

**Mothers, Work and Childcare:
Choices, Beliefs and Dilemmas**

by

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CHAPTER SIX

Analysis and Interpretation: Making Meaning from the Data

6.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I present the way in which I made meaning from the six life stories and reflect, in analytical depth and breadth, on the emerging themes. I connect the data and stories with similar themes in the literature already discussed in Chapter 3 and introduce further literature where appropriate. This analytical reflection serves to ground the findings in the existing literature and locate them in the field of study. This section (6.1) introduces the Chapter, and in section 6.2, I introduce and justify the four-staged process of meaning making which I developed and adopted to analyse and interpret each interview transcript. This is followed by a deeper discussion of the first three stages of the process. In section 6.3 I justify my decision to adopt the fourth stage of the process to present themes that emerged from across and within the six stories. I will compare Pamphilon's (1999) multidimensional *Zoom Model* with my four staged process of meaning making. I then discuss three key themes selected for their particularly close connection to my two empirical research questions: *Decision-making about returning to work* (6.3i); *Love* (6.3ii) and *Expressions of Emotion* (6.3iii). Each of these discussions includes extensive extracts from the original transcripts to bring the voice(s) of the mothers to the fore. Section 6.4 discusses the effects of the research on *me* and how I was 'troubled by the data' (St Pierre, 1997). Section 6.5 provides an explanation of the process and emotional context of returning the interpreted narratives to each of the participants and their reaction to my interpretation of their life stories. The Chapter concludes with a summary of key points from my processes of analysis and interpretation (6.6).

6.2 Meaning-making

This section discusses the way in which I analysed and interpreted the interview transcripts to bring further meaning to the life stories of the six participants as told to me. Each transcript was between 20,000 - 30,000 words long. I listened intently to the recorded interviews and read the annotated transcripts up to five times each to understand and interpret meaning from the *way* in which the informants had told me their stories. From the outset, I wanted to explore the depth of the mothers' views about their choices and decision-making about returning to work after the birth of their child/ren, but I was totally unprepared for the overwhelming sense of responsibility I felt in relation to the (re)telling of the stories and to being truthful to all that they had been prepared to share with me. As Riessman (1993) contends, 'Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations' (p.2). The challenge was to be faithful to the data, ethical towards the respondents and truthful to their stories, whilst at the same time to be an articulate and competent 'teller' of their stories. Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest that life stories 'represent a partial, selective commentary on lived experience' (p.16). Many life stories are, by their very nature, 'messy' (Atkinson, 1998; Plummer, 2001). I was interested in the way the respondents *did* tell me their stories not in the way that they *should* tell them (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.17). The challenge (and potential danger) lay in the act of interpretation of the narrative. As Riessman (1993) suggests

Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives (p.2).

During the interview process there was a natural tendency for the participants to stop and start (Riessman,1993), therefore the interpretation and meaning-making in relation to this study became a four staged process as detailed in *Figure 6.1*:

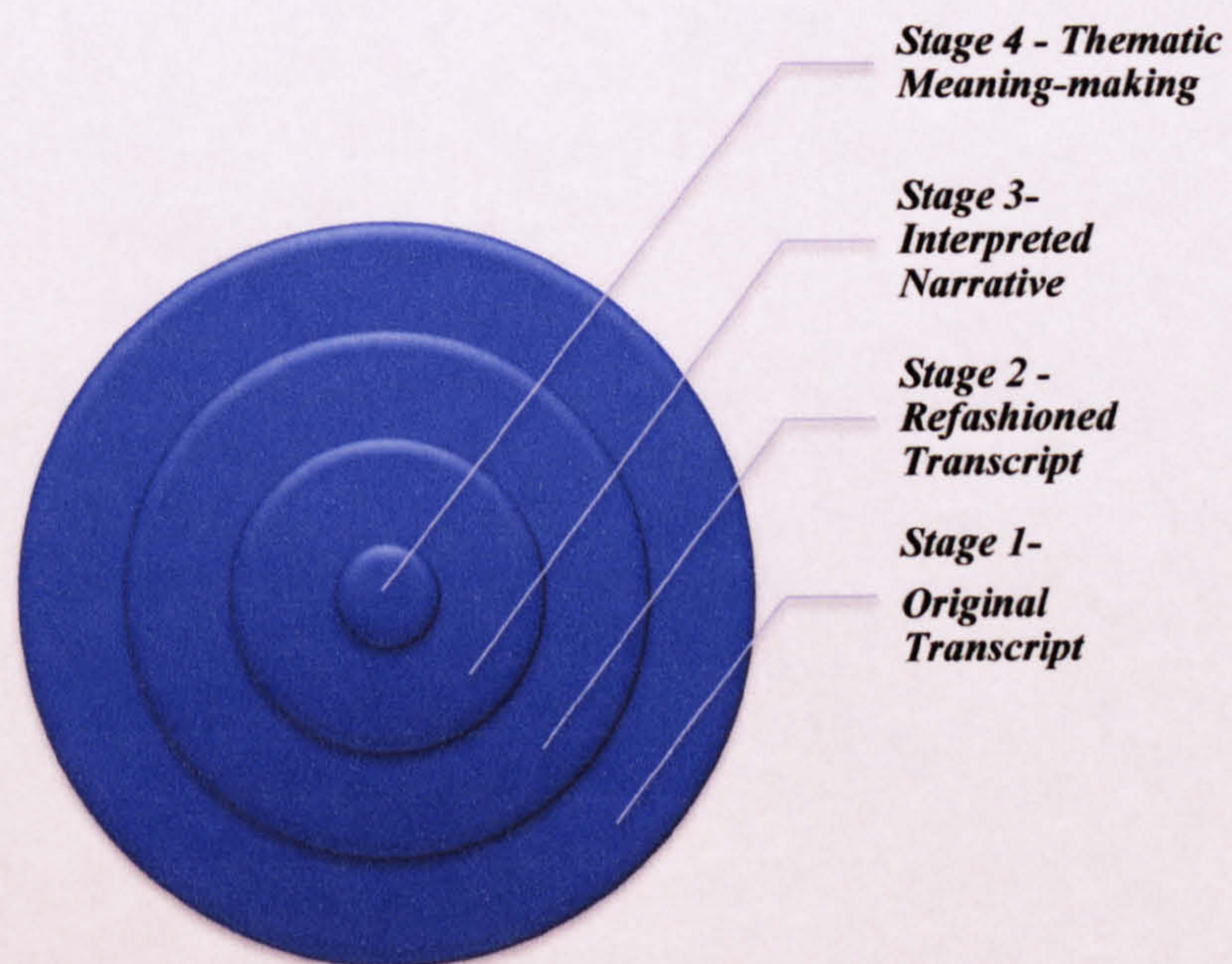
Stage 1- Transcription was the first stage to produce the '*Original Transcript*'.

Stage 2 -was to remove the hesitant utterances - the umms and ahh's and my responses so as to bring coherence to the transcripts and as Riessman (1993) suggests to 'refashion' them – the result being the '*Refashioned Transcript*'.

Stage 3- involved editing the refashioned transcripts into a 3,000 word interpreted narrative, which became the '*Interpreted Narrative*'.

Stage 4 -involved applying a thematic approach to bring further interpretive meaning to the original transcripts (produced in stage 1). This stage-of *Thematic Meaning- making* will be discussed further in section 6.1.iii.

Figure 6.1 *Four Staged Process to Meaning-making*



To exemplify stages 1-3 I have drawn on an extract from Becky's interview in *Table 6.1*. The first column is an excerpt directly from Becky's original transcript which includes natural pauses and hesitations and my responses as part of turn taking. In the second column, the interruptions have been removed so as to 'refashion' (Riesman, 1993) the text. In the third column, is an excerpt from the interpreted narrative which shows how I edited and interpreted Becky's life story. Throughout the process of interpretation I endeavoured to keep the original intent and meaning as Becky told it to me by drawing upon the information from the original transcript and checking for coherence in the refashioned transcript.

Table 6.1 *An Example from Becky's Story of the First Three Stages of the Interpretive Process*

<i>Original Transcript</i>	<i>Refashioned Transcript</i>	<i>Interpreted Narrative</i>
<p><i>Becky</i> – Right - Well I was born in the South, so I was born and bred here, both of my parents are from South</p>	<p>Becky – Well I was born and bred on the South Coast, both of my parents are from here. My parents divorced when I was</p>	<p><i>Becky did not have a happy childhood. Her father worked on the ferries and was a typical</i></p>
<p><i>Jools</i> - O.K.</p>	<p>eleven. I've got one sister through both</p>	<p><i>'working men's club' type of man. Becky</i></p>
<p><i>Becky</i> – I -my parents divorced when I was eleven,</p>	<p>my parents and she's twenty-four now but</p>	<p><i>regularly witnessed him physically abuse her mother when he returned home drunk from the</i></p>
<p><i>Jools</i> – right</p>	<p>she's got special needs. She's got severe</p>	<p><i>pub. When Becky was eleven her parents</i></p>
<p><i>Becky</i> – I've got one sister through both my parents</p>	<p>learning difficulties; she's about eighteen</p>	<p><i>divorced but at the time she didn't fully</i></p>
<p><i>Jools</i> – Yes</p>	<p>months cognitively and she's got</p>	<p><i>appreciate why her father had to leave the family</i></p>
<p><i>Becky</i> – and she's twenty-four now.</p>	<p>cardiomyopathy heart disease, Scoliosis,</p>	<p><i>home. Although he had never hit her she had</i></p>
<p><i>Jools</i> – Hhm</p>	<p>um her spine [is at] seventy-degree angle</p>	<p><i>grown up knowing he was an alcoholic and</i></p>
<p><i>Becky</i> – but she's got special needs</p>	<p>[and she is] wheelchair bound, [she]</p>	<p><i>assumed that domestic violence was 'normal'.</i></p>
<p><i>Jools</i> – Right</p>	<p>doesn't speak, um [she] needs twenty-four</p>	<p><i>Unlike her twenty four-year-old, (severely</i></p>

Table 6.1 An Example from Becky's Story of the First Three Stages of the Interpretive Process

<i>Original Transcript</i>	<i>Refashioned Transcript</i>	<i>Interpreted Narrative</i>
<p>Becky – Right - Well I was born in the South, so I was born and bred here, both of my parents are from South</p>	<p>Becky – Well I was born and bred on the South Coast, both of my parents are from here. My parents divorced when I was</p>	<p>Becky did not have a happy childhood. Her father worked on the ferries and was a typical</p>
<p>Jools - O.K.</p>	<p>eleven. I've got one sister through both my parents and she's twenty-four now but</p>	<p>'working men's club' type of man. Becky</p>
<p>Becky – I -my parents divorced when I was eleven,</p>	<p>she's got special needs. She's got severe learning difficulties; she's about eighteen months cognitively and she's got</p>	<p>regularly witnessed him physically abuse her mother when he returned home drunk from the</p>
<p>Jools – right</p>	<p>cardiomyopathy heart disease, Scoliosis, um her spine [is at] seventy-degree angle</p>	<p>pub. When Becky was eleven her parents divorced but at the time she didn't fully</p>
<p>Becky – I've got one sister through both my parents</p>	<p>[and she is] wheelchair bound, [she] doesn't speak, um [she] needs twenty-four</p>	<p>appreciate why her father had to leave the family home. Although he had never hit her she had grown up knowing he was an alcoholic and assumed that domestic violence was 'normal'.</p>
<p>Jools – Yes</p>		<p>Unlike her twenty four-year-old, (severely</p>
<p>Becky – and she's twenty-four now.</p>		
<p>Jools – Hhm</p>		
<p>Becky – but she's got special needs</p>		
<p>Jools – Right</p>		

<p><i>Jools</i> – Right, gosh</p> <p>Becky - um, and my Father was very violent in the past as well</p> <p><i>Jools</i> – O.K.</p> <p>Becky – yeah, I, from when I was very young I remember</p> <p><i>Jools</i> – towards to your Mother?</p> <p>Becky – towards to my Mother yeah, he was never violent towards to me, but he was alcoholic.</p> <p><i>Jools</i> – O.K.</p> <p>Becky – he was a typical southern man, worked on the ferries</p> <p><i>Jools</i> – O.K.</p> <p>Becky – yeah, they used to drink a hell of a lot on the ferries and so on and they’d come home, you know, beat my Mum if she broke an egg or whatever, you know that sort of thing</p>	<p>come home, you know, beat my Mum if she broke an egg or whatever, you know that sort of thing and obviously I witnessed a lot of that.</p>	
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Kiessinger (1998) and Atkinson's (1998) suggestion that interpreting hours of confused data into a coherent text can be a daunting task, was one which resonated with me. Atkinson (1998) also raises a number of other important points for the researcher to consider in relation to interpreting life stories. He suggests it is very much dependent on the way in which the researcher is able to extract meaning and indeed, if the same meaning can be applied by the researcher in the role of narrator as the participant story teller. He further argues that much of the interpretation is to do with the way in which the researcher and participant interact with one another and the quality of their relationship. In addition, he contends that the subjectivity and theoretical perspective of the researcher is significant.

A life story interview is a highly personal encounter: an analysis of a life story is highly subjective and may have as much to do with the quality and depth of the interpersonal exchange itself as with any theory that might be applied to the content of the narrative.

(Atkinson, 1998, p.59)

Richardson (2005) suggests 'we do not triangulate; we crystallise' (p.963). She argues:

Crystallisation provides us with deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously we know there is always more to know.

(*ibid*)

Leitch (2006) suggests that narratives alone can be limiting and used an arts-based approach to explore identities of six female teachers in which she argues:

Not all aspects of experience are, however, readily available to awareness; many emotional, sensory and embodied dimensions of experience lie below the threshold of consciousness and are thus often impossible to articulate in words.

(Leitch, 2006, p.551)

The participants took part in 'mask-making', 'self-system pictures' and 'autobiographical timelines' alongside what Leitch (2006) describes as 'narrative conversations' to explore the unconscious aspects of their identities. Leitch contends that using multiple methods offers an alternative approach to the recognition of embodied knowledge.

The narratives that ensued served as powerful reminders that our everyday, often professional, lives are lived on the surface, but there may be more meaningful and deeper ways of living that are seeking attention beneath the surface. Somehow creative expression of time-lines brought this into relief, raising questions about relationships, about values, priorities, about how they lived their lives and how they conducted their work.

(Leitch, 2006, p.562)

Sparkes and Douglas (2007) used poetic representation to retell the story of 'Leanne' who was one of seven participants, all of whom were female golf professionals who took part in interviews about motivation. Sparkes and Douglas (2007) claim their decision to use poetic representation was twofold: 1) to confirm her anonymity and 2) to be able to draw on the array of language used by the participant in her description of aspects of her life. Bagley and Cancienne (2001) discuss their re-presentations in a process whereby dance was used to interpret and bring meaning to their data. For example, they comment:

Dance in the performance moves beyond the actual interviews and takes creative license. This is done for purposes of seeing old information in a new light and creating a new interpretation from the old. It would be absurd to suggest that when Carl was interviewing parents concerning school choice, these parents were dancing. Although the movements are motivated by the words of the participants and the researcher, I, the choreographer, undertook an artistic endeavour and created image in motion and juxtaposed these images with the words of the participants. One of the many questions that I ask as the choreographer interpreting the data is, if thoughts and feelings were imagined through movement, what would they look like?

(Bagley and Cancienne, 2001, p.227)

Riessman (1993) argues ‘there is no single method of narrative analysis but a spectrum of approaches to texts that take narrative form’ (p.25). This reflects the approach I took in constructing and making sense of the data whilst always keeping ‘humanness’ to the fore. When I interviewed Becky, although I had no previous relationship with her, I responded with simple comments to the information she so readily shared with me. Although it was mainly ‘yes’ or ‘ok’ or even ‘gosh’ it would have been quite strange for Becky to have shared such personal, sometimes distressing, information with me (a relative stranger), if I had been unable to demonstrate a element of compassion and empathy (Oakley, 1981; Tierney, 1998; Etherington, 2004) I was also, as Riessman, (1993) suggests, able to clarify my understanding of things interviewees said. For example, when Becky described her relationship with her parents and how her father had been violent (*Box 6.1*), my interjection (*see bold italics*) was to clarify who her father had been violent toward.

Box 6.1 Clarifying Meaning during the Interview Process

Becky - um, and my Father was very violent in the past as well

Jools – O.K.

Becky – yeah, I, from when I was very young I remember

Jools – towards your Mother?

Becky – towards to my Mother yeah, he was never violent towards to me, but he was alcoholic.

Unlike Kiesinger (1998) I had not set out to use an interactive interviewing technique specifically designed to allow the participants to share intimate disclosures.

However, I did agree with Kiesinger’s point that I wanted to construct narratives that

gave an opportunity for the participants to ‘tell their own stories, with the hope that their accounts might encourage new understandings and prompt new conversations’ (p.74) about women, work and childcare.

In section 6.4, I will explain the issues and dilemmas that began to emerge as part of the process of telling their stories. However, first, in section 6.3, I will discuss the themes that emerged from the original transcripts and the approach that I took to thematic meaning-making at the fourth stage of analysis.

6.3 Thematic Meaning-making

This section introduces and justifies the fourth stage of my approach to analysis: *thematic meaning-making*, in which I returned to the original transcripts and identified emerging themes individual to each participant that were also evident and embedded across all of the six life stories. I coded the original transcripts by changing the colour of the text. I called this version ‘Marked up Thematic Analysis’. In addition, I tabulated each of the themes into a separate document which I called ‘Thematic Analysis’. I was then able to examine the process I had constructed in depth and ensure I was applying the same technique and rationale to my interpretation of each of the interviews.

