The study also suggests that a potentially effective approach may involve establishing an effective co-operative partnership between teenagers, family, friends, health professionals, religious organisations and school, in order to influence teenage sexual behaviour.

In summary, throughout the thesis, the researcher has emphasised the extreme complexity of social influences on teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour and the use of a holistic qualitative approach in order to understand the context of these factors. The study has demonstrated how family, Chinese ethnicity, religion, friends and sex education at school influenced the teenagers in various ways. The implications of the study suggest that it is important for school sex education, health promotion and sexual behaviour counselling to be sensitive to cultural and family norms and values.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule (section 3.2)

For teenagers

Yourself
What is your date of birth?
Do you have any brothers and sisters? How many?
How many people live in your home? Who are they?
Do you have any religion? Which one?
How important is religion to you? How often do you attend religious services or meetings?
Which languages do you use at home?
Have you gone to Chinese school?
How important is being of Chinese origin to you?
How would you describe your ethnic identity?

About your parents
Could you tell me the age of your parents?
What does your mother/father do? Could you tell me your parents' educational qualifications?
How would you describe the personalities of your parents?
What is your relationship like with your parents?
How often do your parents spend time with you after school, and what do you do when you get together?
Are there any rules regarding going out? Do you have to ask permission to go to parties or social events? Do you have to be back by a certain time? Why?
What sorts of things would you like to discuss with your parents? Why?
What sorts of things would you like to be able to discuss with them, but feel that you can't? Why?

Sex education at school
What do you think of the sex education you had at school? Do you think it is necessary and helpful? Why?
What kind of information would you like to get from the sex education, but you couldn't?
Do your parents know what is involved in sex education at school? What do they think of it?

Your friends
Do you have any close friends? Genders? Age? Same school? Ethnic background?
Does your Chinese background affect you making friends with non-Chinese? How and why?
Do your parents know who your friends are? Do they support or encourage you to make friends with different genders and ethnic groups? Why?
What do you have in common with your friends?
How often do you spend time with your friends after school? How do you spend your time?
Do girls/boys sometimes talk about their boyfriends/girlfriends? How?

Sexual relationships

Have your friends ever told you that they had sex? What do your friends think about teenage sex?

What do your parents think about teenage sex? Have your parents talked about their sexual values with you?

What do you think about teenage sex?

Have you discussed puberty, personal relationships and sex with someone? Who, why and when? Who is the easiest person to discuss such issues with? Why?

Some people consider that there is an age, below which young people should not start having sex. What do you think? Which age? Why?

Some people believe that sex is different for boys and girls. What do you think? Why?

Many girls think it is hard for a girl to say no when a boy wants to have sex and she doesn't really want to. What do you think? Why?

Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?

If not: Would you like to have one? Why?

If yes: could you tell me something about your girlfriend/boyfriend? How long have you known each other? How did you meet him/her?

Have you had sex with him/her? How old were you? Why did you decide to have sex? Why not? How do you feel before and afterwards?

Did you use contraception? Who decided to or not to use it?

End

Why did you want to be interviewed? What did you think of this interview? Do you have anything to add?

Does the Chinese background make a difference to any of the issues we have talked about?

Do you have any friends who would like to take part?

For parents

Yourself
What is your date of birth?
How many children do you have?
Where were you born? When did you come to the UK?
What do you do? Could you tell me your educational qualifications?
Do you have any religion? Which one?
How important is religion to you? Why? How often do you attend religious services or meetings?
Which languages do you use at home?
How important is being of Chinese origin to you?
How would you describe your ethnic identity?
Are you married/single/divorced?

Parent-child communication and relationships
What is your relationship like with your children?
How often do you spend time with your children after school, and what do you do when you get together?
Do you know most of your children's friends? Do you know what they do when they get together?
Do your children have to get your permission to go to parties or social events? Why?
Do you ask them to come back by a certain time? Why?

Sex education and sex
Do you know what is involved in sex education at school? What do you think of it?
I would like to know your views on teenage sex. What do you think?
Some people think that there is an age below which young people should not start having sex. What do you think? Which age? Why?
Have you discussed puberty and sex related topics with your children? When and why?
Have you discussed your own sexual values with your children? When and why?

End
Why did you wanted to be interviewed? What did you think of this interview? Anything to add?
Does the Chinese background make a difference to any of the issues we have talked about?
Do you have any friends who would like to take part?

Appendix 2: Letter from Research Ethics Committee (section 3.3.2)

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

DEPARTMENT OF
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Professor Andrew Watterson
Chair, Dept Research Ethics Committee

University of Stirling
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AEW/TI

19 May 2003

Juping Yu
13 Chisholm Avenue
Causewayhead
STIRLING
FK9 5QU

Dear Juping

Attitudes To Sexual Behaviour Of British Born Chinese Teenagers In Scotland

Thank you for submitting the clarification of your proposal, entitled as above, to the Departmental Research Ethics Committee on 12 May 2003. I am pleased to advise you that the committee approved your proposal. The committee raised the following points for you to consider.

a)   The committee expressed concern that there seemed to be no definite opt-out within the telephoning procedure.

b)   The committee suggested that page 7 section (d) should have '..may or may not be the parents of...' inserted.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW WATTERSON
Chair

Appendix 3: The process of snowball sampling (section 3.3.2)

Process / Contacts	Snowball sampling	Teenagers (n=20)	Parents (n=20)
Chinese student at the university	1 teenager → 2 teenagers / 1 teenager → his mother	4	1
Edinburgh Chinese church	2 parents / 1 parent → his wife / his daughter / 4 teenagers / 1 teenager → his friend → his sister	8	4
Glasgow Chinese church	8 parents / 1 parent → her daughter / 1 parent → her friend / 2 teenagers	3	11
Chinese youth counsellor	1 teenager / 1 teenager → her mother	2	1
Women's group	1 teenager	1	-
San Jai Chinese Project	1 parent → her daughter / her friend & daughter	2	2
General Consulate of China	1 parent	-	1

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DEPARTMENT OF
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PhD Student
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Telephone: +44 (0)1786 466287
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10 August 2003

Dear parents,

I am writing to invite you and your son/daughter to take part in an interview. I would be very grateful if you would help me.

I am a Chinese PhD student at Stirling University. I am carrying out a study to explore attitudes towards sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland. This study has the approval of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee. I need your help to fulfil my study. I have enclosed some information to explain why the study is being carried out and what is involved. I would be very grateful if you could take time to read the information sheet attached to this letter. Please use the postage paid envelope to return the response form as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please also feel free to contact my supervisor Professor Tricia Murphy-Black on 01786 466347, or leave her a message on 07974 405 508.

Thank you very much for your time. Your help will be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Juping Yu

Encls: information sheet, response form and postage paid envelope

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STIRLING

DEPARTMENT OF
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Title of the study:

Attitudes to sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland

What is the background of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore attitudes to sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland. In Britain, over one quarter of young people are sexually active before age 16. However, teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour vary among different groups in the UK. We know there is very little information about the influence of Chinese parents on their children's sexual attitudes. It will help us to understand the needs of different ethnic groups if there are studies of them.

What will happen if you take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Then I will arrange an interview with you at the time and place that suit you. During the interview, I would ask you questions about yourself, your views on sex education at school and things people talk about to their children. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' opinions. Your views, whatever they are, will be highly valued. I will record (sound only) the interview if you agree. The information you provide will be strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in any written reports. The recorded tapes and notes will be destroyed once the study is complete.

In case you feel upset or distressed during or after the interview, two support workers can be contacted. One is from the Chinese community, and the other is from Stirling University. The support could be in the form of telephone or personal contact depending on your requirements.

What will happen if you change your mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

DEPARTMENT OF
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Title of the study:

Attitudes to sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland

What is the background of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore attitudes to sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland. In Britain, over one quarter of young people are sexually active before age 16. However, teenage sexual attitudes and behaviour vary among different groups in the UK. We know there is very little information about the attitudes of Chinese teenagers. It will help us to understand the needs of different ethnic groups if there are studies of them.

What will happen if you take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Then I will arrange an interview with you at the time and place that suit you. During the interview, I would ask you questions about yourself, things parents talk about to their children, your views on the sex education you had and things you talk about to your friends. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' opinions. Your views, whatever they are, will be highly valued. I will record (sound only) the interview if you agree. The information you provide will be strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in any written reports. The recorded tapes and notes will be destroyed once the study is complete.

In case you feel upset or distressed during or after the interview, two support workers can be contacted. One is from the Chinese community, and the other is from Stirling University. The support could be in the form of telephone or personal contact, depending on your requirements. If you do not want to talk to a support worker, you may contact the Childline, a free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people with any problems and worries. The number is 0800 1111.

What will happen if you change your mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

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NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

I am satisfied with the information that I have received and I am:

(please tick the boxes)

1. ☐   **Willing** to take part

2. ☐   **Not willing** to take part

3. ☐   **Willing** for my son/daughter to take part

       Name:—————————————— (name of the son/daughter)

4. ☐   **Not willing** for my son/daughter to take part

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Tel: _____

Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

I would be very grateful if you could return this form as soon as possible.

Title of the study:

Attitudes to sexual behaviour of British born Chinese teenagers in Scotland

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided for the above named study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

☐

3. I understand my identity and any information I give will remain confidential and will not be seen by anyone except the researcher and her supervisors.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of informant	Date	Signature

Juping Yu		
PhD student	Date	Signature

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STIRLING

DEPARTMENT OF
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Support sheet given to each teenager

Support workers

If you feel upset or distressed during or after the interview, two support workers can be contacted. You may contact Sherry Macintosh from the Chinese community on 01786 477707, or leave her a message on 07743 125 949. You may contact Ethne Brown from Stirling University on 01786 466356. The support could be in the form of telephone or personal contact, depending on your requirements.

Childline

In case you do not want to talk to a support worker, you may contact the Childline, **a free, 24-hour helpline** for children and young people in trouble or danger. It provides counselling service for any young people with any problems and worries. Your communication will be dealt with in confidence. The number is *0800 1111.*

Appendix 10: Illustration of node trees in NUD*IST (section 3.5.4)

Teenagers' attitudes to sex education

(113)	/sex education
(113 1)	/sex education/positive views
(113 1 1)	/sex education/positive views/source of knowledge
(113 1 2)	/sex education/positive views/need to be taught
(113 1 2 1)	/sex education/positive views/need to be taught/taboo
(113 1 2 2)	/sex education/positive views/need to be taught/little from parents
(113 1 3)	/sex education/positive views/stay in mind
(113 2)	/sex education/negative views
(113 2 1)	/sex education/negative views/not enough
(113 2 2)	/sex education/negative views/not get to people
(113 2 2 1)	/sex education/negative views/not get to people/older
(113 2 2 2)	/sex education/negative views/not get to people/don't care
(113 2 2 3)	/sex education/negative views/not get to people/poor resources
(113 2 2 4)	/sex education/negative views/not get to people/not interesting
(113 2 3)	/sex education/negative views/known already
(113 3)	/sex education/suggestion
(113 3 1)	/sex education/suggestion/time
(113 3 2)	/sex education/suggestion/content
(113 3 3)	/sex education/suggestion/contraception
(113 3 4)	/sex education/suggestion/say no
(113 3 5)	/sex education/suggestion/dangers
(113 4)	/sex education/parents & sex education
(113 4 1)	/sex education/parents & sex education/perceptions
(113 4 2)	/sex education/parents & sex education/never talked
(113 4 2 1)	/sex education/parents & sex education/never talked/not parents' interest
(113 4 2 2)	/sex education/parents & sex education/never talked/embarrassed
(113 4 3)	/sex education/parents & sex education/know it from school

Parents' attitudes to sex education

(201)	/parents' attitudes to sex education
(201 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views
(201 1 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views/trust school
(201 1 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views/source of knowledge
(201 1 3)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views/difficult for parents
(201 1 3 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views/difficult for parents/embarrassed
(201 1 3 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/positive views/difficult for parents/knowledge
(201 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/negative views
(201 2 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/negative views/too early
(201 2 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/negative views/too open
(201 2 3)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/negative views/safe sex
(201 3)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/know from
(201 3 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/know from/school
(201 3 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/know from/TV
(201 3 3)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/know from/children
(201 3 4)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/know from/herself
(201 4)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/suggestions
(201 4 1)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/suggestions/timing
(201 4 2)	/parents' attitudes to sex education/suggestions/content

Appendix 11: Demographic information about the teenagers (Part two)

Number of the teenagers / Demographic information		Boys (n=10)	Girls (n=10)
Age at the interview	16	3	5
	17	1	2
	18	3	1
	19	3	2
Born in Britain		9	9
Religion	Christians	6	6
	Buddhists	1	1
	Dao	-	1
Atheists		3	2
Current status	At university	4	3
	At secondary school	5	7
	Working	1	-
Living at home		9	9
Living with one parent		2	-
At least one parent had worked or were working in the catering trade		9	9
Taking part with both parents		1	1
Taking part with mother only		1	4

Appendix 12: Demographic information about the parents (Part two)

Number of the parents / Demographic information		Fathers (n=5)	Mother (n=15)
Age at the interview	In their 40s	4	11
	In their 50s	1	4
Age moved to Britain	In their teens	2	6
	In their 20s	2	6
	In their 30s	1	3
Length of residence in Britain	12-20 years	1	4
	21-30 years	3	8
	Over 30 years	1	3
Religion	Christians	5	11
	Buddhists	-	2
	Dao	-	1
Atheists		-	1
Education	University	2	2
	Secondary	-	8
	Primary	3	5
Divorced		-	2
Working in catering trade		3	8