Continuity and change:

a cultural analysis of teenage pregnancy

in a Cree community

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THESIS

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## Abstract

This thesis presents a cultural analysis of teenage pregnancy in a Cree community. In the last fifty years social and material change, prompted by residential schooling and the growth of settlement life, have catalyzed a shift in teenage perceptions of parental authority and norms of social relations. Today the peer group is a pre-eminent agent of socialization generating pressure to drink and be sexually active. The peer group also, in part, sustains the valuation of motherhood and some indigenous norms of interpersonal communication and socially appropriate behaviour. In this contemporary context the meanings of teenage childbearing are multiple, and different for each individual.

Although a biological fact, teenage pregnancy may also be seen as a product of how differentials in power between teenagers, their peers and people of different age and social groupings are played out. The construction of a category of adolescence and the centrality of fertility and reproduction are keys to understanding the social and symbolic significance of teenage pregnancy. This analysis emphasizes the interactive relationship between historical change, ideological beliefs and individual perceptions in shaping the meaning of teenage pregnancy in a Cree community

## Resumé

Cette these presente une analyse culturelle de la grossesse-adolescente au sein d'une communauté Crie   Des changements sociaux et matériels recents entreinés par l'instruction locale et la croissance  de l'établissement ont catalysé une transposition quant a la façon dont la jeunesse Crie réagit aux normes traditionelles et a l'autorité parentale   De nos jours, le groupe de pairs est un agent de socialisation pré-dominant générant une pression de boire et d'etre actifs sexuellement   En partie aussi, le groupe de pairs soutient l'évaluation de la maternité, de normes  de communication interpersonelle et de conduites sociallement appropriées associés à la culture traditionelle   Dans ce contexte contemporain, les significations d'adolescentes-meres sont multiple et different pour chaque individu

Bien qu'un fait biologique, les grossesses-adolescentes peuvent aussi etre perçues comme le produit de pouvoirs différentes entre pairs et entre les personnes d'age differents   La construction sociale d'une categorie d'adolescence, et la centralité de la fertilité sont clé dans la comprehension de la signification sociale et symbolique des grossesses-adolescentes   Cette analyse place l'emphase sur l'historique, les croyances idéologiques et les perceptions individuelles quant a la formation de la signification et de l'expérience de la grossesse-adolescente au sein de la communauté

## Acknowledgements

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# Chapter One

## Introduction to the Thesis

### Introduction

This thesis is an anthropological study of teenage childbearing in the James Bay Cree community of Mistassini, Quebec [1] The analysis is based on fieldwork carried out in the summer of 1990 During that time I conducted informal interviews with women, covering a variety of related topics the perceptions of different generations of Cree women about teenage childbearing, whether the phenomenon is considered to be recent in origin and whether women's perceptions of teenage childbearing have changed in the last fifty years In the following chapters I argue that teenage pregnancy is, in part, a product of cultural transformation prompted by social and material change in the community; it is also a product of cultural continuity. The latter is illustrated by the continued power of indigenous ideologies related to gender and fertility, and certain ethics of social behavior in the community.

In the course of interviewing as well as reviewing Band Council statistics, I found that practices as well as perceptions of marriage and childbearing had changed. Elder informants recalled that while fifty years ago childbearing during the teenage years[2] routinely occurred, occasionally among girls as young as thirteen, fourteen or fifteen, the greatest number of marriages and first childbirths took place in the late teens through mid-twenties. At that time, *both* marriage and childbearing signalled a girl's entry into womanhood and marriage accompanied, if not preceded, childbirth Bearing a child out of wedlock appears to have

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[1] In 1988, teenage pregnancy in the eight James Bay Cree communities was eight times higher than the average rate for Quebec

[2] When speaking of 'teenage' in this thesis I refer to the ages of 13-19. The term adolescence, as I use it, refers to a stage in the life cycle, perceived to fall between childhood and adulthood, the definition of which varies both socially and culturally.

carried with it some social stigma   Informants stated that in the last twenty years more and more teenagers were having children in their earlier teens, 13-17, social pressure to marry had decreased and the stigma of out-of-wedlock childbearing had diminished

Although I was told of young women who had recently married at sixteen or seventeen and started families (and this was not considered problematic), most teenage childbearing in the community today is out-of-wedlock and it is these pregnancies that are the focus of my analysis   The informants identified two factors which they stated had decreased the possibility of an early marriage   lack of maturity and productive economic skills of the average 13-17 year old, and a decline in social pressure to marry if a girl becomes pregnant   They frequently voiced the opinion that marriage in the early teens was no solution to the potential problems teen mothers may face   Despite these changes in perceptions toward teenagers, and in marriage and childbearing practices, grandchildren appear to be welcomed into the family and there is usually a strong, supportive kinship network to help care for the child

One aim of this thesis is to contextualize the contemporary phenomenon of increased teenage pregnancy with respect to the changes mentioned above, paying particular attention to the construction of the classificatory category of adolescence, and its impact upon teenage social relations.  My second goal is to examine the significance of dominant gender ideology in the community, and how this relates to meanings of fertility and reproduction   Based on these discussions, I argue that the increase in teenage pregnancy is, in part, a product of historical changes which have helped generate a shift in teenage perceptions of parental authority and norms of social relations   An important caveat to make here is that I have chosen to focus in detail on social and cultural factors, at the expense of other factors that substantially influence the occurrence of teenage pregnancy (such as ignorance of how pregnancy occurs or the sheer increase in 'opportunities' for teenage sex that have occurred with the shift to village

life) The thesis should not, therefore, be viewed as a comprehensive account of teenage pregnancy, but rather one which emphasizes some important aspects of this phenomenon.[3]

As we shall see, former mechanisms of social control in Mistassini, such as parental authority and the force of social opinion, have weakened. The teenage peer group has emerged as an influential force shaping teenage behaviour, and generating a separate set of teenage activities. For successive generations of teenagers, these changes have prompted an increasingly heterodox view of 'traditional'[4] Cree practices and a more pluralistic definition of Cree culture For example, ideologies associated with gender and fertility have in the past been a largely uncontested means of ordering the social world Today these ideological beliefs[5] are sometimes consciously rejected, or else self-consciously accepted as being part of Cree identity. Alternatively, for some women and teenagers, beliefs about childbearing and fertility remain a "natural" part of their transition to womanhood, and are therefore accepted as tacit, unexamined knowledge [6] Within this context, the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy has acquired multiple meanings, and can be understood as an event embedded in both cultural change and continuity in the community

## Outline of the Chapters

This introductory chapter includes an outline of the chapters and a review of the literature on three topics: teenage pregnancy, adolescence and the Cree. As well, I include a

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[3] The advantage of this decision is that it allows (I hope) a more detailed exploration of the chosen topics, which have not typically been explored in many studies of teenage pregnancy (see literature review below).

[4] A discussion of the construction of tradition, and its relevance to this analysis is offered in the Research Methods section below

[5] Young refers to ideology as "a process through which socially significant facts and meanings are produced circulated, and accumulated." (1983:204). In this thesis I use the term 'ideological beliefs' to refer to knowledge or thought which are part of a particular set of facts and meaning, or ideology (see Chapter Two for more discussion)

[6] For a discussion of how factors such as ignorance about the biology of pregnancy, "accidental" pregnancies or those which result from teenage 'passion' or inebriation, see pages 89-92

review of research methods and a personal statement about the problems and merits of conducting anthropological research in a James Bay Cree community

Chapter Two offers a discussion of the analytical perspectives that inform the thesis I begin by reviewing anthropological analyses of gender, these provide a framework for discussing gender construction, its impact on the social order and on male/female relations in Mistassini. Then, using an approach that follows that of Foucault, I explore how social mechanisms in the community regulate female fertility. Finally, Bourdieu's (1977) notions of habitus and James Scott's (1990) discussion of resistance are introduced as conceptual approaches that help make sense of the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in Mistassini I relate broad socio-historical and material changes in the community to women's responses to dominant ideological beliefs about gender and norms of social interaction

Chapters Three and Four present much of the ethnographic data gathered from fieldwork and research. Drawing from this information, I outline generational perceptions of teenage childbearing, describe past and present marriage and childbearing practices, and contrast past and present notions of youth/adolescence. Contemporary perceptions of teenage pregnancy in Mistassini incorporate a complex mix of both past and new ideas about teenage years, marriage and childbearing Several key factors shaped informants' perceptions of teenage childbearing perceptions of the social necessity of marriage, the effects of enforced residential schooling in the community, and the construction of a category of adolescence, influenced by Euro-American notions of this stage of the life cycle

In Chapters Five and Six I explore the contemporary phenomenon of teenage pregnancy in light of the above social and historical context, and refer to specific statements informants made concerning teenage life or the significance of childbearing. In Chapter Five, my analysis focuses on the emergence of a concept of adolescence as a distinct lifestage As a notion of 'teenage years' and a separate set of teenage practices developed, teenagers began to

modify formerly taken-for-granted practices of marriage, childbearing and socialization[7].

Today the teenage peer group is a pre-eminent 'agent' of socialization, generating pressure to oppose adult authority, to become sexually active, to party, to drink or experiment with drugs, as well as to participate in other social or recreational activities. Such peer group activities increase the likelihood of pregnancy occurring The peer group also appears to reproduce accepted ideological beliefs about gender and fertility, and certain norms of social relations.

Chapter Six explores the construction of gender and fertility in the community and the symbolic links between a woman's reproductive capacity, the transition to womanhood, and accepted norms of male/female relations. Female informants perceived and accepted these ideological 'truths', which associate childbearing with the transition to womanhood (a few informants identified these norms explicitly, but more frequently these ideas appeared to be an implicit part of growing up), and a small minority clearly rejected these dominant ideological beliefs In both Chapters Five and Six, my intent is to show how successive generations of teenagers and women responded to the social pressures and ideological constructs they encountered, and to argue that in the context of these changes and continuities, teenage pregnancy conveys multiple meanings

To conclude in Chapter Seven, I summarize the implications of my analysis. Clearly both the influx of Euro-Canadian culture and economy, and a corresponding shift in how Cree culture is perceived and accepted by youth have contributed to the increase in teenage childbearing over the last fifty years. The frequent association of teenage drinking with pregnancy makes it tempting to represent teenage pregnancies as solely the product of 'teenage problems' but such a characterization is incomplete.

Childbearing in Mistassini is also symbolic of cultural generativity, and is a highly valued event marking the passage to adulthood for women and men. As well, it may in some instances

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[7] I am not suggesting here that teenagers were the only group who may have been moved to doubt or modify some aspects of traditional practices, merely that they were an an important source of change with respect to marriage and childbearing

have political significance   Cognizant of the Euro-Canadian society's medical control of bodies and reproduction,[8] some Cree women, implicitly or even explicitly in their views of early childbearing and contraception, express resistance to, or at least ambivalence about, assimilating White ways.  As a cultural analysis, this interpretation elucidates the numerous factors that contribute to the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and shape its social significance.

## Review of the Literature

For the purposes of this research, three bodies of literature, on teenage pregnancy, adolescence, and the Cree, are of interest.  I review these topics in the sections below

Since the 1970's, a voluminous literature on the topic of teenage pregnancy, generated within the fields of public health, sociology, psychology, and family studies has appeared Under the heading "public health literature", I survey general trends in these studies, which represent the bulk of research that has been conducted thus far.  Under a second section, entitled 'anthropological and historical studies', I discuss anthropological and historical research on adolescence in general  In reviewing the literature on the Cree I limit my discussion to those anthropological studies that address marriage, childbearing, adolescence, culture change, and the evolution of village and bush life.

## a: Public Health Literature

In 1985, the cover of TIME magazine carried the photograph of a wide-eyed young woman, looking warily outward  The caption, located next to her swelling belly, read "Children Having Children"  As a barometer of popular social issues, the magazine was late in carrying a story about what had been termed an epidemic of teenage pregnancy in the United

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[8] Mistassini has a clinic (staffed by a general practitioner, obstetrician, community health workers, and dentist) which disseminates information about the practice of contraception, does routine pre-and post-natal monitoring, and monitors blood sugar, weight, mercury levels, and rates of disease

States.(Guttmacher Institute 1976) The outcry over teenage pregnancy first sounded in the mid-seventies  By the mid-eighties, researchers in various fields of applied and social science, such as sociology, psychology, child development, public health, family and marriage studies had documented its numerous ill effects in paragraphs such as the following from the American Journal of Public Health

> Teenage sexuality, pregnancy and parenthood have become topics of intense national debate in the United States  Although solutions to the problem are subject to considerable controversy, there is no doubt that a problem exists; this 'fact' has been documented in terms of an increase in...a range of negative consequences associated with teenage parenthood, including high rates of prematurity and other health risks to the infant, and high rates of divorce, educational deficits, and economic hardship for the mother. (Polit, D. and Kahn, J 1986 167)

Perceptions of what teenage pregnancy was or is have varied, 'costs' have been framed in economic, social, and psychological terms, but there continues to be a cross-disciplinary consensus that America has been and is confronting a crisis.

Most of the North American literature on teenage pregnancy, both popular and specialized, comes from the U S , which has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the industrialized world (Furstenberg 1987)  In terms of the media coverage and number of studies conducted, teenage pregnancy is not the same topic of intense interest in Canada that it is in the United States  Canada was 12th out of a list of 22 industrialized countries in the 1970's (Alan Guttmacher Institute 1976), and the rate of teenage pregnancy in Canada has continued to decline in the early 1980's (Herold 1984). Research conducted in the United States appears to set the precedent for research methods and the analysis of teenage pregnancy in North America

American research on teenage pregnancy focuses mainly on the antecedents and impacts of early and out-of-wedlock childbearing (see for example Kegeles 1988; Kisker 1985; Franklin 1988, Lancet 1978, Miller and Moore 1990; Zelnik 1977,1982).  Studies most frequently measure the following  variables  rates of teenage pregnancy according to class/ethnic/racial categories, teenage sexual practices and use of contraception, effectiveness of preventive

measures against teenage pregnancy, and the effects of teenage pregnancy on a diverse number of topics, from adolescent psychological development to the national (United States) economy. Sexuality and birth control appear to be the most popular focus of studies, for example, Super (1986 381) notes that the majority of publications (nearly 70%) focused on sexual activity and contraception, 25% studied immediate complications and outcomes, while a scant 5% researched long-term social and economic effects

The nature of the link between teenage pregnancy and poor social conditions is not clear Adverse consequences, popularly understood to be the *result* of early childbearing (Klerman1986, Furstenburg 1987) may well be caused by prior educational, economic, marital, and nutritional disadvantages of the mother Findings relate early childbearing to increased rates of school dropout, overall lower educational attainment, and the creation of economic disadvantage (Furstenburg et al. 1987.6-7). Although there is no conclusive evidence that welfare payments are incentives for early pregnancies (Polit and Khan 1986:171), the cost to the national economy in the United States, in terms of Medicaid and AFDC (Aid For Dependent Children) reaches well into the billions and is frequently cited as one of the major social costs of teenage pregnancy (Klerman 1986, Polit and Kahn 1986)

The prevailing understanding of teenage pregnancy as a problem is accompanied by the image of an unemployed mother with many ill-cared for children living on the dole (Furstenburg 1987.7). This general picture is oversimplified The correlation between low economic status and teenage pregnancy, for example, is well-known and publicized However, as Vinovskis (1988) points out, teenage pregnancy is not limited to the underclass "21 8 percent of black females ages 13-19 from lower class families in Chicago have already been pregnant, but 17 7 percent of those from black middle class and 10.2 percent from upper class homes have also been pregnant (Ibid . 90)"

Furthermore, differences in rates of teenage pregnancy do not necessarily represent different norms of sexual activity, since certain social groups may be more or less likely to resort to abortion and/or to use birth control Aneshensel et. al. (1989) found that Mexican-

American adolescents are more likely than white adolescents to have had a live birth, but are no more likely ever to have been pregnant and are less likely to have had sexual intercourse The rate of teenage pregnancies was higher mainly because use of both contraception and abortion was correspondingly lower among Mexican-Americans than white adolescents.

Highly focussed upon the antecedents and short-term consequences of adolescent pregnancy in various racial/class groups in the United States, the literature is silent on a number of important points Many studies typically ignore differences in how adolescence is experienced across cultural and economic class lines. The terms 'adolescent' or 'teenage' in the literature are used as if interchangeable and refer to the teenage years of 13-19, in spite of differences between early and late adolescence.

"Without a clear understanding of the developmental and biopsychosocial bases for defining meaningful age groupings within adolescence, there are arbitrary and widely differing age-group choices...failure...to differentiate appropriately between early and late adolescence has obscured highly important differences in fertility rates and birth trends for different teenage cohorts" (Hamburg 1986 117)

These inconsistencies continue to occur

Many ethnic groups are often obscured, due to the practice of classifying adolescents under the two broad categories of 'black' or 'white', and sometimes Hispanic, (Konner and Shostak 1986) This lack of attention to variables of culture and class may miss the existence of such factors as kin networks, family support systems, child-rearing practices and differences in how adolescence is experienced, all of which may influence the long-term outcomes of teenage childbearing (see Hamburg 1986 121-122, for a study of the importance of women's membership in kinship networks in urban, Afro-American communities). Finally, very few studies have followed up teenage mothers long enough to evaluate the mother's eventual capacity to cope with parental responsibilities (Furstenberg et. al 1987).

In summary, the media, public health literature and public policy in the United States and Canada clearly distinguish teenage childbearing and parenthood from adult pregnancy and parenthood and represent these phenomena as significant social and economic problems.

Findings relate early childbearing to increased rates of school drop out, overall lower
educational attainment, the creation of economic disadvantage and poorer health for mother
and child (Mott 1986; Burt 1986). However, studies of teenage childbearing focus on teenage
sexual behavior and contraceptive use, and do not refer to relevant differences in whether
and how adolescence is experienced across cultural and class lines. Although teenage mothers
unquestionably face disadvantages, one long-term follow up of teenage mothers in Baltimore
concludes that most teenage parents do not fit the popular image of the poorly educated,
unemployed woman, but instead frequently stage a recovery of sorts in later life, limiting the
number of children to two or three, resuming their education and finding employment
(Furstenburg et al. 1987:133)


## b: Anthropological research and cross-disciplinary studies of adolescence

Adolescence is a fluid concept, as is evident from its different meanings in different
societies. According to Kett and others (Bakan 1971; Kaplan 1986) the modern definition of
adolescence appeared during the first two decades of the 20th century in Europe and America
In his book Adolescence, published in 1905, G Stanley Hall presented a description of this life-
stage that proved to be widely influential. In Hall's description, the biological changes of
puberty were accompanied by a process of psychological and moral development.

> Adolescence is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits
> are now born...Development is less gradual and more saltatory, suggestive of
> some ancient period of storm and stress when old moorings were broken and a
> higher level attained...The functions of every sense undergo reconstruction,
> and their relations to other psychic functions change...There are new
> repulsions felt toward home and school, and truancy and runaways abound .It is
> the age of sentiment and of religion, of rapid fluctuation of mood  Interest in
> adult life and vocation develops  Youth awakes to a new world and understands
> neither it nor himself (Hall 1905 xiii-xv)

Contemporary psychoanalytic, psychological, sociological, and biological theories about
adolescence, united in the view that adolescence is a distinct stage of human development that
merits study and description, continue to develop or modify Hall's early, influential report

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Until very recently, few anthropologists made adolescence their main object of study, although the categories of adolescence, marriage, childbearing and reproductive practices were examined as sub-categories in general ethnographic descriptions. However, there have always been some exceptions, beginning with the works of Margaret Mead, including Coming of Age in Samoa, Growing up in New Guinea, and Sex and Temperament. There are also Hollingshead's (1961) sociological study of Elmtown youth in the 1940's and more recently, a number of studies beginning in the1960's· Wilmott's study of working class youth in east London (1966), Jenkins' (1983) research of working class youth in Belfast, Cohen's (1964) analysis of the transition from childhood to adolescence (a study not based in a particular culture), Condon's (1987) study on Inuit teenagers; Davis and Davis (1989) on Moroccan youth; and Schlegel and Barry's (1991) comparative study of adolescence.

Many studies of adolescence purport to contribute evidence for or against assumptions which introduce evidence for new conceptual approaches. For example, Mead tested Stanley Hall's turn of the century depiction of adolescence as a stormy period of rebellion and conflict by concluding that "the disturbances which vex our adolescents" were due to the nature of the society, and not an innate characteristic of these 'teenage years' (1928:1-13). The same question continues to be posed, and in contemporary terms is rephrased as "how does the socio-cultural process of becoming an adult vary cross-culturally and what influences this process?"

The latter question generates research such as the Harvard Adolescence project, a cross-disciplinary study that involved researchers from the fields of anthropology and psychology. In this project a series of ten ethnographic studies were made world-wide, examining parent-child relations, peer group formation, friendship, games, play, sexual activity, cognitive development, schooling, religious activities, pair-bonding, rites of passage, daily activities and deviance (Davis and Davis 1989). While such studies generate ethnographic information about the varieties of adolescent experience, they offer little analysis of the role macro-structural social, economic and historical forces have played in the construction or experience of adolescence as a distinct life-stage

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Fruitful enquiry into the role of these latter variables has come from an eclectic range of disciplines, including anthropology, social history and sociology  These studies are distinguished by critical analysis of previously unexamined assumptions about contemporary 'problems' of adolescence. For example, in his study of Inuit youth, O'Neil argues that lifestyles of Inuit youth that have been labeled deviant are legitimate responses to the 'social, political and economic conditions of internal colonialism of northern Canadian society (1984. i)

In her analysis of the refusal of some Japanese school age children and youth to attend school--'school refusal syndrome'-- in Japan, Lock (1986, 1988, 1991) links the "Confucian-capitalist" commitment of Japanese companies, family and schools to the values of hard work, sacrifice, social conformity and discipline, (at the expense of answering individual and private needs), to 'school refusal syndrome'. She argues "...their retreat and silence is nevertheless a symbolic statement of protest against the 'soft rule', conformity and contradictions they encounter in their supposedly harmonious and equalitarian society" (1986 109)  Rejecting an essentialist analysis of school refusal as a problem of individual Japanese youth, Lock links this syndrome to the social and cultural milieu of Japanese society and economics which demands conformity to the point of denying individual and private needs (Ibid  109)

Arney and Bergen (1984) critique the way that teenage pregnancy is socially classified and labelled.  They explore the significance in the shift from the label of unwed mother and illegitimate child to 'teenage pregnancy', using a Foucauldian perspective:

> "Teenage pregnancy is   a social problem with multiple faces... we are at least
> entitled to ask what it means to speak about her [teenage mother] in the
> emotionally neutral language of the scientific expert. ..What does it mean to
> treat adolescent pregnancy as an 'error' in the proper timing and location of
> sexual desire?  We are no longer called upon to punish the pregnant adolescent
> in the old and cruel sense of the word, but we are called upon to discipline her to
> be 'true' to her own' nature', a nature which experts have determined to be
> true " (Ibid  17)

The analysis is pertinent: the 'problem' of teenage pregnancy has ceased to be a question of the legitimacy of the child or the single status of the mother, instead, it is the sexuality of the teenager which is now of concern in North American society (Vinovskis 1981, Arney and

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Bergen 1984). The latest 'objectifying shift', which looks to scientific discourse on sexual desire to explain teenage pregnancy, has led to a conception of teenage pregnancy as an error in the proper timing and location of sexual desire. (Ibid.:17) While Arney and Bergen offer an illuminating perspective of the contemporary discourse on teenage pregnancy, their purpose is not to give a satisfying account of the teenager herself. Regardless of how the social and scientific 'gaze' influences our perception of the pregnant teenager, her subjectivity remains unexplored. Arney and Bergen have not offered an analysis of what shapes the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy in the way that Lock interprets school refusal syndrome, or O'Neil interprets teenage Inuit behavior

In summary, anthropological studies of adolescence have increased in the last ten years Cross-cultural research in this area is perhaps more appropriate today than twenty years ago, in large part due to the growing industrialization of most countries and the increasing adoption of formal schooling-- two factors that seem to promote recognition of a prolonged period of adolescence Anthropological studies provide a counterpart to the public health literature, which isolates and studies certain areas of teenage life with correspondingly few attempts to contextualize them in terms of culture, or social or political relations. Several studies of Cree adolescents have been carried out since the late 60's. These together with a general summary of the ethnographic work on the Cree are presented below.

c: Anthropological Studies of the Cree

Earlier anthropological research on the James Bay Cree was broad in its scope; topics of study included the role of women, social organization, recreation, magico-religious life, kinship systems, land tenure and hunting lifestyle (Speck 1917, 1923, 1925,1935, 1939; Flannery 1935a,1935b 1936, 1937 1938,1939; Cooper 1933, 1939, 1944; Rogers E. 1963, 1967, 1972, 1973; Rogers and Rogers 1959; Leechman 1945, Ellis 1964; Tanner 1975). Much research since 1960 has concentrated on one of several themes: the processes of culture change, social/ecological aspects of a hunting lifestyle or the impact of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

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(see for example, Chance 1968, 1970, Holden 1969, Cox 1970, Wintrob 1970, Feit 1979, 1980, 1982,1985, LaRusic 1979, C Scott 1985; Salisbury 1972,1986). Other studies have been done on such topics as religious life (Tanner 1979) Cree narrative (Preston 1975b) or the Cree medical system (Marshall 1984).

After the advent of an active village life alongside bush life, beginning in the forties and fifties, two distinct foci in the literature emerge. One point of interest has been the phenomenon of traditional life "stressed" or diminished by sedentary settlement living (for example, LaRusic 1970; Chance 1970; Berry 1982). In these studies, researchers represented the community of Mistassini as undergoing major social, cultural and economic changes since the nineteen-sixties. The present study does not focus on stressed or diminished 'traditional' life per se, but rather explores the role of individual perception in responding to and shaping social and cultural change.

A second trend in the research documenting bush life is to note the resilience of the hunting lifestyle, and the continuity of Cree culture as the people adapt various aspects of Euro-Canadian culture to their own uses (C Scott 1985, Feit 1979 and 1985, Tanner 1979, Salisbury 1988). Such research portrays hunting and trapping as activities integral to Cree contemporary life and ideology and by implication differentiates the cultural context of Cree teenage childbearing from that of other groups in North America. These latter studies also represent Cree contact with Euro-Canadian society as on-going, the first exchanges of trade goods and technical expertise having begun in the 1600's. The attention to the circumstances of previous historical contacts tempers the image of culture shock conveyed by the literature on culture change

Studies on both hunting and trapping and village life provide accounts of the social behavior considered competent and appropriate in Cree society. Accounts of Cree styles of communication, the role of women, adolescent socialization and several life histories identify such characteristics of competent social behavior as self-reliance, and ethics of non-interference and non-aggression (Flannery 1935, 1937, Preston, R 1975a, Preston, S 1986,

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Darnell 1981) Richard Preston (1979) notes that in the past, Cree adult behavior, in particular the cultivation of self-control and self-esteem, was learned primarily through imitation of adults, practicing the activities and tasks of hunters, trappers and homemakers and receiving guidance from adults themselves. Sarah Preston (1982) discusses the expression of Cree competent social behavior in the context of childbirth, finding that appropriate reticence, emotional control and non-interference are maintained as long as possible before mothers relinquish their self-reliance during labour. These studies document a strong Cree ethic of socially acceptable behavior

A second body of pertinent studies is comprised of ethnographic accounts of the life-course of a Cree person These show that adolescence was in the past one of the least well-defined social categories in Cree communities There were rites which marked progress on the individual Cree's path to becoming an adult man or woman the 'walking out' ceremony, the celebrations of a boy's first kill and his first kill of big game, and a girl's first menarch are events formally recognized. The latter rite is seldom practiced these days (pers comm. Caroline Oblin, 1990) In these cases it was the child's potential competence and his/her duties as an adult hunter (male) or homemaker (female) that were emphasized.

In a study of Cree adolescence, R Preston (1979) compares present and past socialization of Cree adolescents and concludes that these days the peer group, rather than adults, predominates in the process of socialization into the adult world. Other studies (Wintrob 1968,1970, Chance 1968) described the cultural conflict or contradiction that adolescents experienced in trying to maintain their Cree identity when the different world of southern Canada confronted them in school and in the media There are no studies of Cree attitudes toward teenage pregnancy, although Morel (1989) notes that educated Cree, conversant with the culture of southern Canada may see it as an issue. The present research contributes contemporary data relating to studies on adolescence and offers the first analysis of teenage pregnancy

In summary, the existing literature on the Cree establishes a number of important points First, hunting and trapping remain essential activities in the subsistence life-style and for the ideology of the Cree. Despite Cree use of Euro-Canadian/ global technological goods, the cultural consensus on the importance of bush life and subsistence activities, as well as differences in language and norms of correct social conduct, are characteristics that clearly differentiate Cree culture from the industrialized culture of Canada Second, studies indicate that the category of adolescence has been increasingly demarcated as a distinct lifestage in the last twenty years in Cree society.

## Mistassini. historical overview

Mistassini[9] is a Cree community with a summer-time population of 2000, 50% of whom were under the age of twenty in 1987 [10] The population decreases in the winter, when hunters and trappers live in the bush.[11] In design the community has grown north and west from a large bay and along a narrow channel that runs northward toward the larger part of Lake Mistassini. Houses, many of them new, line the streets--paved and unpaved--that curve in concentric semi-circles on the eastern side of town and run parallel on the north-west side The community has a bank, grocery, municipal office, churches, restaurant, laundromat, gas station/garage, craft shop, outfitting camp, video rental store and department store, a clinic, a police station, a fire station, a hockey arena, and youth center Alongside houses and in backyards, some traditional tipis for cooking, family gatherings and preparation of skins are visible

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[9] In the late eighties the Band Council had the formal spelling of the Band changed to Mistissini, which more closely approximates the way the word is pronounced in Cree The name of the community and the lake are still Mistassini, although the Band is hoping to change these too (personal communication, Edna Awashish, Mistissini Band Council, 1992)

[10] These statistics are based on information supplied by Quebec Ministere des Affaires Sociales and were taken from a community profile report available at the Band Council

[11] Today 56% percent of Mistassini men qualify to participate in the income security program This program, instituted as part of the JBNQA, supplements hunters and their families with a cash income Hunting camps are located in the bush, anywhere from twenty to three hundred of miles from the village

The Band Council, clinic, bank, arena, and stores operate year-round, and teenagers take summer jobs at these locations Out of a labor force of 1055 men and women, 80% are employed at some time during the year; the rate of underemployment is 26.3 % and unemployment is 4.9% [12] Overall, the growth of new businesses and construction has accelerated since 1975; housing construction has proceeded perhaps the most rapidly (though its has not kept pace with the demand)

The community is located at the southern end of Lake Mistassini, an immense, beautiful body of water stretching north a hundred miles, and reaching sixteen miles across at its widest point The topography of the area is boreal forest: the land is slightly rolling and populated by a mix of larches, firs and scattered birches. Lakes, rivers and streams--host to a number of species of fish-- break up the thick forest with wide stretches of clear, cold water The climate is rigorous for outdoor living However, the air is dry, the snow usually dry and copious, and the summer time very pleasant, with warm temperatures, a constant breeze, and low humidity.

The Mistissini are an Algonkian-speaking people (Rogers1972:92). Archaeological work done farther north suggests that the area northeast of James Bay has been inhabited for 1,600 years (pers comm David Denton, Cree Regional Authority, 1992); this area appears to have been inhabited for approximately 4,000-5,000 years, although it is not clear whether the earlier group were Algonkian speaking (Ibid.). The Jesuits make reference to Mistissini people in 1642-43 and there were probably contacts with the French post at Tadoussac, but the first recorded meeting between people from the area and Europeans is not until 1663, when three Frenchmen traveled from the St. Lawrence River to Lake Mistassini and then to Lake Nemiscau, where they traded with the local community (Martijn and Rogers 1969:73; Morantz 1983 15)

Despite this first French contact, it was the English who eventually formed a strong trade relationship with the Mistissini and other James Bay Cree. Prior to 1800, contact between the

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[12]Statistics supplied by the Mistassini Band Council, 1987 Community Profile

Cree and Europeans took place either between individual traders or missionaries venturing into Mistissini territory, or at a number of trading posts in the Lac St Jean/Saguenay region (French) and the coast of James Bay (English) (Martijn and Rogers 1969. 74-75)   A number of posts were established at different times in the 18th century in the region but none of these were very long-lived (Ibid ).

In contrast to the brief nature of contacts in the 17th and 18th centuries, between 1800 and 1900 the fur-trade between the Mistissini and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) became well-developed  In 1803, the Montreal-based North West Company (NWC) built a post at the southern end of Lake Mistassini and in 1812 the HBC established a post on the lake (Francis and Morantz 1983:110).  In 1821 the HBC and NWC merged, and until settlement in the area, trade was monopolized by the HBC (Martijn and Rogers 1969: 79).  A thriving exchange of furs for tools, food staples and clothing was established.  Throughout the 19th century, supplies were brought by canoe brigade from Rupert House, up the Rupert River which has its head waters at the north end of Lake Mistassini (Ibid · 78).

In the twentieth century there have been many changes in the region and community, motivated by a host of social, technological, and economic factors.  The fur trade gradually declined in importance during the late 1920s and 1930s because of the Depression and competition with white trappers, and the reduced numbers of animals, consequently, hunters had to depend on seasonal wage labour and government payments to continue to hunt and gain the now necessary imported food staples such as flour, and tools (LaRusic 1970 2)  During the early 1950s, the Quebec government also began to regulate beaver harvests due to the low population and placed a temporary embargo on the trapping of beaver in 1950 or 1951 (Ibid 6)

Concomitantly, federal government control of community life increased by government decree, bands were told to elect chiefs who would serve as liaisons between the community and the Indian Affairs Branch  Formal schooling was instituted in the early forties Cree is the first language children learn at home, while both English, and now increasingly French, taught in the schools, are the second and third spoken languages of most people under the age

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of fifty  Contact with non-government people and organizations also increased with the growth of the mining town of Chibougamau, fifty miles to the south and the network of roads, rail-lines and airports associated with forestry and mining.  By 1964 there was a road within fifteen miles of Mistassini and the Cree were beginning to use planes to reach distant hunting territories [13]  Today the Cree employ 20th century technology--motorboats, snowmobiles, washing machines, dishwashers etc. to assist them in hunting as well as village life.

In 1975 the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement was signed between the province of Quebec and the Cree after a two year long court case in which the Cree fought for the land rights to their traditional hunting territories. The JBNQA instituted Cree-run local and regional governments and an income security program (ISP) guaranteeing that hunting and trapping remained a financially viable way of life. These changes, Salisbury has argued, strengthened a regional sense of community for the Cree (Salisbury 1986)[14]

As noted in the literature review, the advent of village life alongside bush life has led to two different domains of life and practices  To varying degrees, the world of the bush is known and experienced by all members of the Mistissini community and is perceived as removed from 'the white man', and wholly Cree  Periodically this distinction was stated explicitly by my informants, who referred to the bush as a place where children could develop their Cree identity, acquire useful skills, and learn to behave in a more traditionally Cree manner.[15]  The land and its animal and plant life remain singularly important in the Cree way of life.  Values and practices of bush life carry over into village life, and at least at the material level, village life has entered the bush. Teenage pregnancy and childbearing are

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[13] For example, Williamson records that in 1963-64, 263 individuals chartered aircraft for flights totalling approximately 21,000 miles (1964:22).

[14] This interpretation has been contested (see LaRusic 1979 or Scott, R 1992)  R Scott, for example, argues that anthropologists who study the Cree are in fact engaged in just another form of imperialism, as they construct 'the natives' yet again. For my own position on this topic see the last section of this chapter

[15] The flora and fauna of the bush were a traditional source of Cree medicine, which comprised various herbal drinks, poultices, foods, sweat baths (Marshall 1984)

events embedded in a social environment in which both 'traditional' and modern Cree
practices and ideologies are implicated


## Research Methods

As mentioned, the data presented below were gathered when I lived in Mistassini, from
June through mid-August, 1990   While much of the following analysis is based on the
interviews I conducted, I also draw from my experiences while volunteering at the Day Care
Center, attending community feasts, games and youth dances, and from casual conversation
with friends and acquaintances. Anthropological and ethnohistorical sources provide
supplementary information about Cree history, culture and social life

I phoned or approached women in their work places or homes and asked if they would be
interested in participating in an interview, and explained the purpose and confidentiality of
the study.   Many potential informants were contacted after being suggested by a previous
interviewee   In several cases the two interpreters who translated for elder, unilingual
informants suggested other women who might be interested in participating. Approximately
one quarter of the women who were asked declined to be interviewed.

I conducted the majority of interviews in English, or with the aid of a translator for those
not comfortable speaking English (mainly women over sixty-five).  To elicit a comprehensive
picture of their perceptions of teenage pregnancy, I asked informants about a wide range of
topics that might relate to pregnancy in teenagers. youth or teenage years, schooling,
marriage, childbearing, religion, contraception, abortion, male/female relationships,
schooling, parent/child relationships, drug use   These topics provided a basis for conversation
and frequently led to other topics

The interviews were loosely structured around a set of questions regarding personal
experiences of school, adolescence, marriage, childbearing, family life   I also asked a series of
factual questions regarding age, family, religion and occupation   I modified my questions
somewhat according to the age of the women, and for the purposes of discussion divide the

informants into three age groups teenagers and young women in their twenties, middle-aged and elder women (over sixty-five)

These generational divisions correspond to three relatively distinct historical periods experienced by the women Elder women grew up in the bush, with little or no experience with residential schooling, middle-aged women were teenagers in a transitional period, during which time residential schooling was implemented and a more extensive wage economy and welfare system developed. Informants in their teens and twenties, meanwhile, had grown up in the post-JBNQA economy and lifestyle. Interviews varied in length from one and a half to four hours and took place either at the informant's workplace, home, or in the apartment where I was staying I present the content of the interviews, which forms the basis for the analysis, by summarizing informants' responses or directly quoting them.

Women's experiences, personal histories and occupations varied. With some qualifications which I note below, I believe the attitudes and opinions they expressed are reasonably representative of women in the community. Of the fifty women I interviewed, twelve were employed by one of the Cree institutions in the community: the clinic, the band council or the Cree school board, eleven were full-time mothers; fourteen were students; five made their livelihood in the bush , seven were in business, either in a cottage industry or in a local store, and one made money baby-sitting. Clearly, women from the bush are under-represented for middle-aged women; however, because I did not measure correlations hut rather sought to explore a range of opinion, the imbalance does not present a major problem. To the extent that I generalize from the opinions of middle-aged women interviewed, the perceptions of women who spend the majority of their time in the bush are not adequately represented .

A second possible bias could be level of education. The level of formal education completed by the women varied from several years at primary school to completion of a masters' degree. Eleven of the women had never gone to school   Again, if there is a misrepresentation about schooling, this would appear in the middle-aged group, as it is within this generation that

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level of schooling attained varies widely, in comparison to Elders, all but one of whom received no schooling, and teenagers or recent teenagers, all of whom had attended school

The influence of religious beliefs might be another source of bias, however, the three churches in the community are fairly well-represented. sixteen women were Pentecostals, seventeen were Anglicans, six were Baptists, eight said they did not practice a religion and three were not specific as to their beliefs.

There may have been a self-selection bias: informants willing to be interviewed might have been more open and gregarious than the general population and perhaps more likely to share certain opinions. In spite of these potential sources of bias, the informants expressed a range of perceptions and evaluations of teenage pregnancy Moreover, my analysis of the interviews suggests that neither religious affiliation nor occupation was a reliable predictor of attitudes

The notion of 'tradition' is an additional topic that requires comment In this analysis I identify 'traditional' practices and notions of marriage, childbearing, and 'youth' or adolescence, as the informants recollected them. The informants' perceptions of teenage childbearing are not clear lenses, unclouded by memory and idealization, through which we may discover Cree 'traditional' culture. As Hobsbawm (1983:1) points out (see also Trevor-Roper 1983), 'traditions' are invented·

> 'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by
> overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek
> to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which
> automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they
> normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past

To the extent that all contemporary attempts to conceive of the past are reconstructions, traditions and representations of the past are 'invented' Contemporary Native American cultures engage in this creative process, as can be seen, for example, in the 'tradition' of

Native American powwows, which Vargas Cetina (1988:12) describes as a form of tradition-creation [16]

Yet it is possible to discriminate between fabricated traditions and the 'traditions' people refer to in recollecting practices that the historical record demonstrates have been carried on over long periods of time  In this respect, the invention of the Scottish Highlander 'tradition' of kilt-wearing documented by Trevor-Roper (1983) is clearly more 'invented' than the elder women's perceptions that hunting and trapping were a part of traditional Cree life, although verbal recollections of either such traditions *are* reconstructions. I rely on ethnographical records and statistics to verify those practices I present as being typical of traditional life in Mistassini fifty years ago or before

Comments about a 'tradition' may refer to an ideal that was met, in past practices, to varying degrees, as well, the expression of an ideal is itself significant. For example, elder women's perception that out-of-wedlock childbirth was more stigmatized than today may indicate a change in practice, the comment also demonstrates a particular use of the concept of 'tradition'  As informants use it, the idea of tradition carries ideological significance as a category associated with being Cree, and with the most valued aspects of Cree life

Elder women referred to past ways of doing things and younger women referred to "the way things used to be" as 'traditional' in this valuative sense, although not all aspects of 'traditional life' were recalled this way, for example, times of physical hardship when there was not enough to eat, and for some women, the practice of arranged marriage. Middle-aged women were more frankly critical in their recollections of youth and of some 'traditions', but as with elders, the notion of 'traditional life' also operated as an abstract category that provided a favourable alternative to the problems of modern life. The young women with whom I spoke referred to tradition least of all

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[16] Implicit in Vargas Cetina's as well as Hobsbawm's analysis is the assumption that the followers of such invented traditions are unaware of the real origins of the tradition. Such an assumption. while no doubt correct in some circumstances, is unlikely to be true across the board

In this thesis, based on my impression that women generally spoke earnestly and honestly,[17] I have taken the narratives as indicators of some of the women's feelings and opinions. Predicated on the assumption that informants spoke genuinely, I refer to tradition in my interpretation in one of two ways 1) as a concept that can be used to express an ideal that was met, to varying degrees, in past practices, and 2) as a concept the informants themselves used as a way of referring to aspects of Cree life that represent a preferable, particularly Cree way of life. The notion of 'tradition' as a body of past, characteristically or uniquely Cree practices, is an idea that is part of the vocabulary of most people with whom I spoke; I do not believe I imposed this notion upon the informants

## Ethics of Research

In January of 1990, I learned through the Module du Nord, Montreal General Hospital, that some James Bay Cree communities might be interested in supporting research on teenage pregnancy  In February I wrote to the Cree Board of Health and Social Services about the possibility of doing research on teenage pregnancy and the Board expressed support for researching the topic  Subsequently I wrote to the Band Councils in four communities and received several positive responses about doing research  Eventually, I arranged to conduct a study of women's perceptions of teenage pregnancy and childbearing in Mistassini

The public health officer in Mistassini, Bella Petawabano, presented my proposal to Band Council members at a general meeting and they granted their permission to do the research  I have no doubt that band members' trust in Bella had much to do with my proposal being passed. Further, the fact that the study was supported by the Module du Nord at the Montreal General Hospital no doubt favoured the project in the eyes of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services

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[17] Obviously I do not assume that my informants revealed all their thoughts or that the interviews were not affected by my status as an outsider  As one elder woman asked, grinning, as the translator and I were preparing to leave, "How do you know I haven't just told you a pack of lies?"

The research was also funded by the Module du Nord, and was viewed by this department as a project that would illuminate the findings of another study (also conducted in the other Cree communities in the summer of 1990) that surveyed Cree attitudes and knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases. In return for the funding and support from the Module du Nord, I included several questions that explored people's knowledge of AIDs and their responses to a speaker who had visited the community to talk about AIDs.

As Salisbury points out, the James Bay Cree are familiar with anthropological research after over fifty years of being studied (1986· 156). Theoretically each community exercises control over what individuals or institutions they permit to conduct research and any proposed research must receive the approval of the Band Council. However, critics (for example, LaRusic 1979 and R. Scott 1992) argue that too many policy decisions are made by white consultants for the Bands and Cree Regional institutions. How can we evaluate the merits and potential objections to carrying out anthropological and other research in the Cree communities?

Noting the importance of knowledge production in the Cree communities in the wake of the James Bay Project (research is often motivated by claims for compensation and injury from hydro-development), R Scott argues that the efforts to produce knowledge about 'the Cree' perpetuate the myth of a monological body of Cree knowledge on the one hand, and a process of benevolent knowledge production on the other, camouflaging the unequal political and social relations that generate this endeavor (1992·13).

In raising this question R Scott points to a valid concern about carrying on anthropological and other types of research. I believe, however, that it is also necessary to consider other factors, and take a somewhat different position Generally speaking, the political reality of producing knowledge about the Cree today is that it may provide information which the Cree can employ in responding to community needs or in dealing with the government, Hydro-Quebec or other institutions. Secondly, doubting the power of the Cree communities to deal with researchers also carries with it paternalistic overtones. Given the

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relatively brief time that Cree institutions have had to develop and become staffed by members of their own community, criticism and praise about their operation, while useful, are premature, these institutions and community governments are still evolving [18]

My own research was not the result of a grassroots effort within the Cree community to address the topic of teenage pregnancy. This would have been the ideal scenario. On the other hand, there appeared to be general concern in the community, not so much about teenage pregnancy per se as about Cree youth in general; this feeling of concern was evident in the interviews. My findings may be more relevant to the anthropological literature or to the institutions that attempt to provide health care in Cree communities than they are valuable to the people in Mistassini, although I hope that the community finds this research of some use.

In closing, I wish to comment on the link between the nature of the research I conducted and the following analysis I draw on all aspects of my experience in Mistassini, taking walks through the community and out of town at different times of the day and night, sharing in activities with families who invited me to come along to special events, going to dances at the youth center--however, I rely most heavily on the interviews Analyses of 'what's going on' based primarily on what people say are best supported by long-term observations that may either support or qualify informants' perceptions The short amount of time in which I conducted this field work classifies my analysis as exploratory in nature, although I believe it is correct in its outline and argument. The value of the thesis lies in identifying the issues involved in the phenomenon of teenage childbearing and the process by which practices of marriage and childbearing have changed and yet resisted change in the last fifty years.

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[18] Nonetheless, I do not mean to imply that no one should attempt to improve the situation For a thorough criticism of the subsequent implementation the JBNQA by the Grand Council of the Crees, see Status and Rights of the James Bay Crees in the Context of Quebec's Secession from Canada. Submitted to the Commission on Human Rights, Forty-Eighth Session, Jan-March 1992

# Chapter Two

## Theoretical Perspectives

### Introduction

The central argument of this thesis is that teenage pregnancy in Mistassini results from the particular interrelationships between historical events, ideological beliefs and individual perceptions, as they have unfolded in Mistassini; together, these factors mediate and shape the production of culture and culture change  To support this interpretation I explore in this chapter three factors which play a central role in the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy: ideological beliefs in connection with gender and fertility and their relationships to norms of socially appropriate behavior; the emergence of the notion of adolescence as a distinct lifestage among the Cree; and the shift, generated by the historical events of residential schooling and the development of a permanent community, in how Cree youth perceive and understand their culture.

I begin the chapter by defining the term ideology as I use it, and reviewing how ideologies of gender are thought to inform perceptions of the social order, norms of male/female relations and social roles  Theories of how and why gender is constructed come from various disciplines (see for example, Chafetz 1990, Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Randolph, Schneider and Diaz 1988, Sanday 1981).  My specific concern is to explore one dimension of this broad topic· the ideological meanings that inform beliefs about gender and influence the positions of women and men in the social order.   Ideologies of gender in Mistassini help sustain assertions about male/female relations in Cree culture, and express differences between Cree and White society  Childbearing and fertility, associated at a symbolic level with maturity, adulthood, and social or economic wealth are integral aspects of one's gendered identity as a woman or man in Mistassini

In the second section I explore how these symbolic meanings affect women's lives Ideological meanings of gender and fertility help generate the social mechanisms within the community, as expressed in norms of male/female relationships and in attitudes toward contraception, that regulate female fertility. As a preeminent thinker about the control of bodies, Foucault (1978) provides a starting point for my discussion in this section.

In contrast to his contemporaries Foucault offered a new way of analyzing the body in society. Employing his approach, we do not take the body for granted, but instead explore the specific ways in which it is constituted as an object: Foucault argued that the body was an object 'made' or constituted within specific historical periods. Female bodies in Mistassini may be understood as the objects of power relations in the community *by both sexes* through their reproductive capacity, women have the power both to support and resist the social order.

Lastly I address the question of *how* three generations of women interpret and respond to constructs of gender and fertility, and norms of social behavior. My aim in this section is to propose a framework for understanding how historical and material change affected teenage perceptions of Cree culture and community. Drawing from work by Bourdieu (1977), Comaroff (1985) and J. Scott(1990), I argue that in the last fifty years, successive generations of Cree teenagers have become more critical or 'heterodox' in their awareness, contesting as well as conforming to norms of social relations, ideologies of gender and traditional sources of authority. In Mistassini, teenage pregnancy is an event that is *both* the product of long standing social and cultural practices surrounding marriage and childbearing, *and* the result of relatively recent departures from traditional life in the bush; as such, it has acquired multiple meanings, and has different significance for different individuals.

## Ideology, gender and fertility

In examining ideologies of gender and fertility, I presume that these ideologies shape perceptions of teenage pregnancy. In this analysis, the term ideology refers to a belief that people take to be real e g. 'the way the world is'. Young characterizes the ideological as that

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which is felt to be *real* that which 'describes without distorting' (1980:133) and contrasts this to formal ideologies which people consciously recognize and criticize (Ibid..133). Elaborating upon this definition, Young argues that ideological knowledge is intrinsically indeterminate, but that this indeterminacy is reduced by raising one set of facts and meanings to dominance (1983: 206-208) This point is pertinent to my discussion, as I focus on dominant ideological beliefs with the recognition that some contradiction and competing meanings may also exist with respect to beliefs about gender or fertility.

Ideological beliefs frequently sustain the status quo; as Comaroff (1985) states, the ideological is "the medium through which particular relations of domination become inscribed in the taken-for-granted shape of the world" (Ibid.:5). A second point I wish to emphasize here is that the concept of 'ideological' imposes a sense of order and coherence that is somewhat misleading In other words, it is more probable that individual perceptions and consciousness about the social world fluctuate between the two extremes of awareness that Young identifies (also analogous to Bourdieu's two concepts of doxic and heterodox). Secondly, an individual's reference (conscious or unconscious) to ideological beliefs should be understood to vary according to circumstance, the influence of other people and so on. For example, it is obvious, especially in connection with a topic like reproduction, that an individual's actions will be driven by social and biological factors as well as particular ideological beliefs about childbearing

A final observation is that the analysis of ideological beliefs about gender are frequently imbued with biases that are meaningful for western, but not necessarily non-western, traditions (MacCormack and Strathern 1980). For example, observing that in the majority of cultural cases, ideological beliefs about gender are conceptualized in terms of "binary oppositions", Ortner and Whitehead (1981·6) offer an approach to the topics of gender and ideology that is powerful for western scholars. Gender has been defined within this framework in terms of the well-known opposition between Nature and Culture Woman is defined in terms of her body, but man is defined in terms of mind and rationality.

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As we will see below, the Nature/Culture opposition is problematic, but it has also proven influential. For example, Joan Brumberg, a historian, interprets teenage pregnancy and anorexia nervosa in the United States as products of sex role socialization that privileges a woman's body but discredits the value of her mind Brumberg notes

> For adolescent women the body is still the most powerful paradigm regardless of social class. Unfortunately, a sizeable number of our young women--regard their body as the best vehicle for making a statement about their identity and personal dreams This is what unprotected intercourse and prolonged starvation have in common .our unenviable preeminence in these two domains suggest the enormous difficulty involved in making the transition to adult womanhood in a society where women are still evaluated primarily in terms of the body rather than the mind" (1988 271)

In proposing that women's use of their bodies to receive social recognition is undesirable, Brumberg relies on the paradigm in which mind is privileged over body, and on trends in feminist thought which label this classification of woman with body or nature as oppressive Such divisions are not necessarily salient for Native Americans[19]

Both Stratherr (1980) and MacCormack (1980) observe that the notions of culture and nature which operate in this opposition are themselves western constructs, and polysemic categories. Furthermore, as the previous discussion of indeterminacy should suggest, within societies with western traditions, the association of woman with Nature and men with Culture is not consistent, women are sometimes linked with Culture and men with Nature, and so forth (Strathern 1980) In the discussion below I discuss the construction of gender in Native American groups generally, and the dominant gender ideology in Mistassini in particular, keeping in mind that the ways in which individual people perceive or employ these dominant ideological beliefs vary

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[19] Although Native societies, labelled savage and associated with nature rather than culture, *have* been categorized according to these oppositions; in this sense Native women have been doubly 'natured' by the dominant society Green (1980) asserts that Indian women advocate a return to traditional roles that emphasize the importance of the native women's role as mother and wife (1980.264-265) Moreover, she argues that for Indian feminists, every women's issue is framed in the larger context of other issues, such as the land, water rights, natural resources and treaties, that concern Native American people

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Much of the anthropological work on gender construction in historic Native American societies has focussed on how lines of gender were drawn and institutionalized in native communities (Green 1984, LaFramboise 1990; Whitehead 1981). Particular attention has been given to the phenomenon of men who assumed women's roles, the "berdache" and to the "manly-hearted" woman, the female counterpart to the berdache. According to Albers (1989), many American Indian societies made a conceptual distinction between anatomical sex and gender identity--that is, much of what men and women did was not restricted by their anatomical sex. In explanation of this, Whitehead has argued that rather than biological sex, gender was defined "in terms of prestige-relevant occupations" (1981:103)

Whitehead's suggestion is consistent with the pervasive ethic of autonomy accorded to persons to express their individuality through their special skills and innate talents, sacred roles, animal guides, visions and social status, in native cultures. It does not, however, satisfactorily account for the distinctions that *were* made on the basis of biological sex. Among the Cree and other American Indian peoples, men and women performed productive activities associated with the other sex, but there were circumscribed spheres of activities that women or men characteristically performed (Albers 1989).[20] The distinctions made on the basis of biological sex were most evident with regard to procreative sex roles (Ibid. 1989:137). Even among societies with institutionalization of cross-sex roles, cross-sex persons were excluded from the domain of reproduction As I shall illustrate in more detail in Chapter Six, fertility has held central importance for both sexes in Cree society, and arguably in many Native American communities Given the different emphasis placed upon fertility in native

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[20] It is important to keep in mind that earlier norms of relations between the sexes have changed over time Scholars writing about the contemporary status of native women argue that under the influence of European colonization, past "egalitarian" practices, at least as they are reconstructed and construed, gradually shifted, to varying extents, to reflect patriarchal ideologies (Leacock 1980, Powers,1986) Significant for this research is Leacock's (1980) conclusion that Montagnais-Naskapi relations with the Jesuits in the 17th century led to subtle changes in the status in women, from one purely egalitarian, to one "with an edge in favor of male authority and influence" (Ibid 41) Although we should be skeptical that relations were *purely* egalitarian it seems likely that if a shift occurred, it was towards a patriarchal ideology

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versus Euro-American societies, it is clear that Brumberg's interpretation of teenage pregnancy is not easily transferred to native communities [21]

In Mistassini, fertility appears important for both genders   It is true that sex differences *are* recognized early on: even toddlers going through their walking out ceremony perform different 'tasks' according to their sex  As Tanner (1979) recounts, as one matures, gender differences are elaborated, identifying adult men as hunters and adult women as keepers of the camp.  Gender lines are drawn in other salient features of bush life, such as in the division of social space into male and female, the cognitive ordering of household articles and game animals into the male or female domain (Ibid 78-81)

Nonetheless, childbearing and parenthood remain widely recognized signifiers of social maturity for both women and men.  At a symbolic level, fertility is associated with the attainment of maturity, adulthood, social or economic wealth, and part of the transition to manhood and womanhood that most people, unless infertile, complete; childlessness suggests immaturity, inexperience, or social or economic deprivation  Childbearing and parenthood remain the most predictable signifiers of social maturity, sustaining the social and sexual order of bush life, and reinforced by delineating the sexual/gendered order of living space, game animals and productive activities.

Some metaphors associated with a gendered identity as a woman also sustain assertions about Cree culture, and articulate intuitions or opinions about the differences in ways of life, and social or political power between Cree and White society.  In alluding to the birth control pill, informants compared use versus non-use of contraception with dichotomies such as Indian/White, natural/artificial or familiar/foreign  Ambivalence about the use of contraception on the part of some informants seemed to reflect a perception that birth control is a White way of operating in the world.  Methods of birth control are increasingly accepted

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[21] Brumberg's criticism has the paradoxical effect of reifying the dichotomy it exposes i e criticism is focussed on the *place* of woman in nature/culture or mind/body division, rather than the division itself  The observation serves as a reminder that our analyses, as well as these binary oppositions, are not free from cultural bias

among younger generations of Cree women[22] but they are also associated with the White world and the clinic Reproduction and childbirth unregulated by contraception were associated with being 'natural' and with being a Cree woman, particularly by older generations of women

Fertility is a biological fact experienced physically, but it also acts as a powerful symbol of maturity and the transition to womanhood in Mistassini. The symbolic meanings of fertility shape social perceptions of teenage pregnancy and inform teenage perceptions about reproduction, norms of male/female relationships, and ideas about womanhood.

## The female body

In this section I examine some of the ways in which the female body, and particularly female fertility are controlled or regulated within the community and in the context of personal relationships This discussion flows from, and is a continuation of, the above discussion of gender, the difference being one of focus: in this section I explore how different ways of imagining the female body and fertility may lead to different goals in controlling the body

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* provides the starting point for my discussion because of its radical reconception of the body. As Goldstein (1984) states, Foucault's thinking about the body is significant because it enables us to explore the question of whether and how the body is constituted, not by its physical existence, but by systems of power and knowledge. Bodies, asserts Foucault, are 'formed' at certain historical moments; they are the product of " the shifting relational patterns constitutive of objects, rather than stable, self-subsistent objects, which are in each case presented saliently to the beholder." (Ibid. :172).

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[22] One teenager I met used birth control so she would not become pregnant, but it appears that married women are the largest group who practice contraception for the purposes of spacing the births of their children or limiting family size. Given the high numbers of teenage pregnancies, it is unlikely that the majority of sexually active teenagers use contraception, especially to postpone their first child Informants also confirmed this point

Foucault's (1978) description of the body's subjection to systems of knowledge and power (particularly those of medical and State institutions) produces an interesting perspective on North American medical and public health research on teenage pregnancy State or medical surveillance and monitoring of teenagers and their sexual activity, a modern example of what Foucault termed 'the socialization of procreation', can be understood as attempts to control a potential threat to the social and economic order. The pregnant teenage body is constituted as deviant and problematic (as noted by Arney and Bergen, see page 11-12) because it breaks social conventions of sexuality e.g. sex is an *adult* activity, and because it is thought to burden the State with a troublesome, economically unproductive population This representation, widespread in popular media and policy reports on teenage pregnancy, suggests the influence of medical, public health and State discourse in shaping social perceptions of teenage pregnancy.

Foucault's analysis of the 'socialization of procreation' in the West sheds light on the social response to teenage pregnancy in the United States, but his particular conclusions are less relevant for Mistassini. In contrast to the 'socialization of procreation' typical in the larger North American society, the social pressures that are directed toward controlling female fertility in Mistassini have the effect of encouraging childbearing.

Women, through their childbearing capacity, generate networks of extended family that form the fundamental social unit of the community; their role is integral for sustaining the vitality of culture and community. Yet either through the possibility of bearing another man's child, by altering practices of childbearing, reducing family size and using contraception, or entering the workforce alongside men and becoming the main breadwinner women are potentially threatening to their male peers or to 'traditional' expectations of womanly behaviour Childbearing is an event that sustains social roles for men and women and at the same time, by remaining a particularly female event, reinforces recognition of a difference between women's and men's roles.

In this context, female bodies and reproductive capacities *are* the objects of power relations in the community, particularly the relations of power that operate between men and women. Differentials in the personal power teenagers experience in heterosexual relationships, as well as those they experience with same sex peers or with parents/adults, contribute to the social landscape in which teenage childbearing occurs. Teenage childbearing is in this sense symbolic of the sexual politics between young men and women. Teenage pregnancies, and social perceptions of them, are the product of personal relationships with peers and adults, a young women's autonomy in those relationships, and the symbolic meanings that attach to fertility and teenage sexuality.

The social pressures that are directed toward controlling female fertility in Mistassini have the effect of encouraging childbearing  In contrast, the 'socialization of procreation' typical in the larger North American society has had the opposite effect. These macro-social differences generate different social responses to teenage pregnancy and multiple meanings of teenage pregnancy

### Change and continuity

In the preceding sections I have noted some of the factors that shape social perceptions of teenage pregnancy on a broad scale  In this section, I will focus on the nature of individual responses to dominant ideological constructs. I propose a framework for understanding how historical and material change in Mistassini relates to the responses of three generations of women to ideologies of gender and norms of social interaction. The development of a teenage peer group catalyzed a change in the position of youth in the community and generated shifts in this group's perception of community life and social relationships. Individual responses to these events prompted changes in some aspects of marriage and childbearing; on the other hand, Cree youth appear accepting of dominant ideologies connected with fertility and gender. My overall point is to show that increases in teenage pregnancy are in part attributable to a shift in the nature of ideological perceptions, the concomitant loss of some mechanisms of

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social authority and control, and the continued power of fertility as a symbol, albeit an increasingly polysemic one.

Bourdieu's model of the habitus and practices (1977) conceptualizes how individuals both reproduce and modify the ideological constructs that inform their perceptions of the world [23] The relationship between individual and culture envisioned by Bourdieu (Ibid. 163-170) is one characterized by interaction with the habitus, defined as "practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules " (Ibid 72) The model of the habitus and practices includes a similar division between the unarticulated and explicit forms of ideology noted by Young (1980) the relationship between individual and habitus is one mediated by the balance between a doxic world, or that which is natural and taken-for-granted, and the worlds of *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*, or spheres of knowledge/practice perceived to be political or 'man-made'. The latter two terms differ in meaning; orthodoxy aims at restoring the doxic world while heterodox opinion challenges the status quo with political consciousness

Natural, self-evident social relationships and political institutions that belong to the doxic world sustain established hierarchies-- social, political or economic-- that exist between social classes or between generations, for example·

> Social representations of the different ages of life, and of the properties
> attached by definition to them, express...the power relations between the age-
> classes, helping to reproduce at once the union and the division of those classes
> [and] to produce both continuity and rupture(1977:165)

According to this definition, different age groups within a doxic order are defined, in part, by their unequal access to power (which is also unquestioned) By implication, the transition to a heterodox awareness of the social order would involve one age group, typically youth, contesting the traditional source of authority--typically adults and elders To some extent, this sequence of events has unfolded in Mistassini

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[23] For my purposes, culture refers to an historically situated set of values, norms and institutions, the "shared repetoire of practices, symbols and meanings" ( Comaroff J and J 1991)

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In Bourdieu's model, the transformation of awareness from doxic to heterodox occurs with sudden recognition of the artificial or fabricated nature of the social order  But Bourdieu's conceptual approach misrepresents the transformation from the doxic to the orthodox or heterodox  Comaroff articulates the problem succinctly

> For all its cogency, this [Bourdieu's] formulation leads us so far into the domain of implicit meaning that the role of consciousness is almost totally eclipsed. .Bourdieu goes so far .that his actors seem doomed to reproduce their world mindlessly, without its contradictions leaving any mark on their awareness--at least, until a crisis (in the form of 'culture contact' or the emergence of class division) initiates a process of overt struggle. For this model, it is only with disenchantment, when the world loses its character as 'natural phenomenon', that its social constitution can be contested (1985:5)

According to Comaroff, Bourdieu's description of the transformation from doxic to heterodox world is misrepresentative because the divisions between doxic and heterodox worlds are never so sharp or complete as he suggests  Rather, people's understanding of the prevailing social order can be imagined as continually fluctuating between doxic or heterodox forms of awareness  Additionally, in both doxic and heterodox worlds, individuals continually respond to, modify or critique the prevailing social order. This is so whether individuals articulate the political nature of their actions in words, or through their actions.

The proposition that perceptions shift between doxic and heterodox views leads to the position that ideological change arises not only from the loss of certain practices and changes in material life, but also from the shift in how people view 'traditional' life.  This model of cultural change in Mistassini highlights the transforming effect that contact with Euro-Canadian society (most usually on the latter's terms and conditions) may have on perceptions of one's own culture  Teenage social relations with peers and parents, and teenage perceptions of gender and fertility are two domains within Cree culture in Mistassini which have increasingly been subject to contestation, or to put it in Bourdieu's terms, which are no longer part of the taken-for-granted, doxic world  The process of transforming the habitus and practices is potentially one of creation as well as loss  As the example of teenage childbearing illustrates, the loss of past views of the world or past traditions is neither

complete nor ubiquitously experienced  Likewise, the construction of new meanings is slow, characterized by disorder, contestation and lack of consensus

As I shall discuss in chapters Three and Four, teenagers in Mistassini who went to residential school and left their communities confronted previously unavailable choices. Concomitantly, material circumstances were changing in the community.  Whereas previous generations might have contested arranged marriages, parental authority, and childbearing practices infrequently or at a symbolic level, those who went to residential school were more likely to contest these practices explicitly.

The taken-for-granted world of 'tradition' *and* overtly political orders are both subject to forms of human 'commentary' or modification, as anthropological work on the concept of resistance suggests.  'Resistance' is central to analyses of how individuals respond to highly determined cultural constructs or oppressive social situations  For example, in her study of Sudanese women's spirit possession in the village of Hofriyat, Boddy ( 1988  87-88) interprets trances as a means of circumventing  "the cultural overdetermination of women's selfhood "  While possessed, a woman may express behaviors or thoughts ordinarily forbidden to her Trance is "a powerful medium for unchaining thought from the fetters of hegemonic cultural constructs and. .for opening it up in different and possibly illuminating directions"  Hofriyat women thus engage in a critique of the status quo.  Studying another instance of spirit possession in multinational factories, Ong (1988) also finds that possession episodes may be taken as "expressions of both fear and of resistance...They are acts of rebellion, symbolizing what cannot be spoken directly, calling for a renegotiation of obligations  (Ibid_ 38)

The analysis of possession as defiance or rebellion towards cultural, social or economic hegemony raises the topic of resistance  The next question is whether defiance takes other forms or appears in more mundane or daily circumstances  J Scott (1990) hypothesizes that domination always produces forms of resistance  In response to being dominated, subordinate groups generate a' hidden transcript', of "anger, revenge, self-assertion (Ibid_ 18)" that sabotages the dominant values and discourse through overt activities such as anonymous

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attacks on property or character, deception, poaching(Ibid. 17), or more passively, through language, gestures, speech patterns, or humor (Ibid. 123)

The nature of the responses to cultural or social imperatives may be explicit, e.g. articulated in speech, humor, or satire, alternatively, these expressions may originate in voiceless, perhaps less conscious, acts or states of being Boddy's (1988) discussion of spirit possession is an illustration of this second category. Certain illness or physical disorders such as anorexia, bulemia, forms of somatized pain or depression have also been characterized as politicized uses of the body, or states of being, that convey a clear response to social or political pressures In the case of eating disorders, a woman is driven to fulfil two contradictory images of her sex--one erotic and voluptuous, the other disciplined and controlled. In response to a society which provides her with "codes and social scripts [by which] to conform to the social and political order" Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:26) argue that the anorectic or bulemic woman expresses ambivalence and confusion about who she is supposed to be or what she is meant to look like

Teenage childbearing can also be interpreted as an *indirect* consequence of a political use of the body Activities that informants associated with becoming pregnant as a teenager, namely drinking and sometimes drug-use, represent the use of the body for social purposes. As I will argue, for some teenagers, the act of participating in social drinking or becoming sexually active functions at a symbolic level as an act of belonging to the group or joining with their peers These activities increase the likelihood of pregnancy.

The narratives of the informants, as well as other anthropological studies of sex, fertility and gender demonstrate that these categories are invested with political, economic and symbolic meaning (Caplan 1987, Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Schlegel 1977). Teenage childbearing is not merely reproduction; it is an event that implicates the politics between sexes and age groups, and the symbolic use of the body to respond to social pressures. The category of adolescence, the dynamics of teenage social relationships, and the centrality of

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fertility and reproduction to one's identity as a Cree woman, are keys to understanding teenage pregnancy and childbearing in Mistassini

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of teenage pregnancy raises several issues: What are the social perceptions of teenage pregnancy? Why are teenage pregnancy rates higher in Cree communities than in the rest of Quebec? How has historical and material change in the community affected cultural constructs of gender and norms of social relations? How have Cree women participated in this process of change? In this chapter I have outlined the anthropological analyses of gender, fertility and culture that inform my analysis of these questions. Although not uncontested, Cree ideologies about fertility and gender are strong forces shaping perceptions of teenage childbearing and teenage attitudes toward pregnancy and parenting. As we will see, the statements of the informants indicate that teenage responses to perceived norms of marriage, childbearing, proper social relations between the sexes, and peer pressure to engage in certain 'teenage' activities, influence teenage behaviour and the rate of teenage pregnancies as well

Increases in the number of out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies have occurred along with changes in marriage and childbearing practices that resulted from the contestation of 'traditional' authority by successive generations of teenagers. Teenagers may become pregnant as a result of ignoring parental authority or engaging in the activities of the peer group, yet in becoming pregnant they also engage in interpreting and sometimes transforming dominant ideological beliefs about gender and fertility The definition of what is a Cree marriage or childbearing practice is increasingly open to variation

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## Chapter Three

## **Perceptions and Practices**

### Introduction

My purpose in this chapter is to present informants' perceptions of teenage pregnancy. The first section begins with a summary of the apparent changes in patterns of marriage and childbearing in the last fifty years, and an overview of how ideas about adolescence and the experience of the teenage years have also altered. Next I review what informants said about teenage pregnancy, dividing these accounts into responses by 'Grandmothers', 'Mothers' and 'Daughters' These categories should not be understood literally; for example, mothers may also be grandmothers, and so on. Nevertheless, they signify the relationships of the informants relative to each other and distinguish three general age sets whose life histories correspond roughly to three historical periods: pre-residential schooling, the transitional period during which residential schooling began and operated, and the contemporary period where schooling is neither new nor necessarily outside the community

My specific aim in comparing elder, middle-aged, and youthful perceptions is to highlight the generational differences and similarities in ideas about adolescence, marriage and childbearing that emerge   Additional statements, made specifically about the teenage peer group or fertility, are introduced in Chapters Five and Six  The present comparison will illuminate the ways in which each generation of women distinguished themselves from their parents   The narratives also provide a preliminary response to the question of how the informants perceived teenage pregnancy and how they accounted for the apparent increase in out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies

## Marriage, childbearing and adolescence

Informants stated that fifty years ago most children were born after marriage, and that birth of the first child occurred at a later age. A review of a Mistassini band council listing from 1945 supports the informants' impressions For example, in a population of approximately six hundred and sixty in 1945, the average age of first parity for women was twenty-five, and for men thirty.

As noted in the literature review, Cree fertility rates began to increase in the 1960's; Romaniuk (1974) attributes this change to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, a decrease in time spent breast-feeding, and a decrease in time spent by hunters away from their wives The informants stated that during the late fifties and early sixties out-of-wedlock births rose Middle-aged informants said that out-of-wedlock pregnancies had begun with their generation and some of the informants had been sixteen and seventeen at first pregnancy The figures from this research, as discussed below, support the impression that age at first pregnancy is decreasing( although the sample size is too small to be conclusive)

Present trends in childbearing and marriage, if the informants are representative, indicate that age at first childbirth has lowered and young women now marry after, rather than before the birth of their first child    The average age for first child birth for informants under twenty was 17.7 years and none of these informants was married  On average, informants between the ages of twenty and thirty had had their first child at 18 5 years and had married at 29.5 years.  In contrast, informants between the ages of thirty and forty had been  21 3 at marriage and had been 21.1 years at first childbirth.  Informants over forty had been married for close to a year before the first child was born, on average at age 20.7 years The average age at first childbirth for was 17.7 for women over 65

Some of the elder women had married at thirteen, fifteen and sixteen   In such a small sample, these numbers lower the average age at first parity for elder women significantly Elder informants stated that the average age of marriage in 'heir generation was between eighteen and twenty. Early marriages, while not as prevalent as marriages over the age of

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eighteen, nonetheless were arranged consistently, if the band list from 1945 is representative. This listing shows that a total of eleven women out of seventy-seven were between the ages of fourteen and seventeen at the time of their first child.[24]

Informants also noted that family size seems to be decreasing  The descriptive statistics I gathered on family size, age at first marriage and childbirth corroborate this impression. For example, the average number of siblings for women over fifty was eight compared to an average of five siblings reported by informants under twenty. The number of children that both those informants under twenty and those between twenty and thirty said they wanted to have was between two and three

To summarize, in the last fifty years, it appears that there has been an increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births, an increase in the time between first childbirth and subsequent marriage, an increase in the number of women having children in their early to mid teens, and a decrease in the average number of children born per family due to an increased acceptance of contraception (used to limit family size after the desired number of children has been born; see chapter five for a further discussion of contraception).

While the timing and means of marriage have altered, most unmarried women stated that they hoped for marriage or a stable heterosexual relationship. Many younger women, however, qualified this by adding that marriage was not necessary for having children, and that they would raise their children by themselves if they could not establish a relationship that met their expectations  Although more women indicate a willingness to remain a single parent, marriage is still eventually entered into by most of them.

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[24]This is an estimate  I did not include cases where the age difference between the husband and wife was so great that older children were clearly from a previous marriage. I also did not include less obvious cases where men would have been in their late twenties and thirties and women would have been under thirteen, although conceivably, some early-maturing women might have been married this young  One would guess that average age at first menses may have been higher at this time, if this were so then a large number of marriages at these early ages is even more unlikely

During the same fifty year period discussed above, a notion of 'teenage years' or adolescence, which departed from previous categories of aging in the life cycle, also appeared Before residential schooling broke up the seasonal pattern of hunting activity, the Cree gauged maturity according to competence at the skills need for living in the bush At the nearby community of Waswanipi, Feit records that both marriage and hunting expertise provided a means of categorizing people as they progressed through the life cycle the main categories of the human life cycle comprised the following categories young girl or boy, unmarried young woman or man, married man or woman, middle-aged married man or woman and old man and woman (1979.275). Similarly, a number of categories existed to distinguish the relative skills and experience of men[25] who participated in winter hunting activities and were therefore considered experienced hunters with the power to 'think' in the bush, and those whose time in the bush did not include winter hunting, who were said not to have attained the same level of skill (Ibid :422)

"Kaa uschipimaatisiito", the Cree term for teenager or adolescent, literally translates as " the ones that are 'new living' "[26] Preston (1979) noted that a set of teenage activities separate from those of adults was emerging in the Cree communities in the late sixties and seventies Comparing present and past socialization practices of Cree adolescents, he concluded that the peer group, rather than adults, predominated over the process of socialization into the adult world. This is a distinct departure from past notions of aging in the life cycle, which were closely linked to mastering the skills of bush life

Elder and middle-aged informants witnessed the aforementioned changes in age at first childbirth marriage, family size and adolescence As the narratives below illustrate,

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[25] Feit does not comment as to whether a similar set of categories existed for women
[26] A report on the Lac St Jean Montagnais, by Burgesse (1944) notes that these people had words for adolescence as well as the period between adolescence and marriage However, even given the existence of the terms, it seems unlikely that they would refer to a period in which youngsters were understood to have activities substantially different from their parents

important social, cultural and material transformations, which also had an impact on teenage

pregnancy, were occurring at the same time

### a  Grandmothers

"We lose our children in different ways. They turn their faces to the white towns, like Nector as he grew, or they become so full of what they see in the mirror there is no reasoning with them anymore " *(Nanapush, in Tracks:A Novel, by Louise Erdrich New York: Henry Holt. 1988)*,

In total, I interviewed eleven women who were recognized in the community as elders, with

the help of an interpreter  All of these women were in their sixties, except for two, one of

whom was in her seventies, and one of whom was in her fifties.  The latter woman was

presented to me as an elder

The distinguishing feature of elder women's perceptions about teenage childbearing was

the disjunction they perceived in bearing a child when domestic skills and productivity were

lacking  Elder women frequently remarked that today's teenagers did not yet have the

maturity to raise a child, would not have a house in which to bring them up, lacked sufficient

skills in homemaking or were undertaking a task for which they had little preparation or

understanding

*"I say why do they get married so young, before they know anything...they are very poor, they don't know nothing, they can't even patch their husband's pants "*

*"I find that young people don't mature early.  I did, I had the help of my mother telling things. Now younger mothers don't take the time to tell them things."*

*"If young girls have babies at a young age, let them get married at a young age.  At least the child will have a father, otherwise the girls will keep having babies."*

*"It would be a lot easier it teenagers waited until they could support themselves."*                ·

Most, but not all (two) elder women viewed teenage pregnancy as a threat to the stability of

the nuclear family largely because teenage women were not marrying  Elder women did not

focus on the implications of a teen marriage for the marital future of the couple but

emphasized the impact of teenage pregnancy on the children and the nuclear family unit

Elder women often said they could not understand teenagers. The lack of influence these grandmothers felt in their grandchildren's lives was sometimes the result of the physical distance separating them, either caused by the child's attendance at school, residence in another community or down south. Another source of the emotional distance between generations came from the absence of similar experiences in the bush. The Elder women (as well as middle-aged informants) frequently commented on the lack of 'bush skills' in today's youth.

*"Teenagers today should be learning the skills of the bush. Then they wouldn't be hanging around with nothing to do"*

*"In my day we just worked Today's teenagers are a lot different They have the white man's way. They have a lot of things, except they don't work"*

*"Teenagers today are hard-headed. They won't listen. When you go into the bush, they don't understand what to do. They sit around like they are in class. It is hard for the parents to teach them. If they have to do something, their skills are very crude."*

As indicated above, teenage years are perceived as a time in which teenagers are influenced by non-native culture and education, and the use of drugs and alcohol. Lack of maturity was attributed to drug and alcohol use, and outside influences such as schooling:

*"When there was no alcohol you never saw teenage pregnancies; when alcohol came that's when the young (and unmarried) girls started having babies."*

*"To me the way I see it they don't understand what they're getting into--it's due to the alcohol and drugs, that get them into these situations Teenagers should learn to do something useful"*

*"It's hard to understand them, you know? What do they think? [You] can never tell what they're on. Drugs, alcohol....now everything is so changed"*

*"School makes kids wilder and rowdy. Not only school but drugs and alcohol."*

*"A child with no education is a lot quieter, unlike the kids who go to school."*

Approximately three quarters of the women related pregnancy in teenagers to diminished respect and obedience for parental authority

*"Teenagers are different today because their parents let them be different Parents neglect their kids, so the kids get into trouble"*

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*"Children now want to do things their own way. The parents can't say nothing. They think they know too much they say you can't tell me anything, you didn't go to school."*

*"Teenagers today are a lot different. They don't listen to parents, can't be controlled. Ever since kids went to school it's been like this Now kids are wild, but it used to be quiet around here "*

The Elder's perceptions of teenagers and teenage childbearing were based on comparisons to their own experiences as teenage women. They focussed on the fact that teenagers, for the variety of reasons noted above, were not yet adults, and therefore were not yet prepared to take on adult tasks; the age of the mother in and of itself was a secondary issue.

Though generational differences between grandparents and grandchildren are not unusual in many societies, the pace of change has been relatively fast in Mistassini. Between the time that women were raised in the bush and the time that their daughters were sent to residential schools, different norms of socialization and education appeared and profoundly influenced teenage ..⁀ᵉ  As the next two sections illustrate, changing ideas about marriage, adolescence and childbearing have led to different perceptions of teenage pregnancy in younger generations of Cree women.


b **Mothers**

The narratives of the nineteen 'Mothers' I interviewed between the ages of thirty and forty-nine reveal the significance of residential school in their lives. Schooling, as well as continued and growing involvement in a cash economy and exposure to 'southern', Euro-Canadian culture and education, began to generate different ideas about marriage, childbearing and what was appropriate for the teenage years from approximately 1950 onwards.

'Mothers'[27] echoed the Elder's concern about the maturity of teenage parents, but described "teenage years' or what I will call 'adolescence' as a time to devote to personal

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[27]Unless otherwise indicated, 'Mothers' in this section refers to this group of middle-aged informants

development and education, as well as to traveling and seeing the world --"seeing what's out there", having fun, and enjoying one's freedom before taking on adult responsibilities of parenting and work. Although these women also mentioned the value of acquiring experience and skills in the bush, as had elder women, nearly all of this age group stated that schooling should be completed before one started a family, referring to the importance of schooling for a wage-earning capability.[28] As one woman put it "*something a lot of teenagers don't understand is what education can do for you. Just like a secondary five is necessary for some positions, like a coordinator*" Significantly, most 'Mothers' said that they had not experienced their 'teenage years' as described. Saying they had had closer contact with their parents, more work, and more responsibility, they distinguished themselves from today's teenagers.

*"Today's teenagers are lacking motivation to do anything as a group Today kids don't organize their own activities, they have no leadership skills. Here some kids are totally free, everything is done for them. There is free access to drugs, booze, there is T.V., video, radio."*

*"We automatically took our responsibilities, we didn't have to be told. We listened a lot more to our parents, asked questions, saw cousins and relatives."*

*"When I was in my teens I had no choice but to do my chores. My mother didn't do everything for me. She gave positive reinforcement but I knew I had no choice but to get the work done "*

*"I was running my family from the age of ten...I never had my childhood*(this informant's mother had become very ill and her father was frequently in the bush for long periods) "

In contrast to 'Grandmothers', 'Mothers' clearly distinguished adolescence as a lifestage The distinct feature of their perceptions of teenage childbearing was the persistent allusion to the social chaos created by causing premature changes in social roles--from adolescent to parent, parent to grandparent, daughter to wife

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[28] As mentioned, 'Mothers' who had little or no schooling are under-represented in my sample of informants, their views of adolescence might indeed differ from their peers who attended school One of the women I interviewed in this generation who had not gone to school did place greater emphasis on learning traditional skills and did not demarcate adolescence On the other hand, the views of another mother of five who was in her forties, a participant in the Income Security Program (see Research Methods), and had received little formal schooling, resembled those of her counterparts who had gone to residential school

Neutral or positive opinions of pregnant teenagers frequently involved the perception that teenage pregnancy could have a beneficial effect on familial relationships. This beneficial effect often took the form of correcting a problem, causing a son or daughter to 'settle down' and assume responsibility for making a living. Another perception was that grandchildren might help improve estranged or difficult parent/child relationships. When discussing relatives, or their children, women told similar stories: a son or daughter had been unruly, never listening to parents, always getting into 'trouble'. Then they became a parent, and changed, they didn't go out at night, and took their responsibilities more seriously.

*"After my children had children of their own, it drew us together as a family. They could share our experiences as parents."*

In these cases, 'Mothers' viewed pregnancy as an event that would replace the freedom and perhaps irresponsibility of adolescence with the anticipated, stabilizing effects of child rearing and possibly marriage

Other women in this group of informants emphasized that marriage and parenthood would not overcome the immaturity and undeveloped skills of teenagers

*"Teenage pregnancy is getting out of hand The family more or less accepts it The fact is that parents in my age group are willing to take on grandchildren if the parents don't want the child"*

*"My first thought when I see a teenage mother is 'they're so young' I wish there could have been someone to talk to them, to explain the responsibility they would be facing But I never condemn them "*

*"My primary concern is that teenage pregnancies will lead to early marriages before the couple is ready to handle the responsibility I can see why the parents encourage marriage, but there is a risk There are young people who will feel they have been robbed of a life--will later on say, I need my freedom, I need to be on my own. "*

These informants feared that teenage pregnancy would result in a 'premature' marriage between the mother and father. As one woman expressed it, *"they get married because of a child, not because of a bond between them."* Informants predicted that such 'premature' marriages tended to be characterized by frustration or unhappiness and more seriously, increased the potential for wife-abuse or child neglect. Many informants in this age group

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stated there was no need for teenage mothers to marry after the birth of a child born out of wedlock In fact, most emphasized that to do so would be to marry for the 'wrong' reasons

'Mothers' were also concerned about the economic livelihood for teenagers in a cash economy. A perceived negative consequence of early pregnancy was an increased likelihood that education of both the teenage mother and father would be postponed or given up entirely, this would decrease their chances of finding a job and make it more difficult for the young family to survive economically. Some women stated that this situation had particularly negative consequences for Cree teenage fathers While informants frequently pointed out that adolescent mothers often return to school and earn their diplomas, and then take business and secretarial courses, it appears that young men do this infrequently As one informant noted *"Men tend to go into construction and there is low employment in these sectors and the woman ends up being the money winner "* Some informants voiced the opinion that in situations where the woman earned the bulk of the family income, father sometimes became frustrated and more prone to abuse drugs or physically abuse his wife

Women in their thirties and forties identified three factors they believed led to teenage pregnancies drinking and/or drug abuse; ignorance of birth control (cited by a minority of middle-aged women as a 'reason' for teenage pregnancy), and breakdown in parent/child relationships and communication These factors were frequently understood to be interrelated

*"For most people, it's an accident when they become pregnant "*

*"Todays teenagers are different from my generation because they are having sex at an earlier age, there is more alcohol and drugs, and there is little communication between parents and children "*

*"Today teenagers are proud of it (pregnancy) some girls say "I'm proud of it " Its dangerous for them Some of the teenagers get pregnant because their boyfriends make them do it (have sex) "*

*"I think teenagers get pregnant because of drinking and drugs They also use it against their parents A lot of parents are too lenient with their children "*

These comments about parent/child relations illustrate a shift in perceptions (by no means complete) that parents should be directive and interactive, as opposed to indirect and passive. Some informants commented that they were raising their children based on the methods of childrearing they had seen when living with white families while they attended residential school.

Finally, 'Mother's' ideations of their roles as grandparents affected their perceptions of teenage childbearing. Many of the women I interviewed had spent significant amounts of time being raised by grandparents or living with relatives. The practice of parents or other siblings caring for the child of their son, daughter, brother or sister is common among the Cree and Native Americans generally (Powers 1986). Some informants explained that traditional adoption, " chihchiwe chii utineuch aniyuu awaasha" (they 'took for good' that child)[29], in which either grandparents or relatives formally assume parenting/guardian responsibilities, continues to be practiced in the community. The majority of women hoped at some point that they would become a grandmother. However, other women said that in the case of teenage pregnancy this was not always wished for nor economically feasible.

*"I don't want to be a grandmother yet. I feel sorry for the ladies--they end up looking after the child. She's got three granddaughters and she's always looking after them. Grandchildren are also an economic drain. The fathers nor the mothers are ready for it."*

In summary, 'Mothers' generally stated that teenage pregnancy could precipitate a number of negative events, early and subsequently unstable marriages, along with increased economic hardship for both parents and grandparents. Sometimes pregnancy was seen as improving family relationships or regulating teenage behavior, but because most mothers have experienced adolescent pregnancy either personally, or with daughters, nieces or nephews, they refrain from a categoric labelling of teenage pregnancy as positive or negative. One informant in this age group stated, *"There's not one family that hasn't been affected by it*(teenage pregnancy)." Instead, middle-aged informants perceived teenage

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[29] Translation provided by Cree Language Project, Mistassini

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pregnancy within a wider sphere of social relations and practices between teenagers, their peers, and parents. The nature of these social relations was further elucidated by the teenagers and young women in their twenties

## Daughters

I interviewed fourteen young women under the age of twenty, and five women between the ages of twenty and thirty. The experience of these young women in their teens and twenties is rather similar; their childhood and adolescence was spent in a settled and growing community, after sending children to school had become routine practice  While three young women in this age group had spent a number of years living in the bush with kin, the group as a whole had spent less time in the bush than their mothers or grandmothers   For these reasons I discuss these informants as one group

Like the generation before them, young women in their twenties and teenagers also perceived adolescence as a period clearly differentiated from adulthood  They wanted to have the freedom to go out with their friends, to earn money for themselves, to finish their education. The phrase 'teenage years' or 'teenage life' was used repeatedly by both 'Mothers' and 'Daughters' to describe this period before adulthood

*"In your teenage life you're not tied down by other responsibilities.  It should be fun and full of parties and freedom to do what you want  "*

*"Teenagers should spend time learning but in a fun way.  Never being bored but also learning  Adults take life too seriously  In a way, you learn from experience, by watching your actions and from responsibilities. "*

Teenagers also linked the occurrence of teenage pregnancy to the success/effectiveness of parenting or parent/child relationships, indicating a concept of adolescence as a period of dependence or reliance upon one's parents  Pregnancies were sometimes associated with rebellion against parental authority or the perceived neglect of parents   For example, in responding to questions about teenage male/female relationships and pregnancy, informants stated

*"Some girls think they will be more mature and treated like adults when they have a baby  "They wanted to be part of the older group  Some parents treat their kids as fully responsible*

*adults when they [kids] don't know about being adults Sometimes the parents and the grandparents want children "*

*"I heard one of my friends say 'I'm going to have a baby, then my parents will stop bugging me ' Sometimes the boys ask for it If you don't have sex with them, they get mad and break it off "*

*"Sometimes you hear people say 'I wish I was pregnant so they would just leave me alone' or they're just wanting affection or attention, or they are trying to prove to the person they love them, they want their boyfriend to stay with them "*

Teenagers identified two of the same antecedents of teenage pregnancy as did older informants alcohol and disrespect for parental authority. However, they also gave two other explanations the presumption that sexual activity signifies emotional commitment and/or that it is expected by their boyfriends

*"In a couple it's usually the guy who leaves and usually the girl who gets left behind It almost never happens that the guy gets dropped The girl wants to hold on to the guy because he is popular "*

*"Sometimes the guy wants to have a baby, he wants to hold on to the girl. One guy, he had a girlfriend he really loves her and wants to hold on to her."*

A number of teenagers as well as older women emphatically stated that girls may be equally assertive in pressuring boys to be sexually active. Although having a child no longer necessarily brings about marriage, it validates fertility, and is still viewed as a way to secure a marriage partner Teenagers pointed out that one might want to have a child in order to hold on to a boyfriend, increase the likelihood of getting married, get the attention of one's parents or, conversely, show how free one was of parental guidance

In general, peer pressure to drink and to lose one's virginity appeared to be strong. The informants described cases where boys pressured their girlfriends to have sex or else they would quit the relationship In these cases, the girls saw themselves as vulnerable to abandonment by their boyfriends, as the following quote illustrates

*"In grade eight I was already feeling pressure to have sex The leader of the group tries to show off and asks, 'well have you slept with him yet?"*

*Guys will tease you and say 'Virgin ! I don't want to sleep with a virgin.'"*

As for contraception, teenagers expressed two contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, they were unanimous in stating that teenagers need to know more about the biology of

reproduction, 'how you got pregnant' and about sex education generally However, a majority also observed that practicing contraception, in particular taking the pill, could be dangerous for reproductive health, and was embarrassing to purchase at the clinic (attitudes toward fertility and contraception are discussed in detail in Chapter Six)

Teenager informants also expressed positive and negative assessments of motherhood Some young women who had a child often noted the happiness the child had brought. In a few cases the young woman stated she had been ready to start a family. More often, adolescent mothers were ambivalent about their new status as a mother, mentioning conflicting feelings of being trapped and frustrated as well as enjoying their new responsibilities. Responses to the initial discovery of being pregnant were typically bewilderment

*"I was confused but happy. .Most of my friends are in their twenties and have kids I want to have three kids, I have that idea in my mind "*

*"When I got pregnant it was very hard for me I knew my parents were going to scream My mother couldn't take it but my father could "*

*"I got pregnant when I was sixteen I was so embarrassed I felt like I was the only one I was confused I was worried what my parents would say. My grandmother could tell I was pregnant just by looking at me It was amazing how she could tell just by looking at my eyes "*

*"Being a mother .sometimes it's fun Sometimes I get depressed, sometimes I just have an urge to go out and have fun I'm going to get married, my parents want me to I would rather wait one year My pregnancy was an accident I don't like being a teenager "*

*"Girls who get pregnant are scared The parents get angry with them (perception of a peer) "*

*"I was sad when I found out I was pregnant. I had a friend and she was sad too My mother told me to keep the baby and go back to school. I enjoyed being a mother My mother helped me "*

The ambivalence teenagers felt in accepting their parenting responsibilities did not seem to signify ambivalent feelings toward the child itself. The teenage mothers with whom I spoke appeared to welcome and love their child

In summary, teenagers and women in their twenties perceived teenage childbearing as an event embedded in contemporary social relationships with parents and peers and the process of becoming an adult woman These observations about teenage pregnancy, probably accurate for most North American teenagers, are rarely investigated or contextualized in

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studies on the topic [30] Teenagers who had children stated without exception that their mothers had assisted them in caring for their child Those without children said they did not want to have children until they had finished school or were in their twenties; significantly, marriage was not cited as a reason or factor that figured into a teenager's ideas about when to have children

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified a number of changes that occurred in Mistassini. Fifty years ago, out-of-wedlock pregnancy was apparently much less tolerated. Social and cultural controls regulating pre-marital sexual activity appear to have been strict, and those pregnancies that did occur were 'rectified' by marriage. Grandmothers recollecting these customs noted that today's teenagers are not developing adequate domestic or bush skills and lack the skills and maturity necessary for motherhood.

Although they might agree with elders' assessments, middle-aged and teenaged women approached teenage pregnancy somewhat differently. The notion of adolescence as a period of life to devote to education, fun and personal development figured prominently in the perceptions of 'Mothers' and 'Daughters', who stated that teenage pregnancy interferes with one's teenage years, temporarily interrupting the mother's time to develop skills, education and to 'experience life' before taking on adult responsibilities. These beliefs about the nature of 'teenage years' generate negative views of teenage pregnancy

Another division between the elder women and the two younger generations of informants appeared with respect to marriage Although the unmarried status of teenage mothers concerned elder informants, the majority of the other informants viewed marriage as

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[30] The phenomenon of teenage pregnancy can be said to be the same everywhere in the sense that it is embedded in relationships with peers and parents What distinguishes the event are the constellations of social, cultural and economic factors particular to any given community of people

an unnecessary, potentially problematic step for teenagers to take  Not surprisingly, the latter
two generations had witnessed a decline in arranged marriages in the community

While three generations of informants referred to aspects of teenage pregnancy that were
problematic, they also agreed that family relations and childbearing were important, and that
eventually, motherhood was a desired event    Informants expressed the most concern for
pregnancy in girls who were under the age of 16, and related these teenage pregnancies to
alcohol use and abuse, as well as problematic parent/child and peer relations  Material and
historical changes during the last half-century help explain the differences and similarities
between generations and form the subject of the next chapter

# Chapter Four

## Context and Contestation

### Introduction

In this chapter I consider the events that led to changes in teenage perceptions of 'traditional' childbearing and marriage, and to the development of a concept of adolescence in Mistassini  I begin with an account of marriage and youth before the start of residential schooling  The section following outlines the process by which changing social and material conditions fostered a new 'adolescent' domain of activity, generated changes in how teenagers socialized and interacted with their parents. Shifts in marriage and childbearing patterns occurred with these changed circumstances, as Cree teenagers increasingly contested or modified aspects of their parent's life-styles or beliefs

### Marriage and youth in bush life

As discussed in Chapter Three, maturity in bush life was measured by competence in the adult tasks of bush life  For example, recognized life-stage transitions--the walking out ceremony for toddlers, a boy's first kill of a bear, a girl's 'tent ceremony' for first menarch, during which time she was sent to a separate tent, given separate eating/drinking utensils and not allowed to come into contact with males--symbolized the child's or youth's progressive maturity and increasing competence in the bush   Becoming a socially mature adult was intimately linked to a larger Cree conception of men's and women's roles and responsibilities in the world

In Mistassini in the twenties and thirties, a teenager acquired social competence and power through imitation of adults, whose skills and competence assured survival in the bush  Young children and teenagers living in small hunting groups met their peers infrequently

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Under the ages of four or five brothers and sisters played together  Beyond this early age,
girls spent their days with older sisters, their mother and other women in the group, while
young boys joined with their siblings and older men  From childhood, girls were prepared for
the tasks they would be expected to perform as married women [31]

Morantz surmises that 19th century rules about marriage among the Cree, like social
organization, were flexible in nature, having as one objective the creation of economically
advantageous alliances (1983 88)  Detail on actual practices is scant  From the Hudson's Bay
records it is evident that some polygyny was practiced by the leading men of hunting groups
but was by no means the norm  Flannery notes "Polygyny was practised until quite recent
times, but in actuality the form of marriage may be described as having been prevalent
monogamy (1935:84)."  Cross-cousin marriage was somewhat preferred, but not ubiquitous, and
exogamy was the norm[32] at least at the level of hunting or co-residential groups comprised of
two to four or five, usually closely related families (Flannery 1935, Speck 1935 6, Morantz 1983
79; Tanner 1979 23).

An informant to whom Tanner (1979) spoke  described pre-Christian marriage as a more
informal occasion

> "A man who was about to get married would go and kill something  It had to
> be 'big-game' .. The groom would return with his kill  and take it to his tent  He
> would give it to his bride  she would prepare the meat and a feast would be
> given with this food (Ibid  94)."

A second account of pre-Christian weddings describes a couple who simply began living in
the same tent during the winter and were recognized as married by their elders

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[31] A woman's daily work included upkeep of the camp area, the lodge,  getting firewood and
boughs to lay on the floor of the lodge, fetching water, preparing food and hides. gathering
other food sources such as berries and snaring small game, mending clothes and making
footwear

[32] In the twentieth century, as hunting groups associated with particular trading posts
gradually settled in more permanent residential communities and the trading post band
population grew , endogamy became the dominant practice, although this is with respect to a
much different scale of social organization  Prior to the permanent community, marriages
could be called exogamous in that hunting bands were apart except for when they gathered
together in the summertime (Lips 1947 417, Rogers 1969 107)

" Their relationship was such that the old people decided that they should stay together for good  They just said to them 'You may now stay together for good.' and then they waited until the next summer when the minister came around to marry them  Yet in the eyes of the tribe they were already married. (Lips 1947 420)"

These accounts suggest that historically, some form of acknowledgement by other family members or Elders, of couples taking up residence together, has been part of Mistassini culture  This is consistent with ethnographic accounts of marriage practices among other Native American peoples  Much more about pre-twentieth century social organization, mar˜iage and reproductive practices among the Cree is difficult to gather, due to the relative lack of ethnographic material for this period  In the twentieth century, marriages were performed by a priest or minister and attended by the entire community, with feasting and dancing following (Scanlon 1975, Lips 1947)

A review of ethnographies on other Native American peoples suggest that pragmatic views of marriage (where either partner could leave a marriage should a conjugal relationship sour) and few cultural restrictions surrounding sexual relations (LaFramboise 1990; Albers and Medicine 1983, Albers 1989) were the norm in many societies.  Early accounts of the Montagnais suggest freedom to enter into or dissolve marriages, or initiate extra-marital sexual encounters (Anderson 1988 565)  Scholars have suggested that later moralistic attitudes (stigmatizing polygyny or labeling pre-marital sex as sinful, for example) resulted from Christian indoctrination and Jesuit objectives to 'civilize the natives', and define male and female roles (see Leacock 1980 for a discussion of Montagnais 16th-17th century traditional marital and sex customs, and Anderson 1988)

Perhaps influenced by Christian doctrine, social opinion in the early twentieth century did attach some social stigma to out-of-wedlock childbirth  The Elder women I interviewed were unanimous in stating that in their youths, out-of-wedlock births were shameful, and, rarely, the cause of abortions or infanticides  The Elder informants remembered their own youth as strict, with very few out-of-wedlock births  The stories they recollected, whether true or meant to scare young women, suggest low tolerance of pre-marital affairs

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*"My mother used to tell stories of how, if a girl got pregnant you wouldn't see the baby Girls wouldn't tell their parents so someone would go talk to the girl Some parents would understand if this happened some wouldn't "*

Elder women recollected that divorces were rare, which indicates a change from customs of the previous century when either partner could leave without formality (Flannery 1935:84) Informants stated that today, as well, divorce is quite rare

Marriage was recognized as an important step to achieving the status of a mature adult in bush life.[33] Two elder informants commented

*"Traditionally it was the man who was the head of the household and who everyone depended on. There were some spinsters and men who never married They were the one's who could take care of themselves No one worried about marrying them off My mother wasn't married until she was thirty Marriage was seen as a security, a source of stability today it definitely is not that way any more "*

*"Indians lived the hardest way If the girl weren't married she couldn't support a child At that time no one could talk to the parents or to the girl about it (pregnancy) "*

Another elder woman explained that one was treated as an adult when deemed ready for marriage

*"They [parents] looked at how the boy acted, how he lived, what he can do in the bush The girl, how she can handle anything, the housework, washing, sew, knit snow shoes, clean moose hides, cut and split wood, make snares, always busy,knew what to do If she could do all those things then the parents would know, o k , she can be married "*

Elder women tended to portray arranged marriages as wholly in the hands of parents, although Lips notes that extremely reluctant brides or grooms could voice their disagreement and obtain release from a planned marriage (1947 418)   Most of the women described hearing about their future marriage along the following lines

*"I was living with my grandmother and one day she came and said I was to be married I cried and said grandmother I don't want to leave you She said 'what if I died, who would take care of you ?'"*

*"One girl got to marry who she wanted to... There were a few girls who argued One girls was really depressed [interpreter's translation], The parents decided not to push her and she didn't have to marry that guy One day my parents told me I was arranged to be married I said 'I don't know the guy I don't want to' My mother said 'What would happen to you if we died, who would take care of you Even though you don't know him, you'll start loving him Get*

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[33] Today, although the acceptance of marriage as a sign of adulthood is decreasing , people still say that when people marry they will 'settle down' e g begin to behave as mature adults

*married, live longer and have a better life'. My parents arranged for my sister to marry an older man, because she was hard to handle "*

Looking back on their marriages, elder women maintained a great sense of humor about the surprise and fear they had felt They were divided with respect to the loss of this institution Some had tried to arrange marriages for their daughters, others said they were glad that by the time their daughters had grown up they had not needed to perform this function

As represented by ethnographers, a relatively stable pattern with respect to a hunting/trapping life-style existed up through the fifties and sixties. In 1966, Rogers described the Cree as predominantly hunter-gatherers, though he predicted changes were imminent Similarly Tanner, based on research between 1969-1971, referred to Mistassini as "a functioning fur trade community, with most of its population living the nomadic life of hunters and trappers in small scattered hunting groups" (1979:3). While hunting and trapping practices were stable other aspects of social life were in flux in the fifties and sixties These are noted next

### Residential schooling the impact on marriage and childbearing

The institution of residential schooling (along with the development of a permanent community at Mistassini post and increased dependence on a wage economy) interfered with and upset norms of parent/ child relations.[34] Schooling removed children from a familiar environment, depriving them of parents, siblings and language. Most informants had spent many of the years from age five to fifteen or sixteen away from their families, returning only

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[34]Formal schooling for the James Bay Cree started to be provided in Moose Factory or Brantford, Ontario in the 1920's by the Anglican Church (Williamson 1964:10). It was not until 1942 that the federal government became directly involved, sending children to Chapleau, Ontario for three years before they returned to the community From the beginning of the fifties through 1963 children through grade 6 were sent to Brantford, Moose Factory and Chapleau while those in grades 7-12 were sent to Sault Ste. Marie (Ibid 10) In 1963 a high school in La Tuque Quebec opened and took all Mistassini students below grade six In 1964 the Mistassini Day School opened, taking fifty-three students, after this time, students attended school in Mistassini, La Tuque and Chibougamau

for the summer months  The first generation of women who attended residential schools

expressed a variety of feelings about the experience.

"(Growing up in residential schools) *I felt lost, curious  My parents were raised with a different way of believing about the way women should be.*"

"*I went to school in LaTuque.  I liked school  The teachers were strict, but I didn't mind the strictness.*"

"*I was anxious to go to school  I went willingly, I was curious about everything  Then later, I wanted to stay at home  I missed my family life and I wasn't free anymore  After a while, I accepted it  I felt I had been thrown out of my family*"

"*I liked school very much  I loved to go to school My parents wanted me to stop  My mother ..[became ill]  so when I was fourteen I had to stop going to school*"

"*When I was five years old I went off to Branford Ontario  From there I came home and went to LaTuque  By grade five or six I had got used to being in school.  Eventually I got to like it  I would say I grew up in the white man's world*"

Residential schooling changed the social life of Cree youth  Unlike their mothers, who

(according to elder women) had been strongly discouraged from spending time alone with

young men before marriage, youth set up dance clubs in the community in the fifties and

sixties, playing records, or square-dancing to Cree fiddlers till the early hours of the morning

"*I remember as a teenager coming home for the summer and a whole bunch of us would organize square dances  We would stay out until four or five in the morning  No one drank at that time*"

"*We would return in the summer and have a 'Beaver Club'  We'd do the twist, waltz, we did hang around together, dance together  We didn't turn our backs on the kids who didn't go to school, but we were different in the way we spoke and dressed  Girls who weren't students tried to copy or imitate us  The boys paid more attention to the girls who had gone to school*"

As Wintrob and Sindell (1970) observed, and as the informants themselves noted, the first

generations of Cree who attended school were caught between two drastically different

cultural systems  As one informant put it  *"yeah, we were white-washed"* in describing her

own generation of peers who had gone through the system

The examples of the dance club, with new norms for how young people could spend their

time, suggest that a new concept of adolescence and a set of teenage practices increasingly

segregated from adults were emerging, however, the change was gradual  As mentioned in

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Chapter Three, many middle-aged informants recollected missing out on their "teenage years"
Those who did not attend school spent much of their time in the bush, experienced a childhood
and youth similar to that of their mothers, and consequently tended to be closer to their
parents in their perceptions. Upon returning home in the summer, many women had to
assume responsibility for their younger siblings, assist their mothers in the domestic work
and live a 'Cree' life [35] Nonetheless, as more and more children attended school and were
exposed to the culture and economy of the industrialized South, the previous process of
maturing into adulthood was challenged and altered. As informants' references to the 'teenage
years' in Chapter Three suggest, a concept of adolescence as a distinct lifestage was appearing.

The outward signs of adolescence as a distinct lifestage today appear to be firmly in place
in Mistassini Approximately eighty percent of teenagers attend school during nine months of
the year,[36] devote a good portion of attention and energy to their peers, hold summer jobs to
earn money, enjoy cassette players, walkmans, bikes, and boating and other activities. Social
interaction also includes the drinking, sexual activity and experimentation with chemical
substances that have become virtual 'rites of passage' for many North American adolescents
The availability of alcohol and other drugs is facilitated by increased cash flow, the easy entry
of these substances into the community, or passage out to the community of Chibougamau
where they can be obtained Teenagers are one social group participating in these activities

The material changes in the community also helped demarcate an adolescent domain of
activity For example, one informant's description of the differences between bush and
community life gives some idea of the impact of housing on the nature of social interaction:

*"Before there were houses in here we used to visit a lot more People were always coming
around and visiting when we lived in tents in the summer. Nowadays kids don't visit. With
houses and TV it's harder to visit There are doors and walls, you don't feel free to just walk in
because you are supposed to knock We always feel a lot closer in the bush the closeness is*

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[35] On average the mothers I interviewed had spent five years living in 'he bush at some time
during their late teens through their twenties

[36] This is not to say that schooling is unproblematic. The drop out rate from school is officially
5 9% and the high school principal in Mistassini reported that within the community
approximately 20% of the students do not attend classes with any regularity

*there, it's different than in a house, where they(kids) want their own rooms, they want their music, they want to lock the door and have their own belongings In the bush they can say 'gee, I don't need anything' The boys will sit around laughing, talking telling stories They don't do that when they're in the community "*

In her reference to the bush, the above informant implicitly raises an important point despite outward similarities, adolescence in Mistassini, both culturally and socially, is distinct from adolescence in the South. According to informants, adolescence or the 'teenage years' is a time for psychological and emotional development but this does not necessarily imply a prolonged period of parental involvement in the lives of their adolescent sons and daughters.[37] Informants who were parents often identified the ages of 16 through 18 as a time when they could treat their own children as adults (this age might be lower for youngsters who are raised in the bush) Finishing high school was most often given as the point beyond which it would be acceptable to have children in the opinion of most informants, with "after marriage" falling in second place In Mistassini the concept of adolescence or 'teenage years' is not coterminus with the ages 13-19

Furthermore, the continued importance of a hunting and trapping lifestyle and bush life clearly affects the social construction of adolescence and teenage perceptions of their identity as Cree. For example, the above informant also described how differently her teenagers behaved when in the bush Teenagers themselves noted this effect, describing the bush as a place of productive and positive activity, for example

*"After grade nine I went back to the bush I found it exciting, there were lots of things to do, clean animals, make moccasins, mittens "*

*"I would suggest they (teenagers) go live in the bush for a while "*

A large majority of adult informants had spent significant portions of their young adulthood in the bush, and a number of teenagers had also The significance of bush life may

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[37] In his study of Inuit youth Condon notes the high degree of autonomy of Inuit teenagers in the study community and attributes this both to traditional practices of childrearing and to the changes Inuit society has undergone introduction of schooling, concentration of the population into larger communities, change in habitation and emergence of the adolescent peer group (1987 106, 189)

be strongest for those teenagers who are taken out of school by their parents (a not infrequent practice) and to live in the bush, away from their peers, for several months or more  The existence of bush life alongside village life, and the high degree of autonomy and independence that Cree teenagers experience are factors that distinguish adolescence in Mistassini from adolescence as it is broadly defined in North America

Significantly, residential schooling and changes in teenage socialization helped to weaken parental authority and reduce the number of arranged marriages  As one Elder woman said with some mirth *"It used to be that you didn't know you were getting married until your parents told you the day before, now the parents don't know until their children tell them the day before!"* Only two informants in their forties had had arranged marriages. All other informants forty and below had arranged their own marriages; although parental approval had been important to many, they had nevertheless kept the final decision for themselves  Several middle-aged women had temporarily estranged themselves from their parents by refusing to marry a man who had been selected for them.  No informants who had been sent to residential school had undergone an arranged marriage, while women who had had arranged marriages had never gone to school

Although parents lost their authority to say when and with whom a daughter would marry they could, and still do, put pressure on their children  Middle-aged informants frequently recounted that in their generation, parents had pressed pregnant, unmarried daughters to marry the father or to find a suitable partner  Informants typically noted

*"A lot of my friends got married young  They wish now someone had talked to them before marriage  Some regretted getting married so soon "*

*"I got pregnant before I married and my parents made me marry "*

*"I got pregnant when I was 17  When I was 19 I married the father  That was what my parents wanted and I took their advice  I disagreed with them about the marriage but I didn't want to disappoint them "*

Although pressure to marry is less strong today. a number of teen mothers remarked that their parents wanted them to marry soon

As the number of formally arranged marriages decreased, out-of-wedlock births to teenagers appeared to increase The rationale for marriage began to alter somewhat as social and material conditions changed The former social imperatives to have children and marry have today been qualified in several ways, children are understood to bring economic burdens, one reason perhaps that families are becoming smaller Teenagers appeared wary of marriage, alluding to situations of abuse, or other situations where emotional needs of one or both spouses were not being met They referred to single parents in the community as examples, concluding that it *is* possible for one parent to support a small family In contrast to past precedent, a significant number of middle-aged and younger women perceived that a primary, rather than complementary, purpose of marriage should be to satisfy emotional and psychological, rather than economic needs of the couple However, while the importance of marriage has been diminishing and some women have begun to change their expectations of its purpose and function, the importance of having children remains high [38]

## Conclusion

For women born after 1940, residential schooling was an event that catalyzed changes in the social meaning and experience of the teenage years Residential schooling, the development of a permanent community, and changes in material life contributed to the modification of social norms of bush life, such as the institution of arranged marriage, respect for parental authority and the existence of social mechanisms to maintain the authority of elders As a consequence, teenage activities changed, and the social sanctions against out-of-wedlock childbirth weakened [39]

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[38] Burgesse (1944) notes that for the Lac St Jean Montagnais, married men who had not yet fathered a child were the butt of jokes and that full manhood was not recognized until a child had been fathered Bearing a child appears equally important to one s identity as a Cree women, as I discuss in Chapter Six

[39] The destructive effects of alcohol abuse on family life, although not a topic I explored, was referred to by the informants and must also be included as a factor that contributed to the changes in social life in Mistassini

Individuals responding to these historical events necessarily went through a process of ideological upheaval, as the social order and social meanings of events of bush life lost their "natural" or doxic character [40] As informants' comments about adolescence and their own youths illustrate, the sudden questioning of lifestyle and the social order caused disruption This was compounded to varying degrees by poverty, government interference and the debilitating effects of alcohol Nonetheless, many indigenous notions and practices have been resilient As we will see in the next two chapters, the social significance of fertility and the strength of some norms of social relations resisted modification, and have only begun to change recently

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[40]Tanner notes this shift, recording that " it is clear that the primary cause for the shift in young people away from this [hunting] economy depends on ideological and not material conditions Education and communications have given rise to the possibilities for the development of other goals and other needs (1979 64) "

## 'New Living': teenage life and the peer group

### Introduction

My purpose in this chapter is to examine the adolescent peer group as a source not only of 'the new living', as the word adolescence translates in Mistassini (see page 44), but of more traditional Cree practices and ethics  I hypothesize that the history of the peer group in Mistassini offers an illustration of how, over time, shifts in teenage perception of Cree culture affected marriage, childbearing, and the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy  In the first section I argue that family life and early socialization practices generate a set of experiences, shared across generational boundaries, these reinforce the cultural valuation of family, individual autonomy and competence, group harmony, and the ethic of promoting non-interference in the affairs of others  The teenage peer group reproduces many aspects of Cree cultural and social norms of interaction  In addition to conforming, however, the teenage peer group also generates a set of activities disapproved of by the adult community

In the second section, Bourdieu's (1977) model of habitus and practices is introduced as an appropriate reference point from which to begin analyzing the antagonistic as well as conformist postures teenagers adopt  As discussed in the second chapter, Bourdieu's model of 'culture' hypothesizes a fluid relationship between individuals and culture, such that some discord between generations is inevitable (Ibid 166), and likely to increase when the natural or doxic order of the world is challenged  As I shall argue, the creation of a 'teenage' set of practices has generated such discord between generations

Peer pressure to conform to a teenage identity and, by implication, to resist authority and engage in certain activities--drinking and being sexually active-- is high  Peer pressure, a formidable force anywhere, is particularly effective in Mistassini because of a cultural

emphasis on group conformity (although teenagers do not always succumb to the pressures they may feel to participate in peer activities) Teenage pregnancy is an event embedded in the dynamics of teenage social relations, aspects of which deviate from *and* reinforce traditional Cree notions of socially appropriate behavior

## Socialization and growing up a summary

My purpose in this section is to identify norms of interpersonal relations that affect the contemporary experience of adolescence and the event of teenage pregnancy in Mistassini[41] These norms are not always fully met, and differ from family to family, but as expressions of Cree ideals, they are important to note The family is significant not only as a primary source of information about norms of social relations, but as a reference point and source of authority towards which teenagers react--sometimes conforming, sometimes rebelling

According to my observations as well as the other ethnographic studies (R Preston 1979), the nature of family and personal interaction is not primarily verbal (although the amount of verbal communication obviously varies both for families and individuals) Norms of interpersonal communication do not 'traditionally' include 'polite' exchanges and may incorporate silence as a significant dimension of interpersonal exchange (see also R. Preston 1975a) Contemporary family life centers around *activity*, such as eating together, watching the T V or a video, going picnicking, hunting, fishing or boating

In general, individuals are encouraged to "learn by doing" and are rewarded for correct and competent imitation of various skills Children are raised in a way that minimizes the role of direct parental intervention and control, although again, this varies from family to family These aspects of Cree communication and interaction are part of early childhood socialization R Preston (1979) records that verbal reproaches or threats are used to encourage proper behavior or as punishment Another informant recalled

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[41]My purpose here is not to suggest that these 'norms' are somehow the *cause* of teenage pregnancy but rather to describe them as aspects of a complex phenomenon

*"We were mainly scolded or made to feel ashamed The way to control kids was through warnings or threats sometimes someone got a spanking We never had something taken away from us or were restricted in any way "*

Characteristically, a child is thought of as an autonomous social being, rather than an extension or belonging of the parents According to this way of thinking, poor behavior on the child's part is a product of the individual child's personality, not a reflection of parental ineffectiveness Inappropriate or incorrect behavior is expected to diminish as the child becomes in tune with expectations of him/her Speaking of 19th and early 20th century bush life, Lips (1937) states that in extreme cases a recalcitrant child was ostracized by the family and that ostracization was also (very rarely) practiced when adults flagrantly broke social codes of behavior or ignored social obligations (Ibid 1937) [42]

Children were also taught to value co-operative sharing Harmonious family and extended relations were facilitated when individuals conformed to ideals of sharing and non-aggressive behavior. Lips (Ibid ) contends that social conformity to these norms was maintained mainly through the force of public opinion and social pressure brought to bear on non-conforming behavior Preston (1979 84) adds to this description by hypothesizing that "social control was and still is maintained largely through self-control" (Flannery 1935, Preston 1986, Wintrob and Sindell 1970, also note these aspects of social behaviour)

My observation of youngsters suggest that individual autonomy, ethics promoting non-interference in the affairs of others and group conformity, continue to be instilled during childhood These practices are indigenous to the Cree and are considered to be characteristic of Native American practices of raising children more generally(Albers 1989 135) The freedom given to children and youth has the positive effect of developing a sense of autonomy and independence in children and is particularly functional for a hunting life-style

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[42] A middle-age informant recounted a story told by her grandmother about a young man made to live alone for a year after accidently shooting someone This tale describes either an actual instance of 'ostracization , or at least a story justifying its rationale

In recognition that today unlimited freedom brings with it more risks of accident or mishap, some parents have tried to impose curfews on their older children  According to informants, the idea that a person can directly control another's behaviour is foreign (see also Preston 1979)  However, although these norms of non-interference are still widely prevalent, they may be slowly changing, as some parents in their twenties and early thirties report using explicit verbal communication and overt guidance with their children. Some teenage informants also stated that parents should 'manage' their child's behavior more directly and use more explicit verbal communication· *A lot of parents are too lenient with their children."* or *"there is no communication between parents and kids "*  Most informants commented that although more parents were taking up the practice of 'grounding' their children as punishment, it was not a common thing to do

The Cree teenagers I talked to lived with their families and participated in family activities on a regular basis  However, close family ties do not reflect a tightly controlled environment. Teenagers appeared to make their own decisions about daily activities and night life, with little parental interference, although such decisions were made with a clear idea of what activities parents approved

Teenage participation in family life generates a set of shared experiences between parents, children and relatives that sustain the cultural valuation of family and extended family ties, as well as an emphasis on individual autonomy, an ethic promoting non-interference in the affairs of others, and group harmony  These features of family life and ethics of interpersonal relations are similar to those apparently experienced by youth fifty years ago with one caveat. Respect for parental authority, formerly maintained through the strength of social opinion, the physical restraints of bush life and the lack of alternative life-styles (by which youth might have contested parental authority) has weakened  Whereas the community formerly had at its disposal powerful means of social control which complemented the ethic of non-interference in another person's affairs, these former social mechanisms have been

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substantially weakened and alternatives are still being constructed  Meanwhile, the ethic of non-interference is still strong.


## The teenage peer group

The peer group exerts a powerful influence in the lives of adolescents in Mistassini  In what follows I describe teenage social life as I observed it, and then offer an interpretation of some of the social dynamics that characterize teenage social interaction  The power of the peer group in Mistassini is particularly strong for two reasons  The cultural ethic of conforming to the group rather than distinguishing oneself from others discourages teenagers from choosing alternatives to the contemporary trends in teenage activities  Secondly, teenagers' subordinate position to adults generates resistance to adult authority and a sense of teenage solidarity and group identity

During the summer, teenagers might have jobs in the same location, or could meet after work during the week, so that contact with friends is frequent  At night teenagers stroll the streets, meet, talk and 'party' with little or no interference by adults  When I returned home from an evening activity or friend's house at night, especially on week-ends, I frequently passed same-sex groups of teenagers, hanging out, talking, watching other small groups, walking around, possibly having an exchange with a member of the opposite sex in a range of possible manners  catcalls, teasing, serious conversation

At the week-end dances at the youth center there was a similar separation of sexes, with few venturing to dance until late in the evening  Girls sat with girls, boys with boys, on the bank outside the arena when it got too hot inside  Eventually, I was told, people did dance and boys and girls mixed  Moreover, after the dance was through at midnight or 1 a m , the larger groups broke up into smaller mixed groups or possibly couples, to party and socialize further

In talking to both teenagers and teachers at the school in Mistassini, I was impressed by their stories about the power the peer group wields  Many of the teenagers and young adults I talked to remarked on the  pressure they or their friends had felt, at various times  to

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participate in activities such as drinking, smoking and sniffing gas, as well as how and where to party, what to wear, or when to become sexually active   One teenager wished longingly that she could be 'young' again, so that she did not have to handle the pressures to drink and party   Teenagers and some informants in their twenties felt that to be different, in dress, mannerisms, interests or activities, had immediate consequences of suspicion if not ostracism by one's friends   Reluctance to stand out individually appears to constitute a 'ground rule' of socially acceptable ways of interacting with one's adolescent peers

In one respect, this scenario is hardly unusual   Many non-native adolescents in the industrialized south also oppose authority by conforming to peer activities that are perceived as deviant, however   the underlying Euro-Canadian cultural context is one in which individuality is prized and encouraged   As well within the latter setting the number of distinct groups to which one can belong, for example, the 'artsy' crowd, the jocks, the 'brains' and so on, is large   In contrast, the teenagers I spoke with in Mistassini either distinguished no such groupings among their peers or else described teenagers as belonging to one of two groups 'cool', or not 'cool'

The lack of many different teenage groups is partly a function of the small size of the community   but I believe it also arises out of different norms of individual and group behavior   An expectation of individual modesty operates, making it rude to draw attention to one's individual accomplishments (or to gain them at the expense of someone else)   The emphasis is upon fitting one's self to the group, rather than finding the group that one prefers.   One mother described how her daughter, a bright eleven year old, liked school and enjoyed doing her classroom exercises, but was teased mercilessly for being a 'goody-goody'   When the hazing by her classmates got to the point of physical harassment, she gave in and became disruptive like the rest of the class

Other teachers with whom I spoke also mentioned a strong reluctance on the part of children and youth to   compete' and do better, either academically or in sports, than the class average '   no one wants to be singled out as better   Such scenarios unfold in classrooms in the

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South (as a high school teacher I witnessed them) My point here, however, is to note that given the ethic of belonging to the group, the pressure to conform in Mistassini is perhaps compounded, whereas in the Euro-Canadian and American mainstream, this pressure may be mitigated by the cultural and social tolerance, if not acceptance, of 'being an individual', at least within certain socially defined parameters

Peer pressure is not an experience unique to Cree teenagers I hypothesize that a second reason for the pressure to conform is teenagers' subordinate position to adults (as possessors of cultural and social knowledge, students in the school system or laborers in the economy) James Scott says of the power relations within subordinate groups[43]

> Power relations among subordinate groups are not necessarily conducted along democratic lines at all Consider, for example, the ethos that often prevails among workers which penalizes any laborer who would go out of his way to curry the favor of the bosses The words used from below to describe such behavior (toady, ass-kisser, rate-buster, bootlicker) are designed to prevent it These may be supplemented by glares, shunning and perhaps even beatings (1990 26) Members of a dissident subordinate subculture can act informally to foster a high degree of conformity to standards that violate dominant norms ( Ibid 129)

Although J Scott's discussion focuses on situations where the disparity in power between two groups is extreme (he discusses master/slave relations), his description applies to a wide spectrum of situations where the distribution of power is unequal in the classroom between students and teacher, in the office among workers and the boss, or between teenagers and adults, for example His remarks shed some light on the nature of teenage relations with peers and parents To the extent that teenagers perceive themselves in opposition to adults and reject perceived cultural/social imperatives about who they must become or how they should behave, they resist the status quo

The peer group, reproducing notions of teenage identity and activities, generates pressure to conform Conformity between teenagers confirms their solidarity as peers, affirms their

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[43] As J Scott points out, pressure to conform would also be felt in dominant groups

Cree identity, and legitimates their sometimes confrontational stance [44] Wintrob and Sindell's (1970) also observed that for Cree teenagers, accepting the school's emphasis on individual achievement relative to one's peers[45] was tantamount to disowning one's Cree identity, or at least very threatening to it [46]

Teenage stories about pressure to participate in their peers' activities also support this interpretation  The peer group reinforces Cree norms of interpersonal relations--not calling attention to oneself, belonging to a group, but it also exerts great pressure to engage in other activities--whether these activities are boating and other forms of recreation, or partying, drinking, smoking, and sexual experimentation  Teenagers respond to peer pressure in various ways, and judging from the statements of teenage informants, not all are persuaded to imitate their peers to the same lengths  Thus, while it is generally true that the peer group is quite powerful, and that teenage responses to peer pressure tend to follow similar patterns, individual responses do vary

Whether bowing to pressure or resisting it, teenagers use their bodies to express themselves, for instance by acquiescing to pressure to drink or by feigning these actions  One teenage informant told how her mother had suggested she tip the beer bottle back but plug the opening with her tongue, so that she appeared to be drinking along with her friends  In this instance, it was the sight or image of drinking that the informant perceived was important  In analogous fashion, I speculate that becoming pregnant may symbolize, for

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[44] This is offered as a partial explanation but is not meant to imply that all aspects of teenage practices/behavior can be explained this way  In particular, any explanation of drug dependency would require a more systematic consideration of the personal history, physical make-up and family life of the person

[45] The school setting still appears to be a context in which this 'conflict' operates  For example, a white high school teacher who taught English as a second language in Mistassini described how difficult it was to get students to practice speaking individually  One day, deciding to test his presumption that fifteen sixteen and seventeen year olds would find reading together too 'babyish' he asked the entire class to read out loud in unison  To his surprise the class willingly did so

[46] Although this conflict is perhaps more temporary than it appears  For example, people who have achieved as individuals in highschool have also returned in many instances and become reintegrated into their communities

some teenagers, either solidarity with other pregnant peers or a transition into womanhood
It is important to emphasize, however, that even if pregnancy does have this symbolic
significance for some, it is drinking or the pressure to become sexually active, and not
pregnancy per se, which indicate conformity to the peer group and which lead indirectly to
pregnancy

## The 'habitus", practices and resistance

The teenage peer group, a recent phenomenon in the social order of Mistassini, reproduces
some ethics of Cree social practices while it modifies others   My purpose in this section is to
relate the seemingly contradictory character of the peer group to the on-going process of
culture creation and cultural change introduced in Chapter Two   The model of culture I
delineate below is predicated on two central hypotheses first, that individual perceptions of
the world are based on views of the social order as either natural (a doxic order) or as one
among many possible social orders (a heterodox awareness), or most probably, some
combination thereof   Although both views are compatible with some form of critical
awareness, I hypothesize that it is the second, or heterodox world view, which more often
catalyzes explicit and direct social criticism or resistance [47]   The second hypothesis is that
individuals continually engage in interpreting the cultural or ideological constructs that
inform their experience   Central to my analysis, these two ideas elucidate some of the
connections between the recent historical and social changes in Mistassini, and the
phenomenon of teenage childbearing in the community today

As suggested in preceding chapters, over the past fifty years a set of teenage activities
differentiated from adult practices has appeared in Mistassini   This set of practices
corresponds to what Bourdieu labels "the habitus" (1978)   The habitus or cultural practices,

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[47] As noted in Chapter Two  Bourdieu (1977 167-168) makes this argument in stronger terms,
which I have criticized (see page 37)

fluctuate between 'objective' structures, and the individual's manipulation and interpretation of these  Continually recreated in speech and action, the habitus generates culture

> " practices can be accounted for only by relating the objective structure defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating, that is, to the conjuncture which short of a radical transformation, represents a particular state of this structure (Ibid 78) "

As Bourdieu conceives of it, the habitus endures over time and thus explains the reproduction of certain practices, but it also possesses a potential for change and spontaneity (Ibid 78)  The activities and identity of th~ teenage peer group exhibit both the cultural embeddedness *and* deviation from norms that Bourdieu's model predicts   The fluidity of the habitus is particularly evident if we consider that social and cultural knowledge or 'expertise' is continually learned, and that people grasp the cultural 'habitus' and generate strategies with varying degrees of success

> only a virtuoso with a perfect command of his 'art of living' can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behaviour and situation in order to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say "there was nothing else to be done", and do it the right way  (Ibid 9)

In addition to accounting for the difference in social status between age groups, the above description of the 'virtuoso' explains the invisible ordering within the teenage peer group that differentiates the cool teenager from his/her socially awkward counterpart, the leader from the follower

Others have also suggested that age is one variable influencing the construction of the habitus  Based on his research with Inuit youth, O'Neil (1984) argues that age is as important to the generation of culture (creating perceptions of historical experience or cultural tradition) and identity, as are race or ethnicity (1984 290)  When adolescence is demarcated as a distinct life-stage, the opportunity to develop a set of practices (or an adolescent 'habitus') develops  Concludes O'Neil "within a span of fifteen years three different "cultural streams" have been generated by three consecutive youth cohorts who have experienced history uniquely, and have confronted different situations during their 'formative years  " (Ibid. 291)

Burbank's (1988) description of a conflict between Australian Aboriginal teenagers and their parents over traditional marriage customs offers a second example  She explains that the disregard young Aboriginal adolescents have for marriage rites espoused by their parents are the products of changed notions of love, pervasive influence of Western institutions, disinterest of younger generations in ritual knowledge, and mutual support from adolescent peers for deviant' behavior   Burbank notes that adolescent attitudes toward marriage may also signal changes in gender relations between husbands and wives, and alter some of the bases for social organization and structures of the community (1988 120)

The notion of the habitus is incomplete without reference to how individual people perceive it   Bourdieu hypothesizes that when the habitus is recognized as created or artificial, individuals may contest the social order and traditional forms of authority it embodies   I have suggested above that the emergence of adolescence and other changes in Mistassini during the past fifty years were catalysts that prompted just such a shift in the perception of youth   As stated in Chapter Two, however,  Bourdieu's analysis fails to represent satisfactorily the extent to which individuals continually interpret and respond to the status quo, whether or not they perceive it as natural or fabricated  Recent work on the phenomenon of resistance can fill this gap  In the case of this research, the notion of resistance elucidates the nature of how and why criticism of the status quo is expressed,  helps explain the phenomenon of peer pressure, and illuminates our understanding of teenage dissent

J Scott (1991) argues that members of dominated groups can create a high degree of pressure to conform to standards of that subordinate group's behaviour, which violate dominant norms (1990 129)   If relations of resistance always accompany relations of domination (Ibid 45), then generational differences will arise  Inasmuch as they  find or feel themselves controlled by parents, the school or cultural imperatives of how to 'be', teenagers may perceive themselves as dominated  and wholly or partially unable to express dissent whether it is aimed directly against parental expectations or more vaguely against the community  Peer group activities and the pressure to conform to them  demonstrate how, as

a dissident subculture  the peer group resists cultural or social expectations, and generates both change and continuity in Cree culture

As the balance between doxic and heterodox awareness shifts in favor of the heterodox(see pages 35-40), the contestation of previously 'natural' or uncontested sources of authority and meaning increases  Cree teenagers (and the teenagers in Burbank's description) managing relationships with peers and parents are sometimes victims, but are also sometimes 'actors' who respond to unarticulated as well a⁻ explicit assumptions about what they must do and who they must be  By definition, the management of these social relationships involves coping with differentials in power, which in turn generates various forms of resistance and acquiescence

The model of actor's strategies in relation to the habitus plausibly addresses social relations in which people have some sense of being empowered, autonomous individuals, but what relevance does it have to the pregnancies that result from violent acts of incest or rape? Some informants indicated that gang rapes occur, most usually in situations where the woman is heavily intoxicated (I did not hear any accounts that suggested that such incidents would be included in the same categories as having girlfriends or sporadic sexual experience) It is clearly possible that some teenage pregnancies result from such incidents  The issue of violence and abuse *is* therefore a relevant topic and deserves some comment, however speculative

Clearly from a female point of view, rape is the antithesis of social competence as it removes all autonomy, the same is true of parent-child incest, for males or females  In this context it seems contradictory to speak of strategies, yet when a person employs abusive behaviour, one must conclude that at some level, it operates as a strategy or response that the abuser perceives to 'work' for them  This is an instance where the personal history and personality of individuals is singularly important

Rationalization of violence by the community or the abused individual, in the form of responses that repeatedly deny or put off the difficult task of addressing problems of abuse,

may also be understood to form part of the habitus  In the case of Mistassini, as has been hypothesized with respect to other native and non-native communities  the lenient or tolerant responses to violence or abuse may be ascribed to lack of existing social mechanisms to address and handle these events [48]  In the same way, it may be hypothesized that individuals are not well-equipped to know how to prevent such incidents or what to do about them when they occur

Conclusion

Family life and early socialization practices generate a set of shared experiences that cross generational boundaries, and reinforce the cultural valuation of family  conformity to the group, individual autonomy and competence, and the ethic of promoting non interference in the affairs of others  Located in this shared terrain of culture and social relations, the teenage peer group is not only a source of deviance and change, but of cultural continuity between generations  It would be an oversimplification to imagine a clean separation between the domains of adult and teenage activity  Nonetheless, the teenage peer group contributes significantly to the divergence in practices and beliefs that arise between generations, this is exacerbated by debilitating practices such as the consumption of alcohol or other drugs

In comparison to fifty years ago, fewer aspects of contemporary Cree culture are understood as 'natural' but instead are open to contestation and modification  As discussed above, the dynamics of teenage social relations offer an example of how teenagers respond to cultural and social imperatives from peers and parents  Over time the creation of a teenage habitus has helped generate change in marriage and childbearing practices  Teenage pregnancy is an event embedded in this particular constellation of social relationships and norms of interaction

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[48] The topic of abuse is still taboo in many communities, although more are beginning to address the problem openly (source  Communities in Crisis Conference  Family Violence and Drug and Alcohol Abuse in Native Communities  June 1991 )

# Chapter Six

# Gender and Fertility

## Introduction

The construction of female gender in Mistassini constitutes a second factor that plays a central role in shaping contemporary marriage and childbearing practices. While teenagers have been catalysts in modifying some norms of social relations, they have not challenged dominant constructions of gender and fertility that predominate in Mistassini.

Ideologies in Mistassini, with respect to gendered identity as a Cree woman and the social significance of childbearing, are most often taken-for-granted or doxic in nature, although as noted in Chapter Two the doxic or heterodox nature of women's awareness varies. Conscious and explicit contestations of these prevailing norms, whether verbal or symbolic, are recent and rare, somewhat more frequently, these ideologies are recognized and consciously accepted as part of being Cree. Dominant ideological beliefs relate fertility and childbirth to becoming a woman or man, and help differentiate the Cree from the 'White' world.

My purpose in this chapter is to elucidate how constructions of gender and fertility shape the contemporary phenomenon of teenage pregnancy by exploring the following topics female gender construction in Mistassini, teenage perceptions of womanhood and contraception and the impact of popular ideals of womanhood transmitted via the media. Fertility and childbearing are generally seen as integral aspects of womanhood and teenagers clearly perceive this reality. The ideologies about female gender and fertility also provide a means of ordering the social world as the dichotomies of fertile/barren, Indian/White, familiar/foreign illustrate. Cree women and teenagers will continue to encounter, and in some cases contest or redefine these constructions.

## The construction of womanhood

My purpose in this section is to highlight the former complementarity between occupation and fertility as defining features of woman or manhood, and to note the decline of occupation as a signifier of gender today

With respect to the Cree, surmising from the ethnographic record at the turn of the century, Whitehead's argument (see pages 31-32) for the importance of occupation and Alber's for the significance of fertility in gender construction are valid  As mentioned above, in Cree society one's role as a mother or father, one's competence in performance of hunting, making snowshoes, skinning hides, butchering meat, and other bush skills constituted interrelated and integral aspects of a gendered identity as an adult man or woman  Although men and women would sometimes perform activities associated with the other sex, except (apparently) in the case of religious matters (Flannery 1935 81), men and women had essentially separate spheres of activity,

Separation between the sexes was well-demarcated in several spheres  Taboos existed against women eating certain body parts of animals and participating in religious activities For example, Speck quotes from a shaman of the Mistassini band

> When they kill 'Short Tail' [a polite epithet for the bear], before they bring
> him in the young unmarried women cover their faces  This is done so that they
> may not see the 'great food'  coming in , lest they become sick on account of
> having insulted him  Only married women may skin him, and only the men can
> cut him up  (1935 96)

Tanner (1979) notes similar taboos  Young women were placed at the door to avoid stepping over the legs and equipment of hunters, who feared being weakened by the power of their menstrual blood  One informant (36 years old) remembered her mother warning her about this restraint as a teenager  Tanner comments at length on the organization of domestic space within hunting lodges, and notes the strict separation of male versus female space

> The spatial organization of the dwelling space used by the commensal family
> provides us with a model of the social organization of the family  [it] shows a
> definite and complete separation between the sexes, a separation which
> increases with age, except at the point of a marriage bond (1979 81)

Tanner also describes a metaphorical intermingling of the sexual domain with hunting practices Animals are said to be thought of as having personal relationships with hunters, analogous to the sexual love between a man and his lover/wife in some cases, at other times to fatherly love for a son or daughter (Ibid 138) This metaphor appears elsewhere in other Native American hunting cultures (LaBarre 1984 59-61) accentuating the interplay of dependence and dominance in the relationship of conceptual opposites. animal and hunter, male and female, man and woman In traditional Cree society, a separation of the sexes on the basis of occupation/activities existed, and fertility was a defining feature of both genders

Today in Mistassini the connection between occupation and gender has altered somewhat In the bush men still perform the majority of the hunting and trapping, while women maintain the camp in the bush and prepare the meat and skins Men are also the main employees in forestry or mining occupations The jobs available to men and women working in the village economy, however, are not such gendered activities Women working in the Band Council hold head administrative positions, and in one Cree community recently, a woman was elected chief As previously noted by one informant (see Chapter Three), employment in construction is frequently low and women may become the principle breadwinners

In Mistassini women equal or outnumber men in administrative or secretarial positions, and more women than men have returned to adult education classes to finish their high school diplomas Economic activity outside of the bush is less and less connected to gender identity due to the nature of office work where both women and men may work at the same job, and because wage-employment of any type may be difficult to find

Involvement in the wage economy thus does not perpetuate the traditional link between production and gender Marital and parental status, on the other hand, have remained closely associated with social maturity and status as a mature woman or man [49] Generally,

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[49] Ortner and Whitehead (1981 8) interpret the prevalent cross-cultural practice of defining women in terms of their kin roles--wife mother, sister or lover-- as 'relational', reflecting

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pregnancy and childbearing remain pivotal events in the construction of identity as a Cree woman As a source of cultural generativity and motherhood, a woman's fertility is highly valued Childless couples are referred to as 'poor' or 'unfortunate and usually raise/adopt children of siblings or others One informant, describing a woman who lived out of town but came to Mistassini occasionally, described her as a "child" When I asked why she said this, my informant pointed out that the woman had never had children The following teenage comments about the birth control pill further illustrate teenage understanding of fertility

## Contraception and the female body

In this section I explore the ideological basis for these attitudes towards childbearing, arguing that most teenagers recognize the social significance of fertility and childbearing and accept these constructions, and a only few appear to contest prevailing norms Cree notions of fertility and sexuality are polysemic in that they order relations between men and women in the community, and at the same time exemplify and maintain the differences between Cree and White society

As noted in Chapter Two, informants under twenty and those between twenty and thirty say they want between two and three children (the idea of planning the number of children has accompanied the introduction of birth control) It appears that the average number of children born per family is also decreasing Informants attributed this decrease to the

women's relations to men, and contrast these to definitions of men that emphasize status and activities (hunter, warrior) The tendency to define women relationally, they argue ' must be seen as a reflex of their exclusion from--yet crucial linkages with--the world of male prestige " (1981 19) Ortner and Whitehead interpret 'relational' as lesser or subsidiary to the male system of prestige This analysis is debatable if one rejects the assertion that male/female, public/domestic are unequal, and instead posits a sphere of separate but equal relations Thus Powers (1980 56), criticizes the ethnocentrism on the part of many western anthropologists, interpreting Oglala Sioux menstruation ritual, she comments that it is a "common misconception that values placed on certain behaviors in Western society can be equated with values placed on those same behaviours in non-Western society Instead she argues that menstruation, commonly depicted and understood by ethnographers as a polluted and degrading state for Sioux women, in fact elevated women s reproductive abilities to sacred and supernatural status

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increase acceptance of the use of contraception as a way of limiting family size *after* the desired number of children has been born   Using the pill to postpone having children until school is finished or until marriage, however, is seen in a different light   Elder women whom I interviewed stated that no form of birth control was practiced in the past ( fifty years ago and more ), although newly married couples very occasionally practiced abstinence to postpone having children for a year after marriage   Middle-aged and elder informants stated that some parents felt that if they approved of contraception, they were condoning premarital sex, and a number of women felt that it was morally or religiously wrong to regulate one's fertility artificially   The most interesting statements about the pill came from teenagers

According to teenage informants, some mothers warned against using the pill because it could cause future infertility and/or damage reproductive organs, these informants said this was why some sexually active teenagers did not take the pill   Why do girls who 'transgress' against parental wishes in other contexts, follow parental advice in this case?   One reason informants mentioned is that girls are embarrassed to go to the clinic for pills, fearing they will be seen by acquaintances or that news of their visit will escape the clinic   Undoubtedly, lack of forethought, ignorance or the attitude that "it won't happen to me" is another factor   A third factor among some informants was the belief that contraception was religiously immoral   Yet it seems to me that mothers' warnings, and teenagers' seeming adherence to this advice yield another explanation that rounds out the picture  taking the pill threatens childbearing, a reliable and culturally sanctioned event which is a source of social status and gender identity for women

Despite their interest in learning more about contraception, many teenage informants stated that the pill was harmful to one's health and might prevent one from having a child later on   Statements made by young women in their teens included comments about the effects of the pill and sterility

*The pill is harmful for you   It might keep you from having children later on when you wanted them*

*"I knew about birth control but my friends told me it can be bad for you"*

*"I was going to go to the clinic to get some birth control pills but things kept coming up and I never got there and I also wasn't sure if I wanted to be on them"*

The seeming consensus about the importance of fertility and childbearing does not mean that these topics are unproblematic for young women. Although they voiced distrust of the pill, all of the teenagers stated that if young women knew more about contraception and the biological processes by which one becomes pregnant, then at least some teenage pregnancies would be avoided.

*"I never had anyone tell me about birth control. I am in favor of it. I would give it to my kids. Others are not in favor of it though."*

*"I didn't have a very good idea of when you could get pregnant. My mother knew but she didn't tell me. I could never understand that. Why didn't she tell me about how you get pregnant?"*

*"I got pregnant when I was eighteen. Parents don't want to put their daughters on birth control. If I had a daughter I would put her on birth control the day she got her first period."*

The best evidence that fertility is an integral but potentially thorny and complex aspect of identity as a Cree woman is found in the statements of groups of informants who explicitly rejected ideological beliefs surrounding marriage and childbearing practices. Several informants, who formed a small minority had not had children and did not view childbearing as the natural, expected event that would usher them into womanhood. These few young women had formed alternative definitions of womanhood, which they were actively pursuing. A second group of women, also very few, had had children as teenagers or before marriage, but also explicitly criticized communal and parental expectations for women and men to marry, or conventional norms of womanly behavior they perceived as too passive. Women in each of these groups expressly noted and in some cases rejected, what they said was an expectation in the community and among the majority of their peers, that childbearing was necessary for womanhood[50]

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[50] This offers information on women which compliments Burgesse (1944) comment ( page ), that among the Lac St. Jean Montagnais a man was not considered fully mature until he was a father

Teenagers may perceive that sexual activity itself, in addition to fertility, is a necessary component of their identity as adult women  Another source of information about gender and sexuality that needs mention is popular media  Mistassini teenagers, like their southern counterparts, are inundated by the contemporary portrayals in much advertising, T V and film, of idealized, romanticized male/female social roles and heterosexual relationships, in which the sexual experience itself is implicitly equated with social maturity and womanhood

For example, one young teen I stayed with was spellbound (at least four times running), by a video entitled "Teenwitch", in which a teenage girl, by the use of black magic, becomes beautiful and popular at school, and hexes a young man, causing him to fall in love with her  This leads to 1) her loss of virginity and 2) her realization (if I understood correctly) that "true love" can't be 'bought', and 3) a happy ending, in which she keeps her boyfriend and remains beautiful, popular and not pregnant  The television and magazine messages portray heterosexual activity as a way to establish social and gender identity, obviously teenagers vary in how they interpret this message--but this image of sexuality can be assumed to have some impact  Indeed, one informant told me she thought the primary reason for the number of teenage pregnancies in the community was T V and film that depict so much explicit sexual behavior

As illustrated in teenage comments made about contraception, childbearing is an integral but not unproblematic event in the construction of one's identity as a Cree woman  Informants were unanimous in stating they wanted to know more about the biology of reproduction and sex, but comments about contraception ranged from those who said they were strongly in favor and would put their own (future) daughters on the pill, to those who said they would not use it because it might damage their reproductive organs  Encouragement to lose one's virginity and become sexually active comes both from peers and from idealized images of women transmitted in popular media  The importance of fertility and childbearing in past and contemporary Cree society has a significant effect on teenage perceptions of

childbearing, but it is one among several factors that influence the event of teenage childbearing

The range of sometimes contradictory opinions about reproduction and childbearing in Mistassini illustrates the characteristic indeterminacy Young associates with ideological knowledge (see Chapter Two), and the variation individuals show in responding to dominant ideologies For some informants, the link between fertility and achieving adult status in the community is a powerful, self-evident fact, as the analogies made between fertile/barren and adult/child, maturity/inexperience, social or economic wealth/deprivation suggest Other women, particularly the younger generations, may recognize these ideological norms as 'cultural' or 'created', yet nonetheless central to a Cree identity Finally, a very few reject ideological constructs explicitly, and offer their own interpretations, by articulating alternative visions of womanhood, by not having children or by choosing to behave in ways that contradict prevailing notions of womanly behavior.

Another interpretation of bodies and sex in Mistassini, mentioned by only one informant, linked reproduction and fertility of females' bodies with the strengthening and 'reproduction' of Cree culture The informant related how a male member of the community regarded contraception as a threat because it might weaken the strength of Cree culture and society by controlling population growth and referred to the historical decline and in some cases, disappearance, of native communities in North America.[51] This interpretation is supported by contrasts some informants made between Cree reproduction and reproduction controlled by contraception This division appears to be analogous to other oppositions such as Indian/White, natural/artificial or familiar/foreign, as illustrated in comments, principally from women over forty, that family planning was a White way of doing things, and that it was

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[51] If indeed prevalent, this viewpoint may be predominantly held by men in the community and reflect a desire to retain power over women Given the sensitivity of the topic of male/female relations, specifically the ways in which men may hold power over or abuse their wives in the community. I did not broach this topic with informants. A few informants raised the issue of reproduction in relation to abuse or explicit domination by men, but most did not.

not natural to try to plan for children, who were a gift to be gratefully accepted. Several informants stated that Cree women are less likely to use contraception in the 'White' way of planning for, or postponing the first child, and prefer to use it to space their pregnancies or to limit family size.

The production of gender ideologies, and social mechanisms of controlling fertility help sustain assertions or perceived truths about Cree culture and social order, and articulate differences between Cree and White society. Understood in this context, the continued practice of childbearing in the teenage years, and the ambivalence toward contraception take on political significance. These features may reflect resistance against assimilating completely into the culture and economy of the South, although other significant factors such as unhappy teenage social relations with peers and parents, or teenage drug use also come into play.

## Meanings of teenage childbearing

Cree teenagers participate in two different spheres of social relations which may contradict and complement one another. Attempts to achieve acceptance by one's peers may foster opposition to parental authority, even if guided by 'traditional' cultural and social construction of male and female roles. In spite of the fact that people recognize that marriage and childbearing are no longer evidence that one has become a competent mature member of the community, these events still partially function as evidence of social maturity. Teenagers perceive the cultural valuation of fertility/childbearing and parenting roles and may view these events as sources of stability and social stature.

Family life and childrearing, the adolescent peer group and cultural construction of womanhood generate multiple social meanings of teenage pregnancy. First, pregnancy literally transforms girl and boy to mother and father, second, it is, variously, a sign of one's independence and maturity, reproductive health and social well-being, and/or the achievement of womanhood. For example, pregnancy might signify detachment or independence from parental authority and control-- some teenagers talked about getting

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pregnant to get their parents 'off their back', ironically ( in view of this motivation ), most grandmothers provide much assistance in caring for the child   On the other hand, pregnancy is proof of one's entry into sexual activity and accepted adult male/female roles, it may be perceived by one's peers as the predictable outcome of a steady liaison between boyfriend and girlfriend, with various motives imputed to either partner. *"he wanted to hold on to her"* or visa versa, or *"they really love each other"*, or *"it was an accident".* Paradoxically, although the event may cause strife between parents and children, parenthood creates a common ground of experience between parents and children   Pregnant teenagers, through their bodies and the social meanings of childbearing, express the truths and contradictions of passing through adolescence into womanhood in a Cree community.[52]

An objection to this analysis may be that it ascribes an implausible level of intention and imposes a structure of meaning where there is none   Can teenage pregnancy be viewed as a political event, as a response to the pressures and social tensions generated by adolescence? Where do rape and the problems of drug use and alcohol abuse fit into this picture? Isn't it simply passion, curiosity or inebriation that lead to a pregnancy?

In general, alcohol consumption--an expected 'teenage' activity in which teenagers feel pressure to engage--is implicated in the occurrence of pregnancies   Teenagers and adults characterized some teenage pregnancies as the final consequence of a drunken encounter, in which the girl was not even aware that intercourse occurred.  As the teenage informants pointed out, alcohol reduces the inhibitions of both partners, and probably further reduces the chances (low to begin with) that a method of contraception will be used. The role of alcohol in leading to sexual intercourse was identified by many informants, who typically made such observations as the following

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[52]In the anthropological literature the body is privileged with a means of pre-linguistic communication and is aptly characterized by Scheper-Hughes and Lock as "the most immediate the proximate terrain where social truths and  contradictions are played out, as well as a locus of  creativity and struggle " (1987)

*"I think most of the time when intercourse takes place the couples are pretty out of it So many young married couples say they met when they were drunk "*

Alcohol and drug use are indeed part of teenage activities and in this sense are implicated in the incidence of teenage pregnancies, however, the explanation that drug and alcohol use, or poor economic conditions or "cultural disintegration" 'cause' pregnancies can not replace a more contextualized explanation

The context of teenage childbearing involves differentials in power that teenagers confront in managing social relations with peers and adults  In this context teenagers may be understood as 'purposeful' actors, as well as sometime victims, because they are acutely conscious of how their actions will be interpreted by peers, parents and the community  This is especially true for the issues of sex and sexuality   Foucault has argued (1978) that sexuality

> "appears as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power  between
> men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring. teachers
> and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population  Sexuality is
> not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one endowed
> with the greatest instrumentality  " (Ibid  103)

According to Foucault's analysis, sexuality and reproduction are characteristics/events through which one controls or is controlled  Some informants commented that teenage pregnancies are 'used against the parents' or that either girlfriend or boyfriend will encourage pregnancy as a way "to hold on to" the other partner  Other such comments were

*"Sometimes the guy wants to have the baby, they want to keep the girl  One guy, he had a girlfriend, he really loved her and he wants to hold on to her "*

*"I heard one of my friends say 'I'm going to have a baby, then my parents will stop bugging me.  Sometimes the boys ask for it  Then if you don't have sex, they get mad and break it off "*

Such statements from the informants substantiate the interpretation that personal power or influence, over a boyfriend or parents or a peer, is at stake in teenage relationships, and may 'lead' to teenage pregnancy and childbearing  Differentials in the personal power teenagers experience in heterosexual relationships, as well as those they experience with same sex peers or with parents/adults, contribute to the social landscape in which teenage childbearing occurs  As well, this factor may influence the occurrence of pregnancies  Teenage

childbearing is in this sense also symbolic of the sexual politics that play out between young men and women  The meanings of teenage childbearing are multiple, and different for different individuals  Teenage pregnancies, and social perceptions of them, are equally the product of personal relationships with peers and adults, a young women's autonomy in those relationships, and the symbolic meanings that attach to fertility and teenage sexuality.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested that fertility and childbearing, and the sexual politics between young men and women, are events of central importance in the construction of womanhood and play a key role with respect to teenage pregnancy in Mistassini  In keeping with the conceptual analysis of the thesis, I have argued that teenagers not only accept these cultural ideations but modify them as well  If in the future more young women recognize and question the ideological link made between gender and fertil ty, as a few of their peers do presently, then the dominance of present ideological meanings may diminish  In any case, the ideological significance of reproduction and gender, along with teenage practices and the nature of teenage social relations, will continue to reshape the event of teenage pregnancy.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

The history of marriage and childbearing practices in Mistassini and particularly the contemporary event of teenage pregnancy, are phenomena which exemplify the relationship between historical and material change, ideological beliefs and individual perception  What are the implications of this analysis for the study of cultural change, for research on teenage pregnancy, and for the community of Mistassini? In the following conclusion, I summarize my findings and respond to these questions

### Teenage social relations and the politics of reproduction

The ideological link between gender and reproduction in the community of Mistassini influences the contemporary occurrence of teenage pregnancy by shaping teenage perceptions of womanhood  Teenage young women perceive childbearing as a source of social power and status, and as a central event in becoming an adult woman  Childbearing in the teenage years, and the ambivalence toward contraception are significant as affirmations of Cree ideologies of gender and reproduction

In addition to the ideologies of reproduction and gender, the dynamics of teenage social relations affect the event of teenage pregnancy   As in North American society in general, teenagers participate, not always enthusiastically, in activities (like partying) which lead to situations where sexual contact, and the likelihood of becoming pregnant, increase  According to the informants, there is not explicit peer pressure to become pregnant, however, the significant pressure teenagers feel to party and be sexually active without doubt contributes to the higher numbers of teenagers who do become pregnant  Teenagers may perceive they have no option but to imitate their peers due to a cultural ethic of belonging

rather than standing out as different, and due to social pressure to conform to a teenage
'identity' and set of practices that are frequently constructed in opposition to authority  The
peer group has a significant role in influencing when and why teenagers have children

Other factors such as unhappy teenage social relations with peers and parents, teenage
drug use, and the influence of T V and films, depicting sexually active women in a variety of
contexts, must be mentioned as influences upon teenage behavior. Although the ideological
significance of pregnancy may symbolize the transition to womanhood, statements from
teenage informants indicated that pregnancy might mean different things for different
individuals, this suggests that teenage pregnancy is interpreted in multiple, idiosyncratic
ways by peers and parents  Depending on the teenage mother and her personal history, the
meaning attached to the event of teenage childbearing varies  Teenage pregnancies, and
social perceptions of them, are equally affected by a teenager's personal relationships with
peers and adults, her autonomy in those relationships, and the symbolic meanings that are
attached to fertility and teenage sexuality

Contextualizing teenage pregnancy

The perceived increase in out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies in the last fifty years
(which also appears to be a real increase) is a phenomenon that occurred when previously
stable practices of marriage, childbearing and socialization began to change. For women
born after 1940, the institution of residential schooling and the growth of a permanent
community led to a situation where increasingly, Cree youth could contest the social order and
social meanings of events, and modify traditional ways of doing things. These events were
instrumental in generating in teenagers a predominantly heterodox awareness of their
community and culture  Arguably, the set of practices and norms that define teenage life
today have again acquired a doxic or self-evident status for todays' teenagers, as taken for
granted as the socialization of bush life was for their grandparents (although these older

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generations of adults may themselves still protest against the activities and influence of the teenage peer group)

Domains of adult versus teenage activity still overlap to a large extent Family life and early socialization practices generate a set of shared experiences that cross generational boundaries, and reinforce the cultural valuation of family and conformity to the group, individual autonomy and competence, and the ethic of promoting non-interference in the affairs of others As a social group located in this shared terrain of culture and social relations, the teenage peer group is not only a source of deviance and change, but of cultural continuity between the generations

Nonetheless, generational differences such as those found between Cree teenagers, their parents and grandparents occur because aspects of Cree life and ideologies ( involving gender, reproduction and marriage practices), are increasingly subject to modification Other potentially debilitating practices, notoriously the consumption of alcohol, are involved in this process of transformation When they interact with their peers, teenagers may or may not be deviant, but in either case they are engaged in interpreting perceived social and cultural imperatives about being Cree

Earlier studies posited that Cree youth experienced a cultural 'conflict' between the White and Cree worlds (see Chance 1971, Wintrob 1970), which caused them anxiety and confusion Today passage into adulthood involves more than resolving a clash between two cultures Cree adolescents are equally engaged in managing two sometimes conflicting sets of social relations (peers and parents) and in interpreting and responding to significant aspects of Cree culture the social ethics of group harmony and behavior, valuation of parenting and family, and the ethics and practices of bush life They are thus drawn together with the adults into the community, as well as separated from them

As illustrated by the analysis of the teenage peer group and teenage perceptions of fertility, generational differences do not necessarily signify the disintegration of Cree culture Rather, these differences signal the loss of a perspective of the social order as the

*only* way of living  With the shift to a heterodox view of culture and community, local definitions of a Cree way of life or Cree identity become more pluralistic  My analysis of teenage childbearing suggests the fluidity and increasing variation, as well as the resilience of, Cree 'culture' as a concept

This interpretation proposes that the shift in how 'traditional life' is viewed by members of a cultural community constitutes a central feature of cultural change  Once the traditional or status quo is understood to be arbitrary rather than natural, alternatives to the status quo appear, at the very least, traditional practices are contested or resisted in both speech and action  The material and social changes of the last fifty years in Mistassini catalyzed a shift in how Cree youth viewed *some*, but not all, aspects of the 'traditional' culture of their elders  This shift prompted the contestation of authority and generated alternatives to norms of indigenous Cree practices, at once expanding the definition of what was Cree, and changing it

Other aspects of Cree ideology, notably gender construction, the social significance of fertility and ethics of personal relationships, have remained more firmly embedded features of Cree culture, although some women have modified or criticized these too.  For the most part, teenagers appear to reproduce these ideologies, aware of the social significance they hold  In addition to being a product of the increased opportunities for teen sex that have come with village life, teenage pregnancy can be characterized as the product of cultural continuity as well as change in Mistassini  It is an event emblematic of the present position that Cree teenagers occupy as both critics and committed advocates of their own culture and community.

## Comparative social perceptions

In addition to articulating an explanation of cultural change in Mistassini, this analysis contributes to the literature on teenage pregnancy in three ways  First, it highlights the multitude of factors that appear to influence the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and the social response to this event, secondly, it underscores the cultural specificity of the notion of adolescence  and thirdly  it exposes the bias of many studies of teenage pregnancy

The explicit recognition of the importance of childbearing to cultural generativity and to the family characterizes the social response to teenage childbearing in Mistassini Representations of teenage childbearing in the United States are likewise products of Euro-American and Western ideas about marriage, adolescence and fertility For example, Vinovskis argues that in America, interest in teenage childbearing reflects an underlying concern about the marital status of the mother, he cites the fact that although the highest rate of teenage pregnancy was in 1957, the social outcry about teenage pregnancy in the United States was not raised until the early seventies, when the proportion of out-of-wedlock pregnancies had increased drastically

Representations of teenage pregnancy in the North American literature also reflect a classic notion of adolescence in North America (as described by Stanley Hall, see page 10) Teenagers are portrayed as dependent and immature In a widely quoted and influential report on teenage pregnancy, entitled "Eleven Million Teenagers, What can be done about the epidemic of adolescent pregnancies in the United States", Daniel Callahan observes in the editorial essay at the end of the report

> A teenager is a person somewhere between a child and an adult one who is
> still growing and maturing, still finding his or her way around the world, not
> altogether in possession of that self he or she will eventually develop with
> maturity Most teenagers are minors and dependents (1976 57)

The pervasiveness of this definition in North America is evident in the prolonged period of schooling that teenagers are expected to go through and is reinforced by the legal system, which withholds some of the legal rights and responsibilities of adults until one reaches at least eighteen years of age Cree informants, departing from this definition, credited teenagers with more autonomy in making decisions Informants who were parents often identified the ages of 16 through 18 as a time when they could treat their own children as adults, as noted in Chapter Four Finishing high school was most often given as the point past which it would be acceptable to have children in the opinion of most informants, with 'after marriage" falling in second place Hamburg (1986) has suggested that school-age pregnancy is

a better term to describe pregnancies that are problematic and this seems to reflect Cree perceptions more accurately

Both American representations and Cree perceptions of teenage childbearing reflect their respective societies' notions about the position of women in society, particularly the function of their bodies and reproductive capacities, and about a number of related issues or practices marriage, fertility, adolescence In comparing *representations* to *perceptions* I am comparing apples and oranges, the comparison seems useful, however, because it illustrates the potential for discrepancies (particularly cross-cultural) between the widely accepted, influential stereotype generated by the bulk of research in the United States and the actual findings of a case study While informants in Mistassini see teenage pregnancy within a larger context of social relations, North American researchers focus on teenage mothers' sexual behavior and contraceptive use with relatively little investigation of teenage social relations and the subjective experience of the teenage years

The focus on teenage sexual behavior and contraceptive use in North American research results from an assumption by researchers that it is primarily their developing sexuality, rather than their fertility, that teenagers want to experience or explore This narrow focus on the teenage mother and her sexuality, as the 'agent' or cause of teenage pregnancy, produces an overly simplistic understanding of this event Teenage social relations and norms of male/female relationships, in addition to teenage perceptions about fertility, contraception and reproduction, are factors that significantly influence when and why teenagers have children

As a source of cultural generativity and motherhood, woman's fertility in Mistassini is the object of social attention and ideological significance Other studies propose that factors such as economic opportunity or educational aspirations also 'protect against early childbearing', purporting to explain why segments of the population lacking educational or economic opportunity have higher teenage pregnancies This reasoning is defensible to a point, yet in the case of young women at Mistassini, childbearing remains an important part of their

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development into women  To label teenage pregnancy in entirely negative terms would make

fertility and the reproductive capability of the female body problematic in a way that that the

majority the informants in Mistassini would question


## Conclusion

Statistics on teenage childbearing normally ignore cultural, social and historical

perspectives that allow us to see teenage childbearing in a comparative light  Once gained,

these perspectives temper or at least clarify the picture of a 'problem'  Some of the difficulties

faced by teenage mothers in the United States, such as child care, are ameliorated in Mistassini,

primarily because of help received from grandparents, who assist greatly with caring for the

child, teenage mothers frequently return to school to complete their high school degree

American teenage mothers also experience variable amounts of family and community

support, and have diverse long-term outcomes to an extent not reflected in the literature

(Furstenberg 1987)  Failure to recognize these variations and differences has led to the

current situation in the United States, where teenage childbearing is universally taken to be a

problem  The contrast between social perceptions and the realities of teenage childbearing in

Mistassini versus the United States demonstrates that a unitary definition of teenage

pregnancy is inappropriate for societies as pluralistic as America or Canada

In this thesis I have explored some of the preconceptions and assumptions that inform

social perceptions of teenage childbearing in a Cree community  Played out against a

backdrop of material and social conditions over which people have little control, the dynamics

of teenage social relations and the cultural significance of fertility are factors that teenagers

and their parents in Mistassini (and elsewhere) will continue to be concerned about  These

factors should be taken into account when researching teenage pregnancy or when forming

public policy aimed at teenagers in general

## Epilogue

After submitting this thesis for review in November 1992, I returned to Mistassini in January 1993 to present my analysis to the Band Council I wanted to give the elected representatives who had agreed to the research an opportunity to respond to my findings and conclusions

As the members of the Band Council noted, the biggest weakness of this research in terms of its usefulness for the community is that it does not include a male perspective of teenage pregnancy, adolescence, fertility and so forth Although my age (28) and apparently single status (my husband did not accompany me) probably helped me approach young women, it made things more difficult with respect to talking to men, and I did not have much luck in contacting them, particularly young men and teenagers Appearances (i e why was I going off to talk privately with a man?) in this case were a preliminary obstacle I did not figure out how to overcome

The principle consequence flowing from the lack of a male perspective is the conclusion that the burden or responsibility for teenage pregnancies rests mainly with women Such an interpretation would be patently incorrect, clearly this thesis examines only one half of the story Although I would argue that some of my conclusions about adolescence apply for both sexes, there undoubtedly exists another domain of male perspectives, pressures, and culturally constructed notions of sexuality and gender which I did not discuss

Another area I do not explore fully relates to the economic situation in the community: how does under/unemployment in the community affect the long-term consequences of teenage pregnancy and family life in general? How do the economic consequences of teenage pregnancy affect men and women differently? For example, young women often return to school and may end up being both the principle breadwinner and the one who performs most of the household work giving women a double work-load Young men, on the other hand, do

not appear to return to school as often, they may be more likely to experience under/unemployment because there is little work available  Moreover, men may feel that running the household (cleaning/cooking) is not 'men's' work, and frequently leave the community and their families for long periods of time in an effort to find employment

In commenting on the positive aspects of the research, the Band members emphasized that it was an advantage to have someone from outside Misassini conduct research when it involved asking about personal experiences, or personal opinions on sensitive issues such as sex or contraception  In such cases it appears that people are often more frank and open than they would be if they were speaking to someone who was also from the community   Indeed, it seemed that many of the women I spoke with did share their honest opinions   The councillors stated that in this respect, they felt the analysis contained a valuable account of the perceptions and feelings of different generations of women in the community

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