This thematic, fourth stage of analysis produced themes that had emerged during the interviews. Atkinson (1998) contends that one of the challenges to and criticisms of the breaking down of the data in qualitative analysis is that it becomes fragmented. However, he also acknowledges that ‘Understanding parts of the story is important

for recognising patterns and themes that connect the parts of the whole' (p.67). I identified with Atkinson's (1998) view that 'As we listen to a life story being told, if any part of it connects deeply or clearly with any part of our experience, we know it is not a unique experience and is one very likely that other's share' (p.70). It was during the process of repeatedly listening to the audios and reading the transcripts that I had begun to recognise themes which occurred across all the interviews, which signified an element of connectedness in these very personal and unique stories. Chase (2005) suggests that when analysing life stories, researchers will use a range of lenses to move back and forth to make sense of the data 'While acknowledging that every instance of narrative is particular, researchers use this lens to attend to similarities and differences across narratives' (Chase, 2005, p.657). I returned to the original transcripts and coded each theme to provide another layer of analysis of their meanings. I identified seven main themes which were evident in all the interviews: *Childhood*, *Decision-making about returning to work*, *Influences and Dilemmas*, *Expressions of Emotion*, *Indicators for Change*, *Identity* and *'Love'* (Figure 6.2.) In addition, other themes highly specific to individual participants dominated some interviews and therefore were significant in relation to each person's own life story. These were themes such as: *Domestic violence*, *Death/ Illness*, *Religion*, *Same Phrases or Inferences*, *kissing*. I grouped these individual patterns under the heading of 'Idiosyncratic'.

The 'Marked up Thematic Analysis' and the 'Thematic Analysis' were then used to examine the process in depth and ensure I was applying the same technique and rationale to my interpretation of each of the interviews. *Figure 6.3* and *Table 6.2* provide examples of the 'Marked up Thematic Analysis' (*Figure 6.3*) and the

‘Thematic Analysis’ (*Table 6.2*) using excerpts from Amy’s data. To recognise where there were similarities and overlaps in the life stories, suggested to me that there was a way to bring ‘a greater meaning for some or all of the stories’ (Atkinson’s 1998 p.73).

Figure 6.2 Stage Four Thematic Meaning-making



Figure 6.3 *Example of 'Marked up Thematic Analysis' with excerpts from Amy's Transcript*

I suppose right back to my own childhood. Um I sort of grew up in um, a working class rural family and my dad was a farm labourer and my mum did sort of casual part-time cleaning work and um, we lived in a, in very odd kind of situation where it felt almost feudal, where we were owned by the sort of landed gentry.... I always thought I'd go back, I just didn't know on what basis um, but then having said that... once I'd... at first up to three months of Sebastian's life, I was thinking, Um, I want to do this [be a mother] full time you know, I owe this to him, he's you know... **If I were to not breast feed him or nurture him, nurture him in any way or cuddle him, he would perish and if I just left him there. He is totally reliant on me for everything - his emotional, his physical... everything was down to me and it was, you know hugely overwhelming...** I mean, it's so unlike me I'm normally such a sort of assertive person you know, and I'm very open and I think given, if, if, Sebastian had not been involved, and that it was any other situation, I would have just taken her to one .. I haven't worked this hard to get to where I've got to and escape those things, although (long sigh) that brings all sorts of issues, social mobility and so on whatever, so I kind of um you know felt like I was progressing and moving forward, and I had my own identity as an adult, that wasn't wife and ... Yeah, yeah... I wanted somebody to - not love him in the same ways that I do but I wanted (pauses) someone (pauses) to care for him in, in such a way you know, that, all the time (pauses) that she was responsible for my son's wellbeing, **that he is the most important thing in her world, at that moment** ...Yeah um, I mean it was a sort of characterised by domestic violence and so on, or whatever so. Then so I guess because, my parents' marriage and the sort of family we lived in was quite, um, um (sighs and long pause) um had moments of being very, very unpleasant...

Table 6.2 *An Example from Amy's Transcript of Colour Coded Thematic Analysis*

Childhood	Decision-making about returning to work	Influences and Dilemmas	Expressions of Emotion	Indicators for Change	Identity	Love	Idiosyncratic
I suppose right back to my own childhood. Um I sort of grew up in um, a working class rural family and my dad was a farm labourer and my mum did sort of casual part-time cleaning work and um, we lived in a, in very odd kind of situation where it felt almost feudal, where we were owned by the sort of landed gentry...	I always thought I'd go back, I just didn't know on what basis um, but then having said that... once I'd... at first up to three months of Sebastian's life, I was thinking, Um, I want to do this [be a mother] full time you know, I owe this to him, he's you know...	Yeah, and I suppose I've just been very aware that I don't want her [nanny] to feel like my servant, or a member of my staff so I try to be as open with her about you know why I may have behaved in a particular way ...	If I were to not breast feed him or nurture him in any way or cuddle him, he would perish and if I just left him there. He is totally reliant on me for everything - his emotional, his physical... everything was down to me and it was, you know hugely overwhelming...	I mean, it's so unlike me I'm normally such a sort of assertive person you know, and I'm very open and I think given, if, Sebastian had not been involved, and that it was any other situation, I would have just taken her [Nanny] to one side...	I haven't worked this hard to get to where I've got to and escape those things, although (long sigh) that brings all sorts of issues, social mobility and so on whatever, so I kind of um you know felt like I was progressing and moving forward, and I had my own identity as an adult, that wasn't wife and mother...	Yeah, yeah... I wanted somebody to - not love him in the same ways that I do but I wanted (pauses) someone (pauses) to care for him in, in such a way you know, that, all the time (pauses) that she was responsible for my son's wellbeing, that he is the most important thing in her world, at that moment.	Yeah um, I mean it was a sort of characterised by domestic violence and so on, or whatever so Then I guess because, my parents' marriage and the sort of family we lived in was quite, um, um (sighs and long pause) um had moments of being very, very unpleasant...

In her study of ‘nine ordinary, yet extraordinary ...women’ (Pamphilon 1999, p.394) the photography metaphor is extended to liken analysis to the zooming in and out of a camera lens. Pamphilon (1999) developed the *Zoom Model* to ‘maximise the multiple levels of meaning found in a life history’ (p.393). The process of thematic analysis in the study reported in this thesis allowed me to *zoom in* on the specifics of each life and also to *zoom out* to see the bigger picture of what was common to all of the women in the study. This process was complimentary to the earlier interpreted narratives that I had re-constructed (in Stage 3 of my analysis) from the original and refashioned transcripts - to bring some sort of order to the meaning-making process. I decided against combining the themes to reduce their complexity as I did not want to try to *make* them fit where they would not go (Pamphilon, 1999). St Pierre (1997) discusses her dilemma with regard to analysis and interpretation. She notes

Identifying, the method of data collection was amusing, thought provoking, and not too difficult; but I had no idea how to link some of the data with the knowledge that was produced....I often felt that all the activities of the narrative – data collection, analysis, and interpretation – happened simultaneously, that everything happened at once.

(St Pierre, 1997, p.180)

In her ‘zoom model’ Pamphilon (1999) suggests four levels of analysis, namely the: *macro; meso; micro; and the interactional* level. In relation to this thesis it is useful to compare the multidimensional *zoom model* developed by Pamphilon and the four staged process of analysis I developed, to identify if similarities or overlaps existed between the two models. In *Figure 6.4* I have identified, by the use of arrows, where the overlaps occur. There were, for example, similarities between Pamphilon’s dominant discourses at the *macro* level and the approach I took to emerging themes. Similarly, there was resonance between the *meso* level and the themes to make

meaning from the way in which the participants in the two models constructed their lives. For example, I had been able to seek out the patterns in the women's lives through thematising the process of their stories as discussed earlier in *Table 6.2*. I agree with Pamphilon's contention regarding the *micro zoom* when she says:

...these were real women talking about their lives, their values, their life learnings it was neither ethically, or intellectually rigorous to reduce their accounts solely to words on a page. As a narrator tells of certain events, the oral dimension may add depth to her words, whereas in other cases her emotions may reveal incongruence that demands further consideration.

(Pamphilon,1999, p.396)

The final zoom of the metaphorical lens in Pamphilon's model is the *interactional* level and is one in which she which she considers the particular relationship established between interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer makes the decisions on what to leave out and what to include in the re-construction of the narrative and therefore the researcher cannot be objectified. *Expressions of Emotions* had emerged as one of my seven themes, not only had this been highly significant in relation to the voices of the women in my study, it had also influenced the way in which I had reconstructed the stories into interpreted narratives. However, the point here is that bias and subjectivity as discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.5ii, is a necessary part of life history research and is evident throughout the whole of the process of life storying.

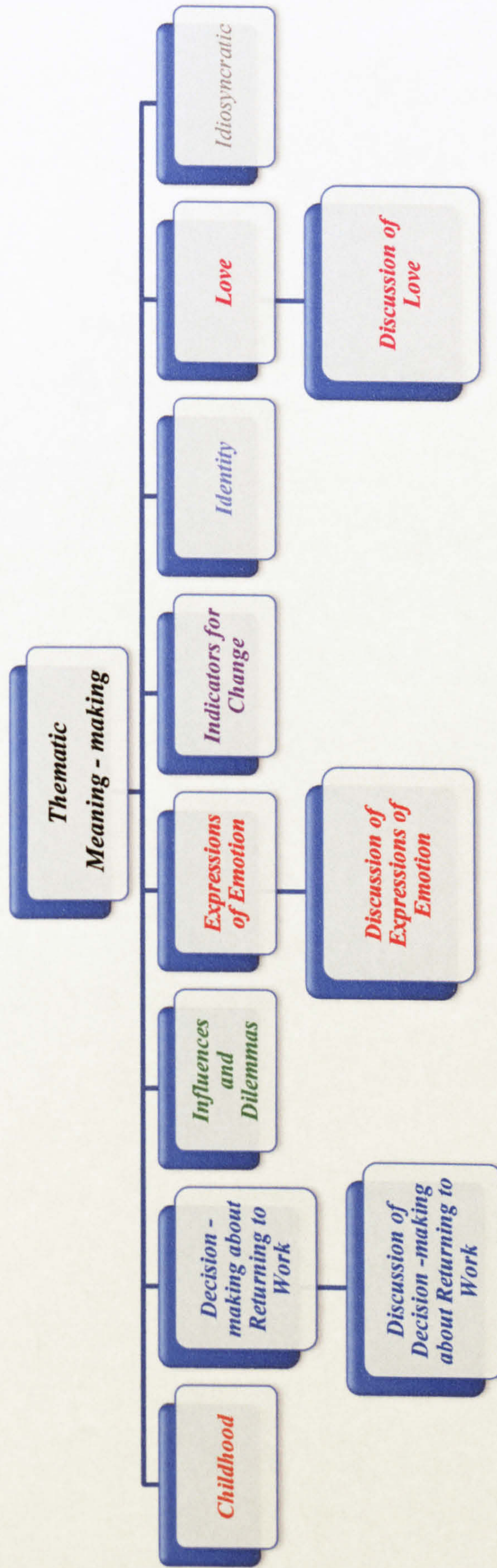
Figure 6.4 Comparisons of two Multidimensional Models of Meaning-making: from Pamphilon (1999) and Page, (this thesis)

The Zoom Model Pamphilon(1999)		Four Stage Model of Meaning- Making (Page, this thesis)	
<p>Macro Level 1 focuses on socio- cultural collective dimensions of life history to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dominant discourses • composition of the narrative • Sheds light on relationship between individual and society 	<p>Meso Level 2 focuses on the individual's process of storying</p>	<p>Original Transcript Stage 1 a verbatim transcript of the life story as told</p>	<p>Refashioned Transcript Stage 2 removed the utterances to focus on bringing coherence and bring meaning to the whole story</p>
<p>Micro Level 3 considers the oral dimension of life history:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pauses • emotions 	<p>Interaccional Level 4 request the researcher to acknowledge their own place in the research as a whole</p>	<p>Interpreted Narrative Stage 3 is a edited interpreted narrative of the story as a whole</p>	<p>Thematic Analysis Stage 4 seeks to identify themes to bring further meaning making</p>

The Zoom Model adapted from Pamphilon (1999)

I added a further dimension, which was to add a discussion element to the thematic analysis for three of the key themes that had emerged, to illustrate their significance. I will now discuss these three key themes with excerpts directly from the original transcripts in the participants own voice(s). My rationale to draw specifically on: *Decision-making about returning to work, 'Love' and Expressions of Emotion* (Figure 6.5) was because they linked directly to what I considered to be the three key elements contained in my research questions: a) *Decision-making* in the *Policy* context, b) notions of *'Love'*, and c) the relational aspect of how *Expressions of Emotion* are featured in the process of the participants' decision-making. This choice is not to deny the importance of the other themes – but for reasons of time, space and scope of the study it would not be possible to deal with each one of them individually here. However, they are significant in their own right and could be the focus of future research.

Figure 6.5 Stage Four Thematic Meaning-making with Discussion of Three of the Key Themes



6.3i Decision-making about Returning to Work:

In this section I will draw on and represent the voices of the mothers to discuss their decision-making about returning to work after their babies were born. I will examine the findings from the participants in the study in relation to existing literature in the field.

The participants in my study all found financial issues related to childcare decision-making to be problematic at one time or another. Their accounts accord with the findings of existing studies. Volling and Belsky (1993) found that parents paid particular attention to financial factors (among other things) , with the majority of women suggesting financial circumstances had the greatest influence on their decision to return to work. Similarly Hock *et al.* (1984) found that women's attitudes to work following the birth of their first child was influenced by financial circumstances.

All the women in my study talked about their financial commitments. Even though Esmé, considered staying at home to be a financially viable option this was due to careful planning at the time of her marriage to Tim and remained a factor in her thinking, As Dalli (1999; 2002) has noted, there is a widely held perception that 'good mothers want to look after their child at all times' (1999, p.92) and this was Esmé's view too:

Esmé

I suppose the sort of thing that I really want to get over is when people say, 'Oh what do you do?', when you say, I'm at home, a full time Mum, people say 'Oh you're very lucky!' and they mean that from a financial point of view, you know 'Oh, you're lucky that your husband has got a good job and you are able to do that'. If you were looking from the outside in [then] yes, we are now because Tim has got a very, very good job (pause) but, before we got married Tim hadn't got a good job. Um it was okay but he was at the bottom of his scale he was only... twenty five and I was twenty four and we bought a house just on Tim's income so that we knew that if we did start a family, I had the option of staying at home with the children.

Esmé's comment '*I'm at home, a full time Mum*' seems to indicate that mothering is not just what she does but a 'mum' is what she 'is'. Esmé might have considered herself to be 'a good mother' (Douglas and Michaels, 2004; Miller, 2005; Johnston and Swanson, 2006) in the sense that she believed that a mother should stay at home and be with her children. Several studies have concluded that for some women motherhood defines 'who they are' particularly when they have no intention to return to work (Hock, *et al.* 1984; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Volling and Belsky, 1993; Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Edwards *et al.* 2002; Duncan, 2003; 2005). Esmé's story appears to accord with such views.

For other women motherhood is an important part of their identity but is not necessarily *the* most important part (Quinn 2004). Quinn goes on to suggest that there are multiple characterisations of motherhood, though some elements of motherhood are shared by all mothers, every mother is different. In keeping with Volling and Belsky's (1993) findings, although the remaining five women considered finances were not necessarily the overriding factor, clearly economics influenced their decision-making to an extent, coupled with how much the women

actually enjoyed their current jobs. Lucy explained how she had discussed the options with her husband:

Lucy

When I talked to my husband about it ... he said "it's whatever you want. Financially we could just about afford it if you decide not to go back to work, but you've built up your career, you've got a nice job, it's well paid etc, etc so you know let's see how it goes..." If there was another time what would I do? I am sure I would be completely different...with two children; I wouldn't want to work so that for me would make the decision.... Financially it wouldn't be viable... and then you think how come you wouldn't do it for two but you'd do it for one? So you actually start to raise a lot of issues within yourself of which you don't always find the answers to really. I do analyse it frequently... I also think a lot of it is about what you are returning to, because if I've got quite a mundane job with you know, really poor salary and really poor working conditions etc. etc. you know, what a huge escape, what lovely reasons to not have to return to work. Financially I didn't have to [return to work] but because I knew my job was nice and I enjoyed I knew I could make it work for us as a family, there was an element of encouragement wasn't there to go back to it really.

Brannen and Moss (1991) found that it was ultimately the mothers who took responsibility for the decision for their return to work with most husbands sitting 'on the fence' (p 46) when it came to final decisions. Lucy's decision was based on the fact that she enjoyed her job and saw it as her career, Johnson and Swanson (2006 p.511) argue that such mothers should be recognised as working full-time because they enjoy or want their career rather than be dismissed as reluctant- to- be mothers.

Even though Lucy questioned her decision she knew there were elements of her job that she enjoyed a great deal, although her choice of words was interesting when she discussed what it must be like to have a less than satisfactory job. She seemed to be rather envious of those mothers who might be able to 'escape' returning to work on the basis of poor working conditions and lack of job satisfaction.

Becky's reasons to return to work were to an extent not dissimilar to Lucy's, in as much that she enjoyed her job. Becky used the analogy of working in a supermarket to describe what she considered would be a less stressful job as opposed to a reason not to have to work. Becky seemed resigned to the fact that she had to return to work soon after Jordan was born. She had accepted a financial arrangement with her employer when she gave birth to Jordan and therefore returned to work when he was a few months old. Much like Lucy, Becky viewed her job as a career. Becky considered the ideal scenario would be to work part time hours, during school term time only.

Buzzanell, *et al.* (2005, p.261) developed the notion of the 'good mother' into the *good working mother*, one where the role of a working mother is still considered to be a 'full time' role and not diminished just because she goes to work. The 'good working mother', does two things'; she arranges 'good quality childcare *and* takes pleasure in her 'good working mother' role. Fitting her work with her son's school hours was a concept that Becky had thought about and was hoping she would be able to build into future opportunities, to allow her to combine a job she enjoyed with her role as a mother.

Becky

Um, I didn't necessarily want to go back then but my employer at the time, the Guy said, um, "I won't put you on sick, on, on maternity pay or anything, I won't deduct your wages at all, if you come back to work in four months time." Mike [was] crap with money, I was the higher earner it was my only choice you know I felt [I had] financially.... It's true I made that choice to have a child. I made the choice to work, within a stressful job ... I could go and work a couple of hours an afternoon at a school or at Tesco's or whatever, just to keep my hand in with adults... I know a woman who works for customs and she works school term time only... she works school hours, quarter past nine till three.. Well the last few days with the announcement you know from Gordon Brown about ... increasing flexible working time for working mothers. Flexible hours and so on - for working mothers and it's going to be brought in as legislation [and] I thought great. So, if I pass the level two, if I am able to do the exams. I would approach my employer and see if my job can be done term time only, school hours. If it can brilliant! I'll keep [the job]!

Martha had been faced with either returning to work for three months or paying back the additional maternity leave allowance to her employer. She had only ever planned to return to work for three months and at the time of her maternity leave it hadn't seemed such a bad idea. However, as the day of Martha's return to work loomed nearer, the more upset she became about the prospect of leaving Holly at the nursery. Martha's experience highlights the observation of Lewis (2003) that 'The complex pattern of finance and provision presents parents - usually mothers - with choices, but not always pleasant ones' (p.235). Lewis points out that until the advent of childcare policies under the new labour government, early years provision was very much a private concern, and only part of the public arena when children were deemed to be 'at risk'. A fact Martha was only too well aware from her employment role in a social services nursery. Brannen and Moss (1991) report that the effect on women of their decision to continue working in a full-time capacity was met with

criticism and disdain in the mid 1980s, where government policies did little to support women financially.

Martha

Connor had said that to me at the weekend... "At the end of the day Martha if you can't, if you can't do it, then just forget it...we'll pay the money back, it will be hard, but we'll pay it back and that will be it". Although I intended to go back to work, I was only ever going back for three months ... I wasn't going to be working. I was going to stay at home with Holly... that was my choice and that's what we'd always said, that I would go back for three months, get that out the way, then I was going to be home with her.... It was really hard....

Amy said she had always known she would return to work but had been undecided about when, so had '*kept my options open for a year. I thought righto, I'll make a decision around about nine months*'. Ayesha said she had under estimated how '*blooming expensive everything was*' and '*how little pay, you get near the end...*' but she also said '*I've never once regretted going back to work*'.

Brannen and Moss (1991) identified that mothers ultimately made the decision about the type of childcare they took up for their children. This was also true in my study and in some cases, Amy, for example, although a joint decision had taken place the father didn't necessarily have a strong view. In the Brannen and Moss (1991) study, despite the sample group being made up of all women who were married with both partners earning, it was ultimately the mothers who took responsibility for the decision for their return to work.

Amy

I mean, yes, we discussed it, and yes, you know we, we threw the idea around. Particularly when it came to his mum, maybe filling the role but he didn't think his mum was really a goer but his view was very muchyou're the mother and you have these maternal instincts, and you do all this research into this area. You know what you're talking about and I bow to your better judgement....also I don't think he could quite ... appreciate or empathise with the...sort of almost neurotic madness that came over me, about you know just how precious Sebastian was [to me]

For Ayesha on the other hand although her husband was prepared initially to go along with his wife's choice of early childcare he had very strong feelings and attitudes about the type of educative environment that he wanted his son to have and was only prepared to endure the childminder environment for a limited period of time, which proved to be a contentious point for Ayesha.

Ayesha

Kristoff was quite nervous... he was very much, "well that's your profession, you decide, I'll leave it up to you..." He has wanted me to remove Freddie from the childminder because ...in his mind he's separated Care from Education... He has battled with it... it was his pressure of enrolling him in a Private Day Nursery [otherwise] I would have kept Freddie with Lillian [childminder] until he was five. [I would have been] quite happy to do that, um, but it goes back to [the] learning environment... He expresses it quite clearly that he feels, that Freddie has not had the same experiences that his colleagues' children may have had because they are in Private nurseries.

Brooks-Gunn *et al.* (2002) discuss the amorphous nature of 'quality' in child care and the difficulty of determining which experiences best support children's cognitive development. More recent studies in the UK have indicated that the quality of the practitioners who work with children in their early years is key to high quality provision (Sylva *et al.* 2004; Walsh and Gardner, 2005; Melhuish, 2006). For Kristoff and Ayesha it was ultimately relationships and the quality of the practitioners' relationships that mattered in their choice. This view is highlighted by Rahilly and Johnston (2002) who considered that mothers viewed relationships with

childcare staff and their child's happiness and security as the key factors in determining quality in formal childcare.

Other decisions for the women in my study were similar to those found in other studies. For example DeMeis *et al* (1986) comment about the notion of sadness and concern from mothers in relation to being parted from their babies. Leach, (1997) and Sikes, (1997); talk about the guilt or anxiety mothers feel when handing over their baby to someone else. For the participants in my study the separation anxiety coupled with their guilt was at times extremely overwhelming for the women. The mothers in Shearn and Todd's (2000) study, were reported to feel compelled to spend all of their time with their children; anything less they thought would be judged by others as them not actually wanting to be mothers. This view led them to feel anxious about their children being looked after by others (*ibid*). In my study Becky, for example found that guilt was a complicating factor of her decision-making. Though not encumbered by Bowlby's (1953) attachment theories and the guilt inducing notions of causing 'harm' to her child, Becky had an idea that for her son it was probably better to be with someone who could offer him a close attachment experience in a homely environment (Vincent and Ball 2006). However, she also had strong views about her role in the home and although she '*lived*' with the situation for as long as she could, the overwhelming nature of her guilt became too much to bear and she decided her only option was to swap her son's childcare arrangement from childminder to a nursery.

Becky

I didn't like it because ... I felt that a Childminder replaces a mum and it wasn't as ... I'm just trying to think of the word, it wasn't as impersonal as a Nursery is. Because I felt guilty enough, having to go back to work and leave my child for somebody else to bring up. I didn't want... (as much as it probably would benefit Jordan at that time being that young, seven eight months, that he needed that one to one motherly role)... I felt that I was being replaced, I didn't like it, but I had no choice you know... In reality it probably was the best thing for Jordan, but for me, I didn't like it, because it was him being in somebody's home with one person, which felt as though he should be in my home, with me as the one person. ... I don't think any working mother really gets over the guilt, um, but then I don't think it works, staying at home full time this is the problem. It's hard to get that balance. But ... he turned a year, in the October, I decided to go and look for a nursery because ... I just didn't feel happy with the woman, not her personally just the situation. I thought – No- he's old enough now; he'd do well in a Nursery... and with the other children and that sort of environment.

Amy said she couldn't ever imagine a time when she *wouldn't* feel guilty and how she had found it difficult at times trying to come to terms with what she described as *throw away* remarks by those in positions of so called authority.

Amy

I anticipate being like that [guilty] forever, that's how it feels ... I can't see when it'll end. Um, you know, I keep thinking, um, maybe when he can talk and I can explain to him, [when] he can understand a reasoned argument about why I'm leaving him, you know...

There's little things, like he got this funny rash it looked like Measles, [I] consulted all the medical books, I did the glass test and all that business and it was just some sort of peculiar rash. Anyway I thought I had better take him to the doctors to get it checked out ... Um anyway the doctor didn't have a very good bedside manner [Sebastian] had stopped breast-feeding, this is one of those guilt things, and he started sucking his thumb (he's ambidextrous– either will do)... The doctor said it was due to trauma chewing. That made me feel terrible! The thought that because I had given up breast feeding that he had to resort to sucking his thumbs so harshly and so frequently that he'd injured himself and was in some sort of trauma! I agonised over that for a little while and then dismissed it as nonsense, because once the rash had gone so did the little blisters on his thumbs and he's still sucking them so it must have been related to the rash. But it is little throw-away comments like that that people make; and when it is somebody in a position of authority then you start doubting yourself all over again – that the decisions I am making about my life and within that decision making framework the childcare choices I make for my son could be causing him trauma!

6.3ii Discussion of 'Love'

In the review of the literature in Chapter Three I discussed the work of Barnes *et al.* (2006) and Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (1999) who found that mothers in their studies wanted carers of their children to be warm, loving and often previously known to them. In my study, the six mothers discussed their longing for the sorts of relationships they wanted for their children in respect of my notion of professional love. In this section, I draw extensively on the voices of the mothers to illustrate how they voiced their views about their notions of love. I have chosen excerpts from each of the women's lives, as love has been a major focus of this thesis and my positionality.

Esmé had been very clear about her decision not to return to work when her children were babies. She found it almost impossible to imagine leaving her children in any sort of childcare context before they were of an age whereby they could speak for themselves. She had a group of friends that she was close to and she saw leaving her children in the care of close friends as something quite different from leaving them with *strangers*.

In her discussion of her theory of ethical care and education Noddings (2001) makes clear what 'care' means for her. Perhaps Esmé would agree with Noddings' notion of wanting children to have love, not paid 'care' provided by 'strangers'.

Esmé

I think ... I would want to get to know the person first so I might, within my close friends..... I would be quite happy, um, to like ummm leave Polly with certain people but I know that person and to me that feels very different than just dropping her off somewhere.

Ayesha considered her strong faith alongside her cultural heritage had a strong influence upon her views regarding the importance of loving relationships. Ayesha and her husband were both Christians and she had a clear idea about the various different types and definitions of love for example 'Agape' as friendship love and 'Eros' as sexual love. This accords with the views of a pupil reported by Baker and Freeman (2005) regarding the family-like structures of loving relationships which can be found in Christian schools. Gillespie Edwards (2002) suggests intimacy is vital in close relationships between adult carers and young children. The importance of practitioners developing close, sustaining relationships with children and their families is well-documented research by Elfer *et al.* (2003). Goldschmied and Jackson, (2004) also discuss the need for practitioners in group care to 'organise for intimacy' (p.45). In other words, to plan special times of the day whereby children in very small groups, can be engaged in close relational experiences with *their* key person. They give the example of sharing a treasured collection of buttons or postcards belonging to the key person as part of what they term 'island time' or 'islands of intimacy' (Goldschmied and Jackson 2004, p 47) Manning-Morton and Thorp (2003) suggest trust in the adult is an important part of encouraging close intimate relationships and echoes the sort of relationship Ayesha wanted her son to have with his childminder. As Elfer *et al.* (2003) contend, the key person is not intended to replace or undermine the role of the parent They suggest it is only when the relationships between the key person and the child is properly understood that it works well. Ayesha was secure about her role as Freddie's mother and was confident about her understanding of the role of the childminder in a close loving and intimate relationship with her son.

Ayesha

I don't make any qualms about saying 'intimate', I wanted that intimate family setup... I know that some people take offense of the word intimate... I know some of my colleagues do have a problem with conveying the word 'Intimacy' and 'love'. I have no qualms, because I actually do want somebody to love my child ... I know that every parent feels that their child is lovable um and the best [thing] since sliced bread, but I wanted someone to love him... I see her [Lillian - childminder] as part of my extended family. But I wanted it to be a professional relationship. Not just having a member of my real family. For example, I didn't want my mum to look after Freddie because um, I wanted it to be professional. So it is a professional relationship. I know that I am her employer but I do see her as part of my family and um so I don't overstep the mark by saying "oh Auntie this or Auntie that" as I would with other women of Lillian's age that have a relationship with Freddie.

But it's that extended professional relationship and it's very much a sort of an intimate close family, and that's what I wanted, and I'm happy about it. I think it's coming from a large West Indian family when knowing that everybody's your Auntie even though they're no blood relation and knowing that you have that level of respect...from having that close family relationship within a community. We come from a Christian ethos as well, and knowing that there are ... different levels of love. So you've got a 'Agapé' love meaning friendship love, and there's the 'Eros' love, the sexual love and knowing ...when you say the word intimacy, people are a bit confused ...I think if you have my background, in a large West Indian family, ... the different levels of love it is very clear that if I have an intimate relationship with you built on friendship built on that level of um... respect, and it's not taintedwith anything else. So ...you show love. ... I've used the term intimacy, and I think I quite like that phrase, I understand about the term 'professional love' but I think for me, by putting the word 'professional' there um, it brings a divide. For me, when I feel the love that Lillian has for Freddie I know it is professional but I don't want her to feel, you love him professionally because you're actually bringing a wedge. I actually want her to feel that level of intimacy and that's I think for me that family orientated role, I can't really express it really but I think mmmmm I can't really sum it up. I think the terms that I would use would be that family, intimacy ummmmmmm I think I just have that expectation. When you ...use the word professional, you kind of feel that people need to be trained to do it and I feel that mmmmm it should become part and parcel of knowing the child and it's something that you do naturally. I think when you put the term professionally, it's something like you need to be trained, and there are different skills in that professional love. I understand that certain people might find it difficult...

It seemed to me that Ayesha had given a great deal of thought to her interpretation of what love 'looked like' to her. Her decision had always been to place her son in the context of a home and family while she was at work and she had struggled with Kristoff's views about day nurseries. Ayesha had not wanted her own mother to care

for Freddie which had caused some tension between the two women. Recent findings of the Millennium Cohort study (Hanson and Hawkes, 2009) suggest that children who have been looked after by their grandparents at nine months are more likely to may find it difficult to make relationships with their peers by the age of three years, Ayesha had said she liked to be in control and although she knew that Freddie was safe with her own mother she clearly felt she would lose some of that control were she to hand over the day-to-day care of her son to her mother. Interestingly, Ayesha did not feel as confident about the love of a practitioner in a nursery environment.

Like Ayesha, Martha was confident to articulate her desire for her daughter to be loved by others as a baby and throughout her life. Martha considered much of her own ability to be able to cope with her baby being loved by others, essentially those outside of the family was due to the security of her own attachments with others. This is in line with the notion that strong attachments can help to build resilience and security which can be recalled during times of insecurity (Lamb, 2007; Elfer, *et al.* 2003; Goldschmied and Jackson, 2004)

Martha

Yes I did, [want someone to love Holly] because when I couldn't be there I wanted to think that somebody was looking out for her, that she wasn't just a number and she wasn't just left to you know wander aimlessly around. That somebody there was actually...thinking -I actually care about that child. To me that was really important, because I'd have hated to have...a sea of faces and that she just didn't mean anything to anyone. No, I don't, I don't see that there is any difference [between love and care] I think that ... mmmm depending on how secure you are as a person actually would impact on how you can actually love other people. I think I am a very secure person...Like with Holly...I hope that ... people love her. It doesn't mean that it would take any of her love away from me. As a person, I just hope that you know she is able to sort of make them attachments to other people I think that's really important, really important.

Osgood (2006) suggests that the desire for what she terms a 'dominant construction of professionalism' (p,5) and regulation by the current UK government means that early years practitioners have little opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their roles. She suggests that practitioners are often under pressure to behave in certain ways in order to meet regulatory frameworks and improve standards. Osgood further argues that practitioners feel 'powerless' and 'inferior' in their efforts to apply a different model of professionalism. Amy held strong views about group childcare and considered nurseries were institutionalised settings that had very little to offer children in the way of individualised care and attention. Her view fitted with Osgood's perspective. Amy wanted her son to be loved but knew that she would not want her own relationship with Sebastian to be threatened in any way. She acknowledged that she did at times feel threatened but tried to overcome her own feelings as she knew that it was good for her baby to form strong loving attachments. Osgood (2006) argues that the complexity of emotionalism can be counterproductive in relation to deconstructing notions, of what she considers are the current views of professionalism. In addition, she argues for the ethics of care, which she as an essential ingredient when working with young children. However, she also suggests that because the essentially feminine characteristic role of carer that is dominated by women in the field of early childhood education, this downplays the opportunity for practitioners to take a more reflexive and reflective view of what constitutes professionalism. Amy thought of her own way of loving Sebastian as taking over the whole of her emotions but she did not expect or want someone who cared for him to love Sebastian in the same way. Amy by her own definition had come from a working class background and as an adult identified herself as a white middle class woman and a 'staunch feminist'. Amy's views accord with those of Osgood (2005)

who sees the childcare profession as a 'classed system' and suggest that government rhetoric deliberately seeks to attract the working classes into a role in childcare because working hours fit their personal lives.

Amy

I just do not think um, that kind of institutionalised um setting... is the right place for very small babies. I, you know I think they need um..... lots of close interaction, not necessarily one to one but lots of close interaction, and I think they need to be cuddled, have lots of attention and to have freedom...Lots of Love...It made me think you know what an important job [childcare] ...is and what a huge responsibility you have! Um and how a lot of it is instinctive and is about common sense, and is about your capacity to love and show compassion and to care for and about those children and their wellbeing. Um, and then they can have a... good quality experience of having a really nice time with somebody who cares about them. Um, and so, yes it was kind of, I felt really um, uneasy about the decisions I make about Sebastian, and what to do with him, I wanted somebody to - not love him in the same ways that I do but I wanted ... someone ... to care for him in such a way you know, that, all the time ... that she was responsible for my son's wellbeing, that he is the most important thing in her world, at that moment. For me I think that is one aspect of love it's kind of um, it's ... about responsibility, and it's about caring, and it's about nurturing and I suppose those aspects can be debated with love but I don't - you know [have] a sense of love in that um ...in that overwhelmingly emotional take the whole body and soul over necessarily, no! no! That's not what I would be expecting...

Lucy also wanted those who cared for her daughter Daisy to love her, though for Lucy she considered care to be more important although she was unable to really distinguish what she saw as the difference between love and care. This would constitute 'pedagogical caring', something which Hult (1979) argues is not a practical approach for teachers to develop on the grounds of professionalism and time constraints. However, listening to Lucy, it would seem that this is a quality that she values in those who looked after her daughter.

Lucy

Obviously I think it is impossible not to love Daisy, because she is such an endearing little child, but ... you have to get to know her to love her. You know, deeply. Love is about not just being on the surface it's about knowing a child. So for me it's about ...meeting Daisy's needs, it's all of them really not just the love thing. It's about the care side as well... love is there, I know that sounds daft to say that wouldn't be my sole priority because to me it's about the care and I know love comes with care but it's fitting the two...it's just that the caring and understanding and the needs of Daisy are far more important.

Becky on the other hand had struggled with the concept of her son being in a family home being cared for individually by one person and had moved Jordan from the childminder to a nursery when he reached the age of one year. She explained that although she knew Jordan enjoyed good relationships with the practitioners in the nursery she felt more secure in the knowledge that the practitioners were less likely to form a relationship with Jordan that would threaten her mother-child relationship with him. In a sense, Becky's position seemed not to embrace the theories of those proponents of close attachment (Elfer *et al.* 2003; Selleck and Griffin 1996; Goldschmied and Jackson 2004). Becky based her views on the fact that she considered practitioners would need to treat the children equally and not to get too close to some or have what she called 'favourites'. She also considered the nursery was a work environment and unlike that of a home situation where the boundaries might get blurred. Becky had made friends with some of the nursery practitioners. I was interested in her perception that being friends with the nursery practitioners had somehow permitted them to cuddle Jordan, which she was pleased about. Becky was under the impression the practitioners were not allowed to cuddle the children, a view discussed by Piper and Smith (2003) who address what they see as a 'moral panic' around child protection faced by professionals who work show affection in their work with children.

Becky

I know that they're not allowed to, but where I'm friends with them [nursery practitioners] I know that they do give a cuddle here and there, and Jordan will say "Oh my favourite at Nursery is Leah" (one of the girls who works there) and so on, Um, so yeah he has got that emotional attachment to them, especially as he's been going since he was so young. For the last two and a half years he's been with a lot of those girls there. He's been going up each class but the difference is that he's in a group of say thirteen children some days. Other days, sort of six children or whatever and the children and the staff, there, the nursery practitioners, have an equal relationship with each of those children. I'm sure they've got their favourites, but I'm sure ... they treat each child the same. So it's not that Jordan and Leah are special that I could be replaced you know, it's not like a Jordan and mummy relationship. I think with a childminder that can develop. I don't know, this is just my opinion. I'm not saying that I've read anything that says that happens; it's just what I think. A childminder who's relaxed in their own home with a baby, that the baby might be with them right up until a certain age that's going to develop a bond like a mummy, or like a second mummy as such...I think at a nursery, it's more of a friend thing. Jordan's got bonds with my friends who are like Aunties and they love him and he loves them you know..... But I think for those women that are working at the nursery that's their work, they're going in to work with lots of children, and they've all got relationships with them children which is different to a relationship with a mother and a child. Do you see what I mean? That's what I think that a childminder could have that relationship like a child and a mummy and I didn't want to be replaced.

In line with Leach's (1997) findings, Becky seemed to prefer her son to be cared for by multiple carers in the nursery setting as she was concerned that Jordan might otherwise become 'too' attached to one person. She seemed concerned that she would somehow lose her role as the most significant adult in her son's life. However, Gillespie Edwards (2002) suggests it is unlikely that a child will confuse their key person with their parent and refutes the suggestion that children will give away love that is necessarily due to the parent to another adult. Instead she suggests children are more likely to be damaged if they are *not* encouraged to become emotionally attached. Rutter (1972) argued that if the mother-child relationship is strong a child is unlikely to suffer when cared for by someone else so long as his/her individual needs are met by someone the child could trust. This way of thinking seemed to resonate with Becky's complex view. Although it was incredibly difficult for the

women to articulate their perspectives on love in relation to their babies' relationships with people outside of their immediate family, in their own way the mothers all had strong views about how they wanted those around them to *be* with their babies. This analysis demonstrates that many of the mothers' thoughts and expressed principles are in concurrence – to different degrees - with Noddings' (1984) theory of the ethics of care and education and with *my* interpretation of 'professional love'. The data suggest that the mothers in the study reported in this thesis were secure in their *own* attachments with their babies were better equipped to recognise the love shown by the practitioners to their children. Sometimes this seemed to be in spite of the quality of childhood attachments they had experienced and at other times because of their own childhoods. For example, Martha considered her relationship with her family to be central to her daily life. She described how, as a child, she had been envious of her cousins whose mother did not go out to work and how she had questioned why her own mother had to work. However, as a child her weekends and holidays were spent with her parents and her extended family and therefore her own feelings of being loved were bound in her strong attachments to her family throughout her childhood which continued to pervade her adult life.

Martha

My mum's always worked but sometimes I used to think to myself, why does my mum work? Because my Auntie May, [mum's sister] had two children, similar in age to Sophie [my sister] and my Auntie May never worked. (she always did lots of baking.) John and Florence (that's my cousins) they'd go home from school [to] all this home baking. I'm sure I used to think, why can't my mum be at home?... I can't remember doing very much with my parents you know, sort of going out, like going to the Cinema, or going to the Zoo or anything like that. I can't remember having things. I think it was more that we did family! We always went to my Nan's on a Saturday that's what we were about..... My mum, her two sisters', all the husbands...six grandchildren all went to my Nan's every Saturday; nobody questioned it. That's what we did!

By contrast Amy had a difficult childhood where domestic violence had dominated her early years. Yet, despite the complexity of her experiences and her own thoughts and feelings, her ability to appreciate the importance of love and reciprocity for her son was bound up in her deep understanding of the importance of strong attachments for very young children, as opposed to her own early experiences which were somewhat tumultuous. It seemed that Martha and Amy were both able to intellectually appreciate close reciprocal relationships between their children and their children's significant adults (Noddings, 1984; 1992; 2003; Gilligan, 1982, Goldstein 1998). Martha and Amy's capacity to recognise reciprocity as an intellectual encounter helped them to manage their own experiences of separation anxiety (Bolwby, 1973, 1980; Rutter, 1972).

Amy

My parent's marriage and the sort of family we lived in was quite, um, um... had moments of being very, very unpleasant... I suppose I was very anti family, anti-children, anti-taking on that role of mother and wife, so I was very, very resistant to that for a very, very long time. The thing was she [my mother] was so young and she wanted me and my sister as friends, not as daughters, not as children and both of us really resented that, because we thought you know, we wanted a mother - we wanted to be mothered. We wanted to be loved in the way that only a mother can give love um and maybe she managed that when we were little, we were clean and we were fed and we were cuddled... once we had got to the age where you know, it started to happen, be our own person, then um she was, I think she was out of her depth, ... I don't know... her and my dad were having such trouble.... It just meant that from the age of about ... eight I don't have any... [or] very, very few nice ... childhood memories.

It's an odd mixture of ... feeling resentful, because she's [nanny] spending time with Sebastian and I'm not, um and there's anxiety, and um, and there's also- I want her and Sebastian to have this really close bond ... but is there enough room for that? And where does that leave me? ... [I have] lots of them very selfish thoughts. I think he knows I'm mum and she's Rose [nanny]... we all kind of know what our role is - I don't think she is trying to take my place as mother, and so I don't feel threatened by her as a mother substitute.

There did not appear to be a common view amongst my participants' ideas of love and relationships. This is in line with the literature explored in Chapter Three of this

thesis in which the overwhelming suggestion is that decision-making about childcare for very young children is challenging and anxiety laden (Volling and Belsky, 1993; Pungello and Kutrz-Costes, 1999; Barnes *et al.* 2006; Leach, 2009; Layard and Dunn (2009). Hochschild's (1983) suggestion of 'emotional labour' on the part of the childcarer was only really articulated by Amy but largely due to her experience of her parents' life of what she described as 'servitude'. Vincent and Ball (2006) suggest that particularly in the case of home-based childcare:

Both sides act as if they are not really part of the cash nexus. They play out a drama of surrogate love, which is part of what is being 'sold' (p.118).

The data from my own study leads me to agree with Vincent and Ball's (2006) suggestion that a discussion about money is a very difficult almost impossible conversation to engage in for both mother and childcarer. However, to suggest 'a drama of surrogate love' trivialises the concept of love as demonstrated in the following extract as Amy explains her anxiety in trying to strike the right balance between the professional and yet intensely personal role that the nanny holds in their life. Amy acknowledged that as her son's companion, the nanny, to an extent, held the key to her son's happiness and therefore she was indebted to her but as a paid employee the nanny is bound to act professionally and therefore the two things, being paid on time, and the way in which the nanny behaves with her son are closely related.

Amy

My priority is obviously Sebastian, but I want her[nanny] to be happy and I want her to feel valued! Um, and so, another example is the whole issue of money, um, I just make ... very careful point of always of paying her on time. She does Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and obviously we've had a string of Bank Holiday Mondays and Sebastian's birthday was on a Monday so me and my husband had that off, but we still paid her! I'll make sure that she knows she's going to be paid if we take Monday's off. I've just been very aware that I don't want her to feel like my servant, or a member of my staff, so I try to be as open with her about, you know, why I may have behaved in a particular way, or what I'd like to know, and those sorts of things and you know and also praising her, because I don't think people do praise their Nannies. But ... I just said to her "Thank you, thank you so much for doing a fantastic job, I can see that Sebastian's having a lovely time with you,; he's really happy; he's always pleased to see you, ...he's clearly well looked after..." ... I was honest, I said "I haven't found it easy. I'm not finding any of this easy and knowing that he's in safe hands when I'm not here is a huge relief, and I, hugely appreciate it"... She gave me a big hug and a kiss... I wouldn't say we're buddies, we're not friends... it isn't like... there's an informality, but there's still a distance... and I wouldn't say it was kind of professional distance. It's kind of... she has her role in my son's life and I have my relationship with her, but she has a closer relationship with my son, you know, than I have with her, which is odd because, we're the adults in the transaction. But he's the one who ...knows more about her than I do and because of his young age, he can't tell me. Um, so yeah there's a huge, huge amount of trust that you impart to [someone] who is effectively a stranger ...

Miller (2005) sums up how it is for many women in relation to their roles as mothers.

This resonates with my data and I suggest it is perhaps no surprise that, at times, a mother thinks in ways which might be called irrational:

Being a mother is clearly filled with mixed emotions and feelings – and hopefully large amounts of love. If we ever doubt the deep and all-encompassing dimensions of this relationship we come to have with our children, we only need to imagine the almost unimaginable experience of the loss of a child to confirm its profound, poignant and enduring dimensions

(Miller 2005, p.5)

As a mother, I had irrational thoughts on many occasions and none more so than in the earliest years of my children's lives. I discussed this in some depth in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to how I tried to convey my feelings to others. Whilst I still hoped they would consider I was not completely paranoid, (for example, when I

wrote in my baby son's daily diary, I wrote in a jokey style as if it was he that was writing). I knew there was nothing I could do to overcome the intensity or the irrationality of the thoughts I experienced. Leach (2009) would be likely to relate this way of thinking to the deeply held views and beliefs that she suggests are bound up in the complexity of work and mothering.

In the last of the three themes, I discuss the mothers' use of *Expressions of Emotion* as they describe how it was for them when they were faced with irrational thoughts and feelings which at times totally consumed them.

6.3iii Discussion of Expressions of Emotion

Goldstein (1999) brings together Noddings' (1984) philosophical approach to the ethics of care and education and Vygotsky's (1978) psychological approach to children's learning in the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). She suggests that Noddings and Vygotsky 'share essential understandings of the contours of the relationship between teacher and learner' (p.648). In relation to my study, when the practitioner knows and understands the child, he or she can support their approach and ability to learn. However as discussed in Chapter Three Noddings (1984) argues that the point at which a caring encounter is at its most effective is when the 'one caring' is able to step outside their own frame of reference and into the others'..

In this section, I will discuss the emotions expressed and discussed by the participants. I suggest that when a mother is overwrought with emotion, if the childcare practitioner is able to support her within Noddings' (1984) theoretical framework of ethics and care to offer a 'caring encounter' – which I will call a

loving-caring encounter - then motivational displacement takes place and reciprocity occurs.

Lucy referred many times to how she *felt* about decision-making, her role as a mother and her relationships with others; her husband, her mother, her work colleagues, her daughter and her daughter's childminder. This is an issue discussed by Pungello and Kutz-Costes, (1999) who highlight the additional feelings of doubt and anxiety that can arise at the time of making such important decisions. There was a distinctive difference in the words and phrases Lucy used to describe herself, which could be described as very negative especially in comparison to the more positive words ways in which she spoke about her feelings about her daughter, Daisy.

Regarding returning to work, Lucy had said she was '*so mixed up emotionally*'. She had tried not to think about returning to work until the time was almost upon her and then she felt that it was '*a big pressure*' she said, '*You almost feel as if you haven't got that much control*' and at the point where she had to make a decision, she said by putting off looking for childcare she had been in '*denial*'. She felt she had no choice, and part of the reason she took up a place with the child minder was because she had '*panicked*' but she also said she '*felt completely out of control, completely out of control!*' and her way of coping had been to '*develop this exterior but deep down you know that you are worried um, but it's not how I thought I would be.*' Then speaking loudly with emphasis, she said, '*but you don't know how you are going to be - do you?*' As Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (1999) illustrate, mothers may have strongly held views or reference points for their ideal choice of childcare but in reality often have to sacrifice such ideals. Lucy said she wanted the childminder to give her more

information and that when she didn't get it she found it *'soul breaking'*. When Lucy was talking about Daisy she said *'I think the love for her is just so deep you know it's just there really and I do feel so proud of her.'*

Becky used expressions of emotion when she told me her story. She readily used expletives such as *'arsehole'* *'shit'*, *'bloody'* and *'fuck'* to emphasise or illustrate what I interpreted to be the more challenging perspectives and times in her life. For example:

Becky

Jordan ... was about six months old, and I just thought, oh, you know I had a shit dad I don't want Jordan to have a shit Granddad so that's it... I've not had any contact with my dad... so he's out of the picture...as for my mum, like I say, I have a close relationship with her. Um, she's had many difficulties; she's sort of gone from a very abusive relationship with my dad, um to a guy, who was my step-dad I suppose for sort of five years, um who was in and out of prison. Adulterer a real asshole basically ... bizarre how I turned out like this I don't know, I don't know!

At the point of sharing this element of her story, Becky laughed loudly and it seemed to me that it was part of the way that she coped with life. When she referred to a point in her teens where she took decisions to smoke and take drugs she referred to herself as a *'silly cow'*. Later she described the experience of miscarriage and the usefulness of counselling, and at this point in the interview her voiced softened. The way in which I had interpreted Becky's expressions resonates with Gilligan's (1993) feminist position but also accords with Clough and Nutbrown's (2007) perspective of radical listening. Becky said the counselling had helped her to talk about the more painful aspects of her childhood and how she considered children could not be held responsible:

Becky

I think I, you know, I've sort of moved on from a lot of it and a lot of things that happened when I was younger I put down to the fact that I was a child and that these things happened, and I did certain things or whatever as a child, you know, and I don't think I can be held responsible for that because I don't think children can be held responsible for certain things... that they've done or said or whatever or experienced.

She emphasised the words '*I was a child*'. Later in the interview, Becky described her friend's view of her as a '*stress head*' and a '*control freak*'. She said she thought children thrived on routine and she had found the 'Gina Ford' method of four hourly feeding had worked with her son. Plummer (2001) contends that in life history work the researcher is not seeking to obtain a kind of objectivity that is often found in some social science research and that life historians should acknowledge their subjectivity. Therefore in relation to Becky's story the expressions she used to tell her story were an important part of what Plummer (2001) would perceive as *my* 'subjective view' (p.20) and accord with what Muchmore (2001) describes as the 'guiding principles' (p, 91) of life history research.

Becky

I read Gina Ford when I was pregnant... My Aunt, who's on her sixth child now and all my friends were all like "Christ Sake, you don't go by the book". But I did. He was a four hourly fed. Bed, seven till seven. I did the crying method, which was me crying at the top of the stairs saying, "oh we've got to wait two more minutes" but it bloody worked... It suited Jordan... I think babies particularly thrive on routine, you know young babies, and it suited me having the control thing ...so it suited all of us really.

Throughout much of the interview, Becky laughed and spoke quickly. She described the relationships she had with the men in her life and how Mike, her child's father, was '*horrendous*' with money and how she no longer '*trusts*' or '*relies*' on anyone except herself. When Becky spoke about her job, she said with emphasis '*I*

thoroughly enjoy it. I really enjoy my work, really enjoy my career' but she also acknowledged how difficult she had found it when she perceived her son to be forming too close an attachment with the childminder. 'I just felt that he was spending more time *away from me* than what he was *with me*.... I didn't *feel* that I had *quality time* with him'. By contrast when Becky described her view of Jordan's time at nursery she said:

Becky

I wouldn't change it for the world, and I'm more than confident of him going there, more than happy ... love it, so I can go to work and be happy that my child is being taken care of. I can be happy that they will phone me if they need to give five mils of 'Calpol' you know and let me know if there's something going on.

During much of Esmé's interview she had spoken positively, occasionally emphasising aspects of her children's upbringing or her decision-making. She said she found it difficult not to judge other mothers about their decision to return to work when their babies were small and said she '*struggled*' in particular, with the concept of mothers who returned to work full time – although she had some sympathy for those mothers who '*need*' (ed) the extra money... Esmé had had a difficult time when Polly was a baby, because Polly had cried continuously. Esmé emphasised that period of time as '*horrendous, r-e-a-l-l-y h-a-r-d*'. Being a stay-at-home-mother was a full time job and even though she '*absolutely love[ed] being at home with the girls*' it also meant she never got any time to herself. She emphasised that sometimes she wanted to say to the children '*just give me a minute; just give me a minute, to think!*' The worst time for Esmé undoubtedly was when she suffered from depression, hesitatingly, she said she was '*very tired and ... got quite stressed... about things that normally wouldn't particularly bother me.*' She turned down a birthday party invitation because at the time she had thought '*I can't... I can't do this...*' She had

really enjoyed being with her two daughters and it just being the three of them ‘I always feel there’s just like the three of us in this little pod, if you like, and we go everywhere together, and we do everything together and I like that absolutely fine’

The way in which I focussed on how respondents told me their life stories and their expressions of emotion constitutes what Atkinson (1998) referred to as of the ‘sacrosanct’ nature of the participant’s personality, bringing to life the distinctiveness of the life of the individual. It also resonates with Muchmore’s (1999) description of the life ‘inside’ such as in his explanation of his visit to the art gallery and exploration of Lenzo’s (1992) box.

Esmé was glad she didn’t have to go to work as it was an added complication that would have only added to her anxiety. Instead, she had been able to turn to her mother who regularly helped out with both practical tasks with the children as well as offering emotional support to Esmé. Wheelock and Jones (2002) suggested that parents in their sample considered grandparents were the next best type of care after that of parents because grandparents were reliable, accessible, trustworthy and flexible. As Wheelock and Jones highlighted, some of the participants considered the home of grandparents as an extension to their own family lives. Similarly Esmé’s mother and father were an important part of Esmé’s support network - for herself as much as for her children.

During Martha’s interview, she discussed her role as a mother and as a practitioner. She used a range of *expressions of emotion* in both contexts to describe her feelings. In her career, employed in a social-service run day nursery, her task had been to work with families who were having difficulties and were in need of support. It

seemed to me, that although often faced with complicated dilemmas in that role, Martha had been able to act as 'one-caring' in line with Noddings' (1984) theory of ethics and care. *'I think at that time where they tried to keep families together and work with them...I had to sometimes put my own feelings aside, because on a professional level I still had to have that relationship with the family'*. Martha went on to describe the death of a child she once cared for and was visibly upset as she recalled the trauma of the child's death and the way in which she had been told (which seemed to distress her the most).

Martha

I can remember... a tiny little scrap of a boy... he had just gone to school literally [just left the nursery] he got run over and died. I can remember the officer in charge, Joanne, coming out to the garden. We were all outside with the children, and she just said 'Oh I've just got something I need to tell you', and I went "oh what's that then?" she went "oh um Jason's died". It was as though it wasn't important! There was no sort of... "Come with me, I want to...or there's something I need to tell you." I can remember being a-b-s-o-l-u-t-e-l-y d-e-v-a-s-t-a-t-e-d, I was so upset, and I can remember driving home in floods and floods of tears and she didn't, not once say "will you be alright driving home?" It was almost like [she thought] he wasn't here anymore so why would it affect you? I can remember going to the funeral, and that was just so sad because they were such a poor family, that he ended up being buried in a shared grave. I can always remember thinking, I don't believe that this is happening in this day and age, that this child is just being put, put in the ground with people he doesn't even know!

When Martha spoke of her experience of leaving her daughter Holly, at nursery, she was very clear that, even though she had been 'distraught' and 'absolutely and completely traumatised' by the experience, it was the way in which Martha had been supported by Avril, the manager, which had made the difference to her ability to leave her baby. Martha spoke slowly, deliberately and with great emphasis when she said, *'still to this day I know that I would **not** have gone back to work that day, if Avril ...hadn't had the time for **me**...'* She said the memory of walking out of the nursery without Holly was still 'etched' on her mind and that it had left a 'scar'.

Martha criticised her decision to return to work albeit for the initial three months. She laughed nervously when she said she looked for signs that Holly was unhappy but she was a happy, relaxed and contented baby and therefore did not provide Martha with the 'excuse' she needed despite her own feelings of 'devastation'. Unlike the five other participants whose experiences were much more recent, Martha's recall of leaving her daughter at the nursery seventeen years prior to the interview was highly charged with expressions of emotion. Her experience accords with Cole's (1994) perspective of a contextualised understanding of participants' experiences. In order to re-tell Martha's story and to ensure her voice was heard, I felt that her expressions of emotion had to be included so as not to 'dilute' my report of her story. This is a point made clear by Gubrium and Holstein (1997) who argue emotionalism is a challenge to qualitative researchers. The time lapse of seventeen years made no difference, at the time of the interview, to Martha's recollection of her decision-making process or her ability to convey meaning during the interview. Her feelings were real and I interpreted them to be what Goodson and Sikes (2001) refer to as 'painful'. The mutual trust that was built between me as the researcher and Martha as the respondent concurs with the views of Oakley (1981) and Goodson and Sikes (2001).

Ayesha had planned every aspect of her pregnancy with great precision and described herself as being '*analy retentive*' she also said she was '*fussy*' and '*irritated*' when she viewed her prospective childminder and noted the environment was not of the high standard of cleanliness that she had expected. However, when she described what she had seen of the relationship between the childminder and another child Ayesha became very animated, her eyes lit up as she said '*When Lillian picked up my colleague's daughter [Molly] she looked lovingly into her eyes,*

she held her with such care, I thought, this is the woman for me! Ayesha described her relationship with her childminder as an *'emotional journey'* and said that she and Lillian had an *'emotional relationship'* because Lillian had been *'emotionally sensitive'* to Ayesha's needs. Ayesha's son Freddie had a gradual introduction to the childminder, which had eased Ayesha's *'emotional anxiety'*. Freddie had not started to walk before Ayesha went back to work after her maternity leave and Ayesha explained how she had felt *'threatened'*, *'anxious'* and *'jealous'* that he would take his first steps with Lillian. Ayesha said she felt that Lillian had respected her needs and claimed it was the only time that she had thought *'this [experience] is mine!'*

Unfortunately, there had been a number of occasions when the childminder had been unwell which had resulted in Ayesha or another family member having to *'step-in'* to care for Freddie. Lillian had tried to organise some back up cover with a nearby childminder but because *'Freddie ... found it very difficult to settle'* the backup person had not been prepared to look after Freddie. Ayesha said: *'When Lillian said that her cover doesn't want him because he hasn't built that relationship and it would be too distressing, that broke my heart... because I was just thinking what's wrong with him?'* Ayesha said *'I [thought she was] rejecting me and the way that I'd brought him up. That hurt.'*

Interestingly, both Lucy and Becky commented on childminder opinion. Lucy, like Ayesha, had been very eager to secure her childminder's approval. The thought that someone *'in the profession'* could not only *reject* her child but also *reject* her ability to be a good mother was a step too far. This seemed to be in tune with Ayesha's perspective. Listening to, and writing about, Ayesha experience of her son being

rejected by another adult, and Lucy's perspective of the childminder disapproval was part of what Gubrium and Holsten (1997) would argue is to *feel* the participants' 'experiential truth...and intimacy' (p.58) of their experience. Goodson and Sikes (2001) would consider the analysis and interpretation that I undertook to be part of the process of listening closely. This is a process that requires the researcher to listen beyond the actual spoken word of the interview, and to draw further meaning from the way in which the life story is communicated.

Becky was a bit more dismissive in her comment about the childminder retorting:

Becky

I think she probably is one of those women that thinks a mother should stay at home with the children but in reality, that's quite contradictory, because she wouldn't be earning her bloody money would she if mothers did stay home with their children!

The concern to be seen as a 'good mother' resonates with Buzzanell et al.'s (2005) findings that the women reframed the notion of a good mother into one of the 'good working mother'

Amy said she was totally unprepared for the way in which motherhood had changed her life. She developed gestational diabetes in the latter stages of her pregnancy and due to the number of 'hypos' she was having, she was unable to leave the house, which in effect she said '*meant that my world basically shrank*' [I was] *just petrified that something awful was going to happen to the baby*' Amy had not enjoyed a very good relationship with her own mother and eventually it transpired that she too had also suffered from gestational diabetes during her pregnancy. Amy was not only astonished but appalled that her mother '*didn't think it was important to tell me!!*'

All the time Amy said she had been thinking she was to blame and thought '*it was*

my fault! It was my fault!' Sebastian's birth was complicated and when eventually Amy had returned home with him from hospital she said she was '*overwhelmingly besotted with my beautiful baby boy!*' But she was also struck by the fact that she said he was:

Amy

Totally reliant on me for everything - his emotional, his physical... everything was down to me and it was, you know hugely overwhelming but at the same time, it's like, kind of sense of purpose, it feels like a good thing and you know this is, this is what ... I always had the potential to be or to do... [like I was] probably in some sort of hormonal haze. I thought, I just have to do this, I just have to do this, I'm mother earth I'm going to have ten children! But that didn't last!

Amy spoke quickly and with feeling as she described her '*hormonal haze*', laughing at her '*mother earth*' comment. She then went on to explain how consumed she was with Sebastian and how initially she '*couldn't contemplate what it would be to hand him over to anybody!*' She said:

Amy

I don't think he [husband] could quite ... appreciate or empathise with the sort of almost neurotic madness that came over me, about ...just how precious Sebastian was ...but then he says, he hands Sebastian over to the nanny, and he finds it odd, and it upsets him. It's a little tug at the heartstrings [and he says] "Bye then Sebastian" ... I think he [husband] gets it to an extent, but I do... think it's different!

Amy said she was torn between feeling '*resentful*' and being pleased that Sebastian had a good relationship with the nanny. She was aware that she and the nanny handled Sebastian differently. Amy considered that as his mum she probably '*spoiled*' Sebastian. When the nanny put Sebastian down for a sleep she said he had cried momentarily. Amy spoke hurriedly and with feeling and then began to laugh when she said '*I was thinking -how could you leave him? How long did you leave him, you let him cry! ... Ohhhh! I just wouldn't have done that! ...*' Later in the interview, Amy described a time when she considered using a nursery because of a

breakdown in her communication with the nanny. She later confessed to collapsing into what she described as a '*jittering mess*'. She said she felt that she had '*handled it all really, really badly*' and '*burst into tears*' saying, '*This is wrong, it's just wrong, we've made the wrong decision.*' Amy considered that, by not speaking to the nanny about her concerns, she had taken a '*cowardly approach*' instead and had been prepared to compromise her beliefs and put Sebastian into what she called '*baby prison*'. Amy's initial decision not to speak to the nanny about her concerns resonates with Leach (2009) and Kazimirski, *et al*'s. (2008), view that a mother's trust in her choice of childcarer is an essential quality. The idea that Amy should '*question*' the nanny seemed to be equivalent to what Leach (2009) described as '*checking up*' on her (p.71). The decision to leave Sebastian with the nanny had been largely based on the sort of person the nanny was and the way in which she interacted with Sebastian. This view accords with previous research (Atkinson, 1994; Cryer and Burchinal, 1997; Pungello and Kurtz-Costes, 1999, 2000; Rahilly and Johnston 2002). Leach (2009) suggests that parents choose carers who hold similar values to themselves. It seemed to me that when Amy was describing her feelings about her decision-making it was the emphasis with which she expressed herself that was the most identifiable facet. In concurrence with the views of Barnes *et al.* (2006); Leach *et al.* (2006), and Leach (2009), it was Amy's values and beliefs that led her to question her decisions. During the telling of the story Amy's values were brought to the fore and became part of her emotionalism (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997).

During the interview, as Amy re-lived some of the early memories following Sebastian's difficult birth, I watched her quiver with emotion. She struggled to speak

about some of the personal decisions she had taken, or the times when she had felt out of control. Amy was trying to come to terms with the experience making the transition to motherhood. The feelings she experienced of being out of control resonate with Miller's (2005) stance on the lack of confidence often felt by new mothers and the added anxiety of feeling incapable in the eyes of so called 'real' mothers who were seen to be the experts (p.106). In the following example, Amy explained how her mother-in-law, with whom she had a tenuous relationship, had taken Sebastian from Amy's arms. As Amy re-lived the experience the pain in her voice was similar to that of Martha in her account of leaving her baby at the nursery for the first time. She bowed her head and with tears in her eyes she said:

Amy

She [mother-in-law] just behaved so appallingly...she just snatched him out my arms and... ..he started screaming and ... clearly [Sebastian] wanted to be with me, but she said [as if to Sebastian] "I don't care that you're crying, we're going to have a relationship!...Your mummy needs a break" [she said to me] "you go and sit down" and I thought no, no, no, hang on!

Following the birth of her son Amy did not have the help and support of her own mother and was left feeling physically and emotionally drained. To an extent Amy had lost her sense of agency and power, all of which were in stark contrast to what Miller (2005) would call the 'ideology of motherhood' that Amy had imagined.

By including a discussion of expressions of emotion, I have sought to illuminate my interpretation of the words of the respondents, by including the very essence of their 'voices'. This inclusion conforms to what Atkinson (1998) would call an essential and moral obligation on the part of the researcher.

In this section, I have discussed: *Decision-making about returning to work, Love and Expressions of Emotion*. These discussions have included examples of the ways in which these three key themes were present in each of the interviews and how I applied the thematic analysis to their original transcripts. I have discussed the themes, drawing on the mothers' words and related the findings on these themes to relevant literature as discussed in Chapters Three and Four. In the next section (6.4), I will explain the effect that working through the analysis and interpretation of the women's stories had on me as I 'troubled the data' (St Pierre, 1997)

6.4 Troubling the Data

In this section, I will explain how I became, as St Pierre (1997) suggests, troubled by the data. I struggled in ways that I had been unprepared for at the beginning of the study and I was struck by the notion that I could not 'unknow' their stories once I had met and interviewed them.

This experience reminded me of a situation when, in a previous role, a parent shared with me the most distressing story of how she had been sexually abused by her father for most of her childhood. She did not want or need me to do anything, merely to know it, so that I understood the reason for her mental breakdown and why her children may have needed additional emotional support. That mother had been so traumatised by her experience, she had 'buried' it deep, and it surfaced again when she gave birth to her own children, so much so, that she had been unable to form strong emotional bonds with her children – even though she knew it was what they needed from her the most. I remember being struck at the time by the vulnerability of that mother and yet I held the deepest respect for the dignified manner in which she

disclosed this very private information. I knew my role was to maintain our relationship within this new knowledge and it was *imperative* for me *not* to treat her any differently than previously. She needed me to be ‘normal’ with her because she had lost all sense of normality. She had taken an enormous emotional risk by sharing the information with me and although professionally, it was my role to support her, on a personal level, I was unprepared for what she told me. It was her experience, not mine, but knowing the information had a personal effect on me and I was ill-equipped to deal with my own reaction. I was left with the notion that I could not now ‘unknow’ her story – but I wondered what, if anything, could I, should I, do with it apart from accept it and internalise it?

I was reminded of this experience when I decided on a life-historical approach for this study. I was well aware that by the very nature of life history research I could expect to be in receipt of thought-provoking data. Indeed, it had been one of my justifications for using the method. However, I concluded that in my role as researcher, I was well prepared to receive sensitive and personal information that participants might share. In hindsight, I realise this was a somewhat naïve perspective. I had prepared myself for the process and, to a certain extent, for my initial reaction in relation to being a researcher but I had completely and utterly underestimated, from a human perspective, the way in which the data would continue to ‘trouble’ me throughout the remainder of my research; from the interview, throughout the transcription, approach to analysis, meaning-making and narration of the stories. I was once more firmly back in the position of not being able to unknow what I had been told about their lives. However, the experience of ‘knowing’ the data from my participants seemed somehow worse than in the previous example. This

time, I was wholly responsible; I had elicited the mothers' stories. During the interviews, memories of times which for some of them might have been best left forgotten, were recalled. Fully consenting, the mothers told me about sensitive and personal experiences. These were *their* stories but it was *my* research. The dilemma for me was how to maintain my stance as a responsible researcher and at the same time also become a responsible storyteller. For Bagley and Cancienne (2001) their decision was to (re)present their data in the form of dance which offered them a different way to show, for example, 'the range of emotional feelings...experienced by parents of students with special needs'. (p.234). Furthermore, they said 'We feel the use of words and movement made the content of the data presentable and discernible to the audience in a way that could not have been achieved in by a more bounded representational form' (*ibid*)

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) argue that the challenge to qualitative methods of inquiry is the neglect of emotions. Some may disagree with this notion but Gubrium and Holstein (1997) claim that emotions have always been neglected in qualitative research in favour of the bias toward cognitive approaches and interpretation.

Silverman (2000) suggests that emotionalism requires the researcher to have intimate contact with the participants, and narrative or personal biography is the preferred style of analysis. The term 'Emotionalism' is deliberate in that it seeks to convey the depths of emotion with which the research is carried out alongside the topic focus to be studied, which is frequently located within the realms of emotion.

That emotionalists might be emotional themselves in their presentations is a theoretically motivated aspect of their programme, one that is every bit as thoughtful and methodical as other qualitative approaches... The emotionalist programme emphasises the depth of experience. While this often implies the need for intimacy with research subjects (*participants*), it also calls for researchers to reflect upon their own lives.

(Gubrium and Holstein, p.58) [my emphasis]

I found it impossible to distance myself from the stories and on occasions my involvement in the stories became overwhelming. Like Kiessinger (1998) I also found I could not ‘get the interview(s) out of my mind’ (p72). *Box 6.2* shows two entries from my research journal.

Box 6.2 *Research Journal Entries*

Sunday 25th May

Reading Martha’s transcript and started to cry. Seeing her words and hearing her voice has made me feel very emotional. I need to take a break before I can continue. This resonates with me so much. Today has been a painful day!

Sunday 1st June

Been working on transcripts all weekend. The stories are so powerful I have found it emotionally draining. Is that normal?

(Journal entries, 2008)

I continued to be troubled as I struggled between the pleasure, and knowing, of such intimate stories and the sheer pain of the powerfulness that I experienced in getting to know the women’s struggles, their dilemmas, their emotional turmoil and how they had reached their decisions. It was no longer ‘just’ a research project, but it became clear that I had a moral obligation to do justice to everything they shared with me during their interviews. The responsibility and enormity of the task

completely consumed me. I was overwrought. Atkinson (1998) suggests it is not unusual for the researcher to be moved in such a way.

As we listen to someone else's life story, we are struck by how the story hits us, by how it moves us, by how it connects with something that we are directly familiar with, too. We are often struck by the power the story carries.
(Atkinson, 1998, p.22)

Atkinson (1998) further suggests variables in the way the researcher carries out the interview and the way in which he or she responds to the respondent's account. I was starting to connect with his notion that the experience of carrying out an interview with someone else to re-tell their life story is equal to telling one's own autobiography or as Stanley, (1993) contends auto/biography.

As previously discussed in Chapter Four, I had intended to use a reflexive approach (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) whereby the experience of the researcher is considered and studied along with the participant. I had not wanted my experience to overshadow or shift the focus of the study but, as is often reported in feminist research, the position of the researcher is frequently made explicit from the outset (Reinharz, 1992). There is even the suggestion that 'it requires courage to violate the norms of dispassionate research' (Reinharz, 1992, p.259). I considered my role as researcher as somewhat precarious and even dangerous, in my struggling to be ethical, sensitive and moral in my interpretation of their stories. Courage, as suggested by Reinhartz, (1992) and Tierney, (2000) was not a word I had considered, but on further reflection, I acknowledged that although I had not expected the wave of emotion that continued to dominate my thinking, perhaps my personal connection and bias was part of the inextricable link and messiness of the life history approach (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Over many months of worrying, troubling and in numerous conversations with colleagues, I came to realise that my personal and positional reasons for conducting the study had surfaced whenever I connected with an element of the women's life story. During the interviews, I had concentrated on what was being said and listened intently to the women. But later, when I read, listened and narrated their stories in my own surroundings I *heard* their voices as they echoed some of the same issues that I had struggled to come to terms with and had pushed from my mind. These women's stories reminded me of occasions when, as a mother I had left my babies (Box 6.3) and as a practitioner helping mothers to come to terms with leaving their babies with me, or the practitioners in the nursery where I had been the manager (Box 6.4).

Box 6.3 *Resonances with My Role as a Mother*

I can remember going and thinking why am I doing this? How can I leave my baby and go and look after other people's children?

Martha

Box 6.4 *Resonances with My Role as a Practitioner*

I know that I would not have gone back to work that day, if Avril...hadn't had the time for me.

Martha

The stories were filled with 'emotional data' (St Pierre, 1997). I agreed with St Pierre (1997) 'I had no doubt but that my interpretation was influenced by emotional data, data that I could hardly textualise, code, categorise and analyse' (p.181). At times, I had felt stifled by my feelings but as Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggest, I had been starting from the point of my own experience. The effect was further

heightened as every word I wrote and every thought I applied was *always* within Noddings' (1984) framework of care and concern. I was the 'one caring' and the participants were the 'ones being cared for'. St Pierre (1997) suggests that when she interviewed the women in her study she found the:

...emotional data, was almost overwhelming at times. I found, indeed, that it was impossible for me to ignore the emotions that sometimes threatened to shut down my study...I forced myself to theorize my own identity as I theorized my participants'

(pp180-181).

My own experience was similar to that expressed by St Pierre. I was emotionally drained by the experiences and at times could not bear to listen to large extracts of the interviews in one go. I frequently had to 'psyche myself up'. I spent a long time wondering what it must have been like for the women, particularly when their stories connected with my experience but also when they didn't. For example, I wondered how it must have been for Becky having to cope with a young baby, an alcoholic partner and hold down a job. One particular aspect of her story haunted me as her words played over in my mind.

Box 6.5 *An Extract from Becky's Transcript which 'Haunted' Me*

Becky

Jordan was born in the October. The night before Christmas, Mike took Jordan out of the Moses Basket, absolutely bladdered, two in the morning and I'm going, "... give me my son...give me the bottle" [and he is saying] "there's my effing boy rrrrrr," and I'm thinking Oh, my God! I got [Jordan] off him then he pushed me across the bed, I've got scars on my shins. Jordan and I had to sleep downstairs on the settee, he's [Mike] one of them and [then Mike] wet the bed. Another couple of times I found him, I got up and he was in Jordan's bedroom, just about to wee in Jordan's cot, you know, with Jordan asleep in there when he was only a few months old. You know things like that...When Jordan was about two months old, I had Jordan in my arms, and Mike had got... (he was a grabber). Um, [he is] very, very angry, everybody knows him, and I will say it myself, this is why as a normal, pathetic, mild woman, do you know what I mean? I'm a very strong willed person and have my own opinions... and have witnessed it before so ... I'd never be a victim of domestic violence. The way he dealt with things, was to go to the pub which obviously caused major problems because then it got to the violent stage you know of...I think I justified it in my head at the time, of, he never actually physically punched me and bruised me, but he did shove, grab, hair pull, threaten to throw me down the stairs you know, in front of Jordan [when he was] sort of 7-8 months old. [Jordan] didn't take a blind bit of notice, but I knew that he [Jordan] wasn't... particularly confident, I don't think and a little bit nervy and I now realise yeah that was because of the home life. There was shouting and ...I would say, "wait until Jordan is in bed, wait until Jordan is in bed," ... I would repeat that like a mantra [But]....he would really fly off, through the drink, yes because it wasn't just the evenings it was days as well...Saturdays, Sundays...whatever..

At a meeting of the Early Childhood Research Group at the University, I took the decision to check out with my colleagues my approach to the interpretation and narrativisation of the data into interpreted narratives. I started to cry and was shocked and surprised at my inability to articulate the reasons for my distress. I broke down in tears and, in an emotional state, I struggled to explain to my colleagues the effect on me of working through the interviews. I was at the point where I needed to return the interpreted narratives to the participants and I tried to explain how concerned I was about the participants' reactions to my interpretation of their original transcripts. I was upset because I did not know if my participants would like my portrayal of them and their lives as told to me and this had somehow paralysed

me in my research process. I knew I needed to return the interpreted narratives to the participants but admitted that I was scared. The views of my participants mattered to me and I had procrastinated for too long because I was so concerned about how they might react.

I was embarrassed that I had revealed my emotions to my colleagues. I worried that my inability to reveal my position in a composed articulate dialogue meant that my study held less integrity and importance and that my peers would judge me as being somehow less academic. I had always viewed *real* academics as 'smart, clever and analytical' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 746). I had tried (and in my view failed) to defend my position as a woman interviewing other women about their childcare choices all wrapped up in the name of 'love'. It was impossible for me to disaggregate the personal struggle and connectedness and to decentre from the data. To a certain extent I accepted the notion of emotionalism as offered by Gubrium and Holstein (1997) but what I had struggled to convey to others was the motivational shift I experienced in relation to the ethics of caring as argued by Noddings (1984):

When I care, when I receive the other in the way we have been discussing, there is more than feeling: there is also a motivational shift. My motive energy flows toward the other and perhaps, although not necessarily towards his end. I cannot relinquish myself: I cannot excuse myself for what I do
(p.33)

However, my colleagues did not belittle my emotions or dismiss my struggle. On the contrary, they helped me to understand that research; particularly life historical research can be intensely personal. They saw that the connectedness and determination to behave ethically and respectfully, only served to enhance the quality of the research. Not only did they offer support and encouragement, but the time and

discussion also enabled me to move forward and to return the narratives to the participants. The following day, I took their advice and then emailed my colleagues to thank them for their support along with my apologies for revealing my emotions (see Box 6.6)

Box 6.6 ***Personal Communications with Early Childhood Education Research Group Members***

Date: Thurs, 20 Nov 2008 09:34+000

From: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>

Subject: ECE Research Group

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for helping me with my 'troubling of the data' yesterday. I took your advice and have been in touch with one of my participants and sent her my interpretation....will try to do the rest before the end of the week.

Apologies for...well... you know!

Jools

Thu, 20 Nov 2008 09:39:53 +0000

Date:

From: Lisa Lally <l.a.b.c.d.lally@sheffield.ac.uk>

To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>

Subject: Re: ECE Research group

That's great and no need for apologies. We have all experienced the deep emotions engendered in the research process - to me; it's a sign of quality research.

Best regards

Lisa

Professor Lisa Lally

Date: Thu, 20 Nov 2008 10:08:00 +0000
From: Harry Parker <h.d.e.v.parker@sheffield.ac.uk>
To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>

Subject: Re: ECE Research group

As researchers, when we ask: 'who's going to be affected by the project?' how often do we put ourselves in that picture? The meeting yesterday was a sincere affirmation Jools.

Best wishes

Harry

Dr Harry Parker

In this section I have discussed my personal dilemmas and how, with the help of colleagues in the Early Childhood Research Group, I was able to engage in discussion to help me to address some of the aspects of research that require opportunities to engage in social debate. In Section 6.5, I will set out the process of how I returned each of the interpreted narratives to the participants and their subsequent reactions.

6.5 Returning the Narratives – A Plethora of Emotions

As discussed in section 6.4, I worried about returning the narratives to the participants. I found the process to be very painful. Much like St Pierre (1995, 1997) 'I care(d) immeasurably for the women in my study' (1997, p.181). Following on from the Early Childhood Research Group meeting I made contact with the participants about returning their narratives to them for comment. In this section, I will discuss the process of returning the interpreted narratives to the participants and their reactions to reading them.

I was eager to secure their approval. I was worried that the participants might consider their voice(s) had somehow been lost and that I had either concentrated on what they considered were the less important aspects or played up the 'less significant' aspects of their life story. I was fearful that the participants may either withdraw their consent, be upset, disappointed or even angry. It would be true to say there had been a shift in power (Cotterill, 1992). I was acutely aware that there would be consequences from the narrative that I had produced (Ellis and Bochner, 1992). Esmé was the first one to respond and I negotiated a time to ring and discuss her thoughts. Her first words to me were '*It was so hard to read*' I was unsure quite what she meant at first but she went on:

Box 6.7 *Esmé's Response to the Interpreted Narrative*

Esmé

After the interview, I was diagnosed with post natal depression and I realise at the time of the interview I was very ill. I have since been for counselling and I recognise some of the things I said were typical of the depressive state that I was in. Like when I said I needed to give 'a hundred per cent of my time to the children, to be a perfect mum', I had ground myself down, I realise it is impossible to give a hundred per cent all the time. After the counselling I realise I needed some 'me' time, some uninterrupted time. So when Tim gets home from work I go upstairs and read a book, for example. Also, when I said the bit about wanting to be in a pod with the children and that's the way I saw us. It was because the children were my safety net. I could be someone else. It is all typical with depression and the needing to feel safe, I felt vulnerable but inside the pod I felt safe. I am much better now, I am still taking the medication and I will be for some time but Tim is fantastic and helps with so much and my mum and dad and the rest of the family are wonderful too.

Heartened by Esmé's response and pleased that she had received help, support and solutions to her personal issues, I awaited a response from the remaining five participants. Lucy's response came next and, apart from requesting one name change, she approved of my pseudonyms and there was no suggestion that she objected to my interpretation of her story. However' I was intrigued when she wrote '*There is one detail that you may be interested to know and some developments too*'

she was expecting her second child. I found it incredibly difficult to concentrate on other aspects of my study while waiting for the remainder of the responses. Ayesha sent me a text to say she would respond later in the day and I began to feel quite excited that the responses had not been all that I had feared and reflected that perhaps my apprehension was somehow misplaced. However, the email from Becky was confirmation that I was right to hold some anxiety and nervousness. Becky was clearly unhappy and I thought she was also upset. She said:

Box 6.8 ***Becky's Response to the Interpreted Narrative***

Date: Wed, 26 Nov 2008 13:45:52 +0000 (GMT)

From: Becky

To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>

Subject: Re: Recent interview for my PhD research

Hi Jools,

Having read it I realise that we concentrated on the negatives in my life which makes for rather depressing reading, whether it was the questions asked or my general attitude on the day. I do not think it gives a realistic view of my life now or in my past. There were and still are lots of good times in between negative incidents. I do not see myself as somebody that is struggling against adversity lurching from one drama to the next... I come across as a woman that has an air of victim about her that I certainly have not. I have made some bad choices, haven't we all, but I have also chosen a lifestyle and a career I am happy with. Two of my best friends are my mum and my aunt and I have a lot of emotional support from my family, which I see often, as well as a large social circle of friends I see regularly but who have different life's to me, i.e have a husband or are single career people with no children

I put my son's needs before my own, like most mothers, but am not precious as to who teaches him what, in fact I am equally proud of things he has learnt at nursery as I am of things he has learnt at home. I am disappointed with myself if this is how I come across, I do feel this is not a true reflection of my life as it does not include the great times I have with friends now, the fabulous holidays I have had throughout my life, lots of laughs with people I have been in short term relationships with, not wealthy but always enough money to have a nice home, nice car, new clothes and treats for Jordan.

I am happy for you to use this...but it is not an honest story of my life, it is just the negative side. There are many single parents that have an awful time and life is a struggle for them, there is also a lot more that have successful fulfilled lives, I am one of them, if everybody only listed the bad incidents in their lives they would come across as a victim struggling against adversity, or slipping into a downward spiral, the way the government wants to portray most single parents. There are successful single parent families, I am one, Jordan and I live well.

Kind regards, Becky

I was saddened to receive Becky's response and although I had anticipated some negativity and possible criticism, I was upset by what she said. My initial reaction was to reiterate my offer to her to add a postscript to the narrative to counter the negativity she felt came through in the interpreted narrative. I pondered on this for some time and then sent a note to Becky to this effect. I reflected the contrast from when I had sent Becky her original transcript five months earlier and she had responded so positively. However, I would argue, that whilst representing her view here, I am also 'entitled' to make my own interpretation and that they differ need not necessarily be surprising which a life lived is not necessarily the same as a life told.

Box 6.9 ***Becky's Response to the Original Transcript***

Date: Fri, 27 Jun 2008 20:23:04 +0000 (GMT)

From: Becky

To: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

Subject: Re: Recent interview for my PhD research

Hello Jools,

I have read through the transcript twice, everything is as I remembered, no alterations needed in my opinion.

Having never had the opportunity to read a whole conversation I have had, I now realise how much I waffle! I don't envy you trying to make sense of some of what I talked about; I seem to jump all over the place! Any clarification you need, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks for allowing me take part in this, I seem to be getting some closure having spoke about some things with you, cheap counselling! Ha ha

Kind Regards,

Becky

Leitch (2006) suggests there is a criticism attached to working with autobiographical data that it can be seen as 'practising therapy without a licence' (p, 555). However, I had been very careful in my ethical preparation and therefore did not consider that

by listening to Becky I had offered what could be construed as therapy in any true sense - though clearly Becky did have some impression of the conversation being 'therapeutic' in a sense.

Just as events had taken a turn for Esmé, something similar could be true for Becky. I was disappointed that she chose not to take up my offer for her to 'put the record straight' but castigated myself for not taking more time before responding to her disappointment. I had perhaps acted too quickly when I reminded her she could withdraw from the study or amend the interpreted narrative, in my attempt to remind her that I had to behave ethically, even if it meant I lost something from the study. In my haste to do justice to her story, I wondered if perhaps my interpretation was rather more accurate than she may have liked to accept. The interpreted narrative reflected the data, and was all I had – clearly there were bits of her life history which were never mentioned in the interview during which she conveyed the very essence of all the difficulties she had tried to shake off in her role as a single working mother. I reflected further on Becky's comments and continued to be troubled by her response. I wondered if Becky's disappointment was because, in Esmé's words, it had been '*so hard to read*'. I realised that my role and disposition as an ethical researcher had continued to evolve throughout the process of my study. I identified with Ellis and Bochner (2000) who remark 'We don't need to run from the fear or anxiety we feel. We need to learn from it' (p.748).

Similarly, St Pierre (1997) expresses what I experienced too:

It was during this very emotional process of deconstruction that I found myself working much harder to understand my participants, to respect their lives, to examine my relationship with them and to question my interpretations

(p.181)

I anxiously awaited the final three responses and was relieved, and delighted by their comments, (*Box 6.10*) which read:

Box 6.10 ***Four Remaining Responses to the Interpreted Narratives***

Date: Tue, 25 Nov 2008 21:58:15 -0000

From: Lucy

To: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

Subject: RE: Research

Hi Jools,

Have read info and if possible maybe 'Graham' could be changed to 'James' otherwise the names are a good choice.

I will try and complete timeline and return by end of the week. There is one detail that you may be interested to know and some developments too.

Regards, Lucy

Date: Thu, 27 Nov 2008 17:23:45 -0000

From: Martha

To: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

Subject: FW: My research

Hi Jools,

Hope you are well. This is absolutely fine with me; I do not need to add any changes... Hopefully I have included enough let me know if you need anything else.

best wishes, Martha

Date: Thu, 27 Nov 2008 19:44:29 -0000 (GMT)
From: Amy
To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: My research

Hi Jools

I am well, although madly busy. The work-life balance has tipped and I am now up to four days at work and still struggling to cram it all in. But Sebastian just gets better and better (19months with the attitude of a 13 year old!)

I have read through the story of Amy and think that you have captured the essence of my life story beautifully. I intend to get to the timeline and read through the narrative again so that I can offer any feedback at the weekend. So, all being well, I will email you through something either this weekend or early next week....

Amy

Date: Thu, 27 Nov 2008 22:31:04 +0000
From: Ayesha
To: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk
Subject: RE: PhD Research

Hi Jools,

I really enjoyed the account about my experience. I found myself reading it like it was a novel VERY INTERESTING. This is an accurate account and I don't wish to change anything.

The only thing I might add is the reason I was thinking about you yesterday. Well, Freddie has started going to nursery and has formed positive relationships with all members of the team there.

When saying good bye he often kisses the manager on the lips. I was thinking yesterday about my view previously about not wanting him being intimate with the nursery and how in reality that has changed. I realised that by Freddie showing affection how secure he is, and loved. I am glad he has established such positive relationships and that I am not precious about the affection that is shown to him. On the contrary. I am thrilled to know that he is being looked after by people who think he's fab, just the same as me. (I have sent you a picture to show how handsome he is)

Bye for now

Ayesha

As discussed in Chapter Four, sections 4.4 and 4.7, despite the depth of detail contained in each interview, the annotated transcripts and my interpretation of their stories, I wanted each of the women to document certain specific aspects of their lives in whatever level of detail they chose. Asking each one of them to complete the timeline gave them an opportunity to write their own text; they were not speaking the words to me but writing the words down for themselves. This gave the women an opportunity to recall information, as opposed to having to recall it from memory during an interview. The bulleted questions incorporated in the timeline were able to ‘...indicate patterns and trends which might have been lost if confined to the mind’ (Plummer, 2001, p.32). A few days later, the participants returned their completed timeline to me.

Following Becky’s initial response to my interpreted narrative, I was surprised that her completed timeline arrived first. It came as an attachment to an email (Box 6.11). I was struck by my privileged position and thought how easy it would have been for Becky to have withdrawn her consent had she so wished. I admired her for the fact that she had been honest with me but still allowed me to use the interpreted narrative. The responsibility of causing Becky to have had to endure a ‘depressing read’ weighed heavily upon me.

Box 6.11 ***Email from Becky which accompanied her Timeline***

Date: Mon, 1 Dec 2008 22:38:58 +0000 (GMT)
From: Becky
To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: Recent interview for my PhD research

Dear Jools.

I have attached the timeline, as requested. I am still consenting to you using the transcript, as agreed, but as I said before, it's a depressing read for me. Anyway, please feel free to add anything further in relation to the comments I made previously and any additional information I have given in my timeline. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

I look forward to reading the finished article.
Kind regards,

Becky

I was most interested to see how each participant would respond to the question which asked how they would describe themselves to others. Because it was important throughout the research to include the voices of the participants, I decided to end each interpreted narrative with a description of the participant in her own words. Above all else, I wanted throughout the study to ensure the women knew that I wanted to do justice to their life stories and to be ethical in every aspect of my analysis and interpretation. I wanted them to know how much I valued their willingness to participate in my research and I wanted, as Olesen (2005) suggests, to protect them from any 'harm'. As part of my decision-making about what to include and what to omit, I did not wish to disturb the essence of their life stories, rather to bring meaning to them. As Becky was so *'disappointed'* about my interpreted narrative I decided to include her completed timeline in its totality. I removed information that would reveal her identity but let her words speak for themselves (see *Figure 6.6*). Much of what I had experienced during the process of gathering the life

stories had turned into a lengthy and 'messy' process as I sought to (re)tell the stories and make further meaning from them. As Plummer (2001) contends:

...The analysis is likely to take at least two or three times as long as the interview took. In many ways this is the truly creative part of the work – it entails brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods of time until it 'makes sense' and 'feels right' and key areas flow from it. It is also the hardest process to describe... (p.152)

Figure 6.6 Becky's Completed Timeline

<p>Your place and year of birth</p> <p><i>1976. South of England</i></p>
<p>Your family background and history including ethnicity and religious affiliation</p> <p><i>British. No specific religious beliefs.</i></p>
<p>Your parents' occupations and level of formal education; their general character and interests</p> <p><i>Mother: Qualified drugs and alcohol abuse counsellor. University degree. Character: loving, caring, supportive, assertive, determined. Interests: Reading, quizzes, music, socialising. Father. Lorry driver. Secondary education. Character: unknown. Interests: unknown.</i></p>
<p>Your educational experience: pre-school, schooling; subjects favoured, qualifications attained or not, higher education and professional preparation</p> <p><i>My mother ran a playschool. I attended there with her until I reached school age. I attended an infant school, primary school and secondary school. I have 10 GCSE at grades A-C, studied A level, English, sociology and psychology at college, and got D, D and E respectively.</i></p> <p><i>I am accredited to level 2 in asylum and immigration law, regulated by the Legal services commission, and work as a Human Rights lawyer.</i></p> <p><i>I am qualified to teach Makaton, sign language for special needs children.</i></p> <p><i>Have various qualifications relating to ILPA (immigration law practitioners association) and OISC (office of immigration service commissioner).</i></p>
<p>Your occupation: general work history; job roles and responsibilities</p> <p><i>Present occupation: Human rights Lawyer, working for a well known charity organisation providing legal advice and representation, be it initial or at appeal stages. Personal caseload of around eighty clients. I work four days a week and work from home on occasion. I worked within the care field at a younger age. I have worked with the elderly; special needs children and adults, as well as at a special needs school.</i></p>
<p>Your interests and pursuits I enjoy socialising with my friends and new partner.</p> <p><i>Jordan and I regularly go out on our bikes and like going on 'adventures' with a pack up and a warm coat at the moment! I read a lot, mainly psychological thrillers, with a few chick lits thrown in! I follow international politics and enjoy putting the world to rights over a bottle of wine and with good friends. My main pursuit is to have a happy, fulfilled life with lots of people I love, I am very nearly there!</i></p>
<p>How would you describe yourself to others?</p> <p><i>Optimistic, driven, funny, intelligent well rounded woman takes life a little too seriously and plans to be more spontaneous!</i></p>

Source: Questions adapted from Goodson & Sikes (2001), Sikes (2006) Responses from Becky.

In this section I have discussed the process and the emotional journey of returning the narratives to the six participants in the study. The women had been extremely generous in their willingness to share *so* much of themselves with me, and in particular, the participants for whom I had been a stranger at the start of the research and who had taken the biggest risk. Zeldin's (1994) contention sums up for me the relationships developed between me and the participants throughout the research process.

The desire to participate fully in what the world has to offer, to be human in the widest sense, has been obstructed by the suspicion and disdain that humans have always had for one another and by the difficulty of getting them to be generous to strangers. So far, experience in trying to cultivate generosity suggests that there is no necessary link between generosity within the family and its manifestation towards strangers. To concentrate on generosity and harmony inside the family, as modern thinking does, and to forget what goes on outside it, is like looking at a field and not noticing the horizon... Generosity has to go beyond giving and receiving... With gift giving of the traditional kind, the recipient is made a debtor, and a benefactor therefore can easily become an enemy. Generosity can avoid that only by being the joint effort of two people who have succeeded in putting themselves in the place of the other.

(Zeldin, 1994 pp.381- 391)

6.6 Summary

In this Chapter, I have detailed the approach I took to the analysis of the data which led to interpretation and meaning-making of the six life stories. I have discussed the way I analysed and interpreted the interview transcripts to bring further meaning from the data by using a four staged process and illustrated and justified my use of the four stage model for thematic meaning-making. The process was discussed in light of emerging themes and compared to Pamphilon's (1999) multidimensional *Zoom Model*. In addition, in relation to my research questions, I discussed, drawing on the voices of the women participants, three key themes: *Decision-making about Returning to Work; Love; and Expressions of Emotion* I have discussed the

powerfulness of the effects of the study as I engaged in ‘troubling the data’ (St Pierre 1997) as I returned the interpreted narratives to each participant, and their subsequent responses. In Chapter Seven, I will discuss the outcomes of this thesis and how the findings of this study may contribute new knowledge to the field.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Findings and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This Chapter summarises the thesis, its findings and contribution to knowledge in the field, and offers concluding thoughts. In section 7.2 I will summarise the arguments presented throughout this thesis. In section 7.3 I will discuss the findings of the research with reference to the literature. Section 7.4 reflects on the way in which the study was conducted, the limitations of the study and possibilities for further research. This Chapter will conclude in section 7.5 with final thoughts and reflections of how I consider this study has contributed to new knowledge in the field of social science.

7.2 Summarising the thesis

In Chapter One I have outlined the content of the Chapters in this thesis. I have also set the context and rationale for the study which was to investigate the following two research questions:

Research question 1

What factors are women in England likely to need to take into consideration when making employment decisions and childcare choices when their babies are under twelve months of age?

Research question 2

What importance, if any, do mothers place on having carers in day care settings who 'love' their children?

In Chapter Two I positioned the research by telling the story of *Me and my Boys* which is my life story as a working mother of three sons. I ‘storied’ the period of my life when my children were young including some of the dilemmas I faced when making decisions about returning to work and choosing childcare. My working life as an early years educator had a bearing on the choices I made about suitable childcare for my children and has influenced my interest in the focus of this study as during the past thirty years I have observed other mothers face similar decision-making dilemmas. *Me and my Boys* seeks to bring together the personal and professional aspects of my life. The narrative seeks to demonstrate the beliefs and values that have shaped my thinking about the need for practitioners in the role of the key person in early years settings to be given ‘permission’ to love children that are unrelated to them. In the story I told of the ways in which I gave ‘permission to love them’ to the significant adults in the lives of my children. I also gave examples of how in my professional roles I considered I had gained ‘permission’ from parents, usually mothers, to love their children. A love I propose was in the vein of Noddings’ (1984) approach to the ethics of care, which, I have termed the ethics of *love and care*.

I reviewed the literature in Chapter Three in relation to the following key themes:

- *An Historical Overview of Women in the Workforce in England*
- *Attachment Theory*
- *The Policy Perspective*

These themes were considered to be significant to the focus of the research about the choices, beliefs and dilemmas faced by six mothers in England about whether to return to paid employment or not when their babies were under twelve months of age.

In the first of the three sections *An Historical Overview of Women in the Workforce in England* I reviewed the literature on *Women, Work and Mothering*. This sub section examined five main studies which considered the complexities of decision-making for mothers, upon a subject upon which Leach (2009) contends everyone has a view. *Current Childcare Choices in England* considered the confused agenda with which mothers are currently faced. The dichotomy being whether the political message is to encourage mothers back to work in the realisation that good quality childcare is good for children or whether mothering is more important and therefore mothers should try to remain at home.

In the third sub section the literature concerning mothers' *beliefs and dilemmas* is reviewed. The reported studies revealed that when surveyed or interviewed parents, particularly mothers, held strong ideals about what they consider to be important which had an influence on their arrangements for childcare. However, in some cases the ideal did not translate into practice and the women had to make compromises. The relationship between mothers' choice of childcare and media propaganda is also considered. The literature in this sub section concludes that women make individual decisions and that although similar threads and themes can be identified there is no blueprint for their decision-making which could be considered universal to all the women in the studies.

The review of the literature on *Attachment Theory and Love* was discussed in seven sub sections. *Attachments are the Key* (3.3i) considered the place of Bowlby's studies (1953; 1965; 1969; 1973; 1980; 1982) on attachment and loss in relation to the focus of this study and the influence of such studies to meet policy agendas. For

example how the government had drawn on Bowlby's attachment theory to scaremonger women in post war Britain to remain at home with their children for fear of irreparable damage to the mother-child relationship if they should leave them and return to work. This coincided with the need for jobs for men who had returned home from the war. However, the section concludes with the message borne out in the literature of the importance of children forming close reciprocal attachments with one or two significant adults when away from their main carer (read mother).

Love and Neuroscience (3.3ii) discusses the importance of love and brain development and considered the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) perspective and reports on the most recent findings reported by Adamson (2008) which confirm the place of 'love' as a vital component for children's holistic development.

Providing for Quality in the Education and Care divide considers definitions of quality and the importance of loving interactions between practitioners and children (3.3iii). It continues the review of the growing body of evidence to support the notion of love as being vital to children's learning and development. This subsection reports on the unhelpfulness of the 'care' and 'education' divide and argues the need for highly qualified and educated practitioners to be able to interpret the needs of very young children. This sub section explores the childcare debate across the international community and briefly summarises the place of 'context' in relation to furthering broader understanding of what constitutes quality. Woodhead (1996) for example makes the case for not transposing ideas about quality from one context to another, as he argues quality is culture and context specific. This sub section

investigates the literature with regard to the ways in which English research has drawn upon indicators of quality which have been developed in international contexts. I have argued that assessment tools such as *ECERS* (Harms and Clifford, 1980; Sylva, *et al.* 2003) used in the *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* (EPPE) project and the *Leuven involvement scales* developed by Laevers (1997) have been adopted and adapted for use in early years provision in England but though they have their place do not measure the most important aspect of quality- the relationship and interaction between the adult and the child. I agree with Elfer (2006) that observational methods based on psychoanalytical studies by the Tavistock clinic would provide a far better indicator of quality as they require the practitioner to seek emotional interpretations.

The 'Love Triangle' (3.3iv) builds on the previous discussion and reviews the literature that argues the need for early years' practitioners in discussion with parents to form deep, reciprocal loving relationships with the children for whom they are responsible. This sub section argued for practitioners to be supported in their role as key person in order for them to be emotionally equipped to continue their close triangular relationship between the child, the parent and themselves. I introduced Noddings' (1984) theoretical framework of *Theorising 'Care' and 'Love' in Early Childhood Education (3.3v)*. I also argued for the place of love to be discussed in relationships between key practitioners and children whom they care for. Drawing on Noddings' (1984; 1992; 2003) work I argued the need for close reciprocal relationships – all of which require the practitioner to demonstrate highly developed intellectual capacity and *motivational displacement* - the need to 'step out of one's own personal frame of reference and into the other's' (Noddings, 2003, p.24). I agree

with Goldstein's (1998) perspective of caring and go further in my claim to suggest that it is not only the ethics of care and education but *love*, care and education that is bound up in Noddings' theory.

In *Love and Policy: Teetering on the Edge* (3.3vi) I reported on the literature that has begun to respond to the notion of love. I discussed for example, training packages such as *The Solihull Approach* (Solihull NHS Primary Care Trust, 2004) which has started to include subtle 'safe' language, such as emotional well-being into their literature. I argued that such terms have up until now shrouded the importance of the word 'love' as a word that had been pushed aside and a subject that was somehow seen as taboo. I included examples in this sub section of what I considered had been a recent policy shift in political language to include the term *love* alongside that of educational attainment. In the conclusion of this sub section I argued the need for a dialogue about the ethics of *love*, care and education as being central to the holistic development of babies and children.

In the final sub section (3.3vii) I reviewed the limited literature on *Love and Kissing* relevant to the subject focus for this thesis. The real concern for some professionals about child protection reprisals was explored in relation to holding, touching and kissing (Piper and Smith, 2003). However, I have argued that to deny babies and very young children opportunities to be closely attached both emotionally and physically is in the end likely to do more harm than good. As the literature in this sub section confirms there is little written about the importance of such dialogue. This adds to the dilemmas for practitioners about whether they are doing something

wrong. The literature that does exist is so closely associated with issues of child protection as opposed to attachment theory.

In the third and final section of Chapter Three I reviewed the literature in relation to the *Policy Perspective in England*. In sub section 3.4 I discussed the *Policy Perspectives of Childcare in England since 1989*. The 1989 Children Act (DOH, 1991) was the point at which there was a significant policy shift in England. The change of power when the Labour Party came into government in 1997 was followed by wave after wave of government initiative and policy change, driven initially by the Green Paper '*Meeting the Childcare Challenge*' (DfEE, 1998). The intention was to improve childcare services for all children but it was the first time there had been specific mention of services for those under three years of age. The government was clear that in order to get mothers back into the workforce, childcare services for very young children required a dramatic overhaul. However, because childcare services in England had been neglected for so long, the complicated plethora of policy documents and the pace of change have seen a dramatic period of uncertainty for the early years sector. Practitioners have been left trying to grapple with embedding policies into their everyday practice, which I suggest leaves little room for them to be emotionally available to children and parents.

The discussion then moved on to review the literature (3.4i) on the *Policy Context and the Early Years Workforce*. In this sub section I have discussed the government's intention to 'upskill' the early years' workforce to support the shift in childcare policy. The simplified routes to early years qualifications (CWDC, 2008) and the implementation of the Early Years Professional (*ibid*) brings the intention to bridge

the gap between care and education. I have argued that, despite its best efforts, the early years workforce strategy has failed to properly recognise that the youngest children *need* to have adults who are highly skilled, *appropriately trained* and *emotionally supported*. The point in relation to this thesis is bound up with the literature explored in sub section (3.2iii). Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (1999) reported that mothers wanted practitioners who were knowledgeable, loving and experienced. This was further confirmed by Leach *et al.* (2006) when they revealed that the mothers in their research desired warm, high quality interactions between the practitioner and the child.

I concluded Chapter Three with a summary of the literature that I reviewed in relation to the subject focus, noting that making childcare decisions is a unique personal dilemma. However, the key theme throughout the literature revealed that what mothers really want are loving secure relationships between adults and their young children. This critical overview of the literature in relation to ‘love’ is, I suggest, an original and distinctive contribution to the field of early childhood education and care. .

Chapter Four discusses the methodological approaches of the study. Following the introduction this Chapter is in three sections and begins with a discussion in 4.2 and 4.2i about how I finalised my research questions. I considered both my personal and professional contexts as a working mother employed in roles within the sector of early childhood education and my ideas about ‘love’ in a professional context. I also took into account the current policy agenda with regard to encouraging mothers back into the workforce alongside childcare policy and the early years workforce strategy.

In sub section 4.2ii I discussed *Positionality* in relation to Clough and Nutbrown's (2007) definition of social research as persuasive, purposive, positional and political and built on aspects of my own positionality and the approach I took to this thesis. The discussion then moved on in sub section 4.2iii to discuss the place of feminist methodology in relation to this study. I debated feminist theories as argued by Reinharz (1992) and explored the relationship of feminist approaches within my thinking and research. I presented examples of feminist theory and returned to the debate by Noddings (1984) and her feminist moral theory of ethics and care. Throughout this subsection I argued the point that, although I have an understanding and compassion with feminist approaches, my rationale for interviewing women was not based at the outset on my position as a feminist. However, as I conducted the research and became more familiar with the literature, I recognised aspects of my research which were attuned to with feminist thinking and women's ways of knowing (Belenky, *et al.* 1986).

In section 4.3 I discussed the *Methodological Approaches to Studies of Mothers, Work and Childcare*. I returned first in sub section 4.3i to the previous studies I explored in the literature review in Chapter Three and the methods used to conduct their research. I then moved on in sub section 4.3ii to justify the rationale of using *Depth not Breadth* drawing in particular upon the method of conducting deep level interviews to elicit rich data and to bring the voice of the participant to the fore. Sub section 4.3iii introduced a discussion on *Ethnography* in which I acknowledged the contribution of studies that had employed an ethnographic approach and went on to justify why I had not used ethnography as a method of collecting data for this study.

Life history as a Method of Inquiry was critically examined in section 4.4. In this section I drew upon the growing body of knowledge that exists in relation to using life history approaches in qualitative research. I set out the rationale for using life history as a method of inquiry. I justified the method to be a suitable approach to gather the depth of information to investigate mothers' decision-making about work and childcare for this thesis in section 4.5 *Research design for this study*.

In sub section 4.5i *Selecting the Participants* I presented a discussion about the criteria I applied to select suitable participants to take part in this study and how I drew my sample of six participant mothers from among women who were known to me or those that were introduced to me by others (snowballing). In section 4.6 I discussed the *Ethical issues* with regard to using a life history approach in this thesis. I explained the practical ethical process I followed and then in sub section 4.6i I discussed the notion of *Subjectivity* as a necessary dimension in life history research. I drew in particular on the literature from: Oakley, (1981); Measor and Sikes (1992); Atkinson, (1998); Gubrium and Holstein, (1997); Plummer, (2001); Goodson and Sikes, (2001) and Ellis, (2007) to support this perspective. This was followed in sub section 4.6ii by a similar discussion on the place of *Bias* in life history and exemplified the debate with illustrations from my research in this study. Section 4.5 concluded this Chapter with an explanation and justification in sub section 4.7 about *Carrying out deep level interviews* for this study. In this sub section I gave an account of the process of conducting the interviews, for example practical details such as when and where the interviews took place. I also discussed how I had begun to be 'moved' by the experience of getting to know the women as I conducted the interviews.

Having, in Chapter Four, introduced the women and re-presented them each with a pseudonym to protect their identities, in Chapter Five I told the stories of each of the six women as an *Interpreted Narrative*. The interpreted narratives were the third stage of a four staged process that I applied to bring further meaning to the analysis and interpretation of the interview data. Chapter Five presented the interpreted narratives of the participant mothers consecutively: *Story 1 Lucy and Daisy; Story 2 Esmé, Polly and Lizzie; Story 3 Amy and Sebastian; Story 4 Martha and Holly; Story 5 Ayesha and Freddie; Story 6 Becky and Jordan*. These six stories are an original contribution to life historical research and can take their place alongside the growing literature on women's lives.

In Chapter Six I discussed my approach to *Analysis and Interpretation: Making Meaning from the Data*. In section 6.2 I explained and justified the four staged process to meaning-making that I developed and applied to the interview data. The four stages were as follows: Stage 1 – transcription of the original data into an 'Original Transcript', Stage 2- 'refashioning' (Riessman, 1993) of the original transcript to bring coherence by removing the utterances and researcher comments which became the 'Refashioned Transcript', Stage 3- I edited the 'refashioned transcripts' into the 'Interpreted Narratives' - the six stories presented in Chapter Five of this thesis. Stage 4 – the final stage was to apply a thematic analysis to the original transcripts to bring further meaning which became 'Thematic Meaning-making'. I drew on aspects of Becky's interview to present the stages 1- 3 of the four staged process.

In section 6.3 I detailed the process of how I applied a thematic approach to the analysis. During this process I identified seven main themes which I colour coded: *Childhood*, *Decision-making about returning to work*, *Influences and Dilemmas*, *Expressions of Emotion*, *Indicators for Change*, *Identity* and *Love*. In addition I identified specific themes which were individualised to each participant such as: *Domestic violence*, *Death/ Illness*, *Religion*, *Same Phrases or Inferences*, *kissing*. I grouped these individual patterns under the heading of 'Idiosyncratic'. I used examples from Amy's interview to demonstrate the way in which I had applied this technique. Also in this section I compared my own four staged process to meaning-making to Pamphilon's (1999) multidimensional *zoom model* in which she draws upon the photography metaphor to describe the zooming in and out of the camera lens as the process for her analysis of life history data.

In sub sections 6.3i, 6.3ii and 6.3iii I took three of the key themes; *Decision-making about Returning to Work*, *Love* and *Expressions of Emotion* and discussed each one respectively in turn in relation to the interviews. In each of the sub sections I drew extensively from the original transcripts to bring out the voices of the participant mothers and related them to the literature reviewed in Chapter Three of this thesis. This was then followed in section 6.4 by my '*Troubling the Data*' (St, Pierre, 1997). I explained how during the process of conducting the research I was affected by the interview data and how I became aware of the responsibility of my role as researcher. At points throughout the research and analysis I became emotional which at times prevented me from moving on with the research. In particular after I had interpreted the narratives I was unable to return them to the participants for fear of their unease or disapproval of my interpretation. In section 6.5 I discussed

Returning the Narratives – A Plethora of Emotions and concluded the Chapter with an explanation of the process I went through when I did finally return the narratives to the six participants and how they reacted. Five of the women considered the interpreted narrative to be an accurate interpretation of their life story. However, one of the participants, Becky, did not agree with my interpretation and said she was ‘*disappointed with herself*’ for concentrating on the negative aspects of her life. At the end of Chapter Six I continued to be troubled at the fact that I had caused Becky to be so disappointed.

7.3: Discussion of the findings

This thesis has, through a life historical approach identified seven key themes which mothers said were important to them in their decision making about returning to work:

- *Childhood,*
- *Decision-making about returning to work,*
- *Influences and Dilemmas,*
- *Expressions of Emotion,*
- *Indicators for Change,*
- *Identity*
- *Love.*
- *‘Idiosyncratic’ which included - Domestic violence, Death/ Illness, Religion, Same Phrases or Inferences, kissing.*

In order to address my two research questions I have discussed three key elements from these themes: *Decision-making about returning to work, Love, and Expressions of Emotion.*

7.3i: Decision-making about returning to work

This study set out to explore the views of six mothers about returning to paid employment or not and their choice of childcare for their babies who were under twelve months of age. Five of the six participants returned to work and made childcare choices and one participant, Esmé decided to be a stay-at-home mother as she strongly believed that, as their mother, she should be the one person with whom her children spent the majority of their time (Douglas and Michaels, 2004; Miller, 2005; Johnston and Swanson, 2006) All of the women, at some point in their decision-making, process were faced with financial dilemmas and, in line with the literature explored in Chapter Three, all of the mothers in my study had made the final childcare choice and decisions about when to return to work (not their partners). This thesis has shown that, as with the women surveyed in previous studies (Hock *et al.* 1984; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Volling and Belsky, 1993), my participants had to make compromises between their ‘ideal’ childcare solution and their eventual ‘real-life’ choice of childcare. The women in my study considered a range of factors contributed to their choice of childcare, a similar finding to those reported by Vincent and Ball, (2001, 2006); Uttal, (1996) and Leach, *et al.* (2006). All of the women, including Esmé who had decided not to return to work, felt they had to justify their childcare choices to themselves and to others, a noteworthy point made by Lewis (2003) about the complexity of decision-making. The women gave long, detailed explanations both of their views of themselves as mothers, and their decision-making around returning to work and childcare arrangements. My findings that ultimately it was the mothers (not fathers), who took responsibility for the decision for their return to work, concur with those of Brannen and Moss (1991)

7.3ii: Love

My second research question asked: *What importance, if any, do mothers place on having carers in day care settings who 'love' their children?* The mothers all had strong views about wanting their children to have close relationships with the adults who cared for them which supports the research findings of Barnes *et al.* (2006) and Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (1999). Lucy, for example, found it hard to articulate the idea of love in a professional sense, which resonated to an extent with Hult's (1979) view of '*pedagogical caring*'. Lucy preferred the more traditional term, 'care'. However, during her interview Lucy had begun to question whether her interpretation of care and my use of the term 'professional love' were not more closely connected than she had realised. However, even though she had been unable to form the sort of relationship with the childminder in the way that she had hoped, she knew her daughter enjoyed being with her childminder. Lucy had on occasions observed glimpses of close reciprocal behaviour between the childminder and her daughter, fitting with Noddings' (1984; 2003) suggestion of reciprocity in the context of caring. Although not the ideal relationship between the two women that Lucy had wanted, her childcare arrangement was sufficient for her to persevere with her choice of childminder for Daisy.

Martha very definitely wanted her daughter to be loved and saw love as intrinsically linked to her own role in the early childhood education sector. She knew that the relationships she had formed with children who were unrelated to her could be interpreted as love (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2003; Gilligan, 1982; Goldstein 1998). Martha wanted her daughter Holly to be loved by those who cared for her

(Gerhardt, 2004) and for Martha this had been bound up in secure attachment processes (Bowlby, 1953, 1965; Bretherton, 1992 ; Rutter, 1972).

Esmé was relieved she had not had to contemplate leaving her children when they were very young and found it very difficult to imagine anyone other than her family or close friends having such intimate relationships with her children. This related to her deeply held beliefs about the nature of mothering and accord with research by Kazimirski *et al.* (2008) who found that women preferred occasional care by friends or relatives rather than paid professional carers.

Amy agreed that children, especially babies, need lots of love. She knew that the nanny and her son had a close reciprocal relationship and she also recognised that her son could make the distinction between the two women. Amy described the mother love she had for Sebastian, her son, as one that consumed her whole body. Amy's views were complicated as she held strong beliefs about the role of women and those who chose employment roles in the caring profession. Amy's views concur with Osgood's (2006) notion arguing the case for practitioners to 'deconstruct' their role as professionals. However, Amy did not need or expect the nanny to feel the same way toward Sebastian but neither did she feel jealous of their relationship. Amy had been a nanny in the past and had a sense of the enormous responsibility placed on the adult who is caring for other people's children. As a mother she knew and understood the need for Sebastian to make strong attachments (Elfer *et al.*, 2003) and was prepared to accept love in a professional context as she had been able to recognise the higher intellectual aspect of love in the relationship (Noddings, 2003; Goldstein, 1998) .

Ayesha was clear about the use of the term love and based her understanding on her Christian faith and cultural background, a point advocated by Baker and Freeman (2005). The two things together had given her a somewhat unique position on her interpretation of the word 'love'. She was able to articulate her view of my notion of 'professional love' suggesting that twinning the two terms together was to put a barrier where one did not exist. Ayesha understood that it was difficult and challenging for some people to feel comfortable about such terms as *love* and *intimacy*. Ayesha's perspective in relation to trusting, loving, intimate relationships, concurs with the views of Goldschmied and Jackson, (2004), Gillespie Edwards (2002), Manning-Morton and Thorp (2003), Elfer, *et al.* (2003). However, despite her clear views in relation to her son being loved by the childminder in the home environment, she had misgivings about love being interpreted in group care settings by practitioners in the role of the key person. The discussion challenged her but she later emailed me some further thoughts after her son Freddie has started to attend a nursery.

Similar to the views reported by Leach (2009), Becky had found it more difficult to accept her son having a close relationship with the childminder but felt less threatened in the nursery situation because she thought there was less chance of the adults taking away the love that necessarily belonged to her as his mother

The findings of this study suggest to me that when mothers are able to recognise love as an intellectual encounter that complements their own mother-child relationship then they *do* want practitioners to love their children. I suggest that when this happens mothers can give practitioners the 'permission' they need to love the

children in their care. I suggest this might be expressed as ‘permission to love them....but not *too* much’.

7.3iii: *Expressions of emotion*

The ways in which the women told me their life stories were as much a part of the research as the content itself (Plummer, 2001; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Muchmore, 2001). In the fourth stage - thematic analysis - of my four-staged approach to meaning-making, I included my interpretation of the expressions of emotion used by the participants in the study in line with Atkinson’s (1998) perspective of the sacred nature of the personality of the life told. By including their expressions of emotion I sought to bring out the voices of the mothers, to do justice to their stories but also to bring further context and meaning-making for the reader as argued by Cole (1994), Muchmore, (2001), Goodson and Sikes (2001). All of the women used expressions of emotion which I interpreted as their way of conveying a particular emphasis about an aspect of their life story or decision-making. My interpretation was to highlight and draw out their emotionalism which Gubrium and Holstein (1997) suggest is to literally *feel* the experience of the participants. By including *their* words, in *their* voice and with *their* expressions of emotion I have argued helps to bring further meaning-making to the complexity of the decision-making process undertaken by mothers about whether to return to work or not when their babies were very young (Lewis, 2003; Vincent and Ball, 2001, 2006).

7.4: Reflections, Limitations and Future Research

In the six interviews the mothers shared deeply personal information with me as I explored with them my instinct about the notion of 'love' in relation to their choices and dilemmas about returning to paid employment or not in the first twelve months of their baby's life. Based on the findings of this study and in light of my discussion of Noddings' (1984) theory I suggest that the mothers in my study did want the adults who cared for their children to love them. They may not always have called it love but during their interviews the participants were presented with the opportunity to consider the place of love in interactions between practitioners and babies. It seemed to me that to reach a shared understanding and interpretation of love with their children's carers was even more vital rather than to trivialise or deny the existence of love. This is new territory for research in the field and though, 'Professional love' may not be the 'right' terminology, future research might explore the language of love in the early childhood education and care contexts. Hult (1979) argues against Noddings' (1984) theory of ethics and care and refutes the notion of *pedagogical caring* but perhaps a *pedagogy of love* is another concept which could be the subject of further investigation.

Future research is needed in relation to the notion of 'professional love' and future terminology and philosophy about adult - child relationships might start to include Noddings' perspectives of reciprocity and motivational displacement. Further research could explore with parents and practitioners, the language of relationships in early childhood education and care including the use of the word 'love'.

This study did not seek to generate generaliseable findings. The purpose of the research reported in this thesis was to investigate the views of mothers using a life history approach, thus carrying with it inevitable limitations to the research design. Future research could include a large-scale questionnaire survey (Cohen, *et al.* 2007) which would provide a more generalisable sampling and followed up with interviews with group approaches such as focussed conversation (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007) or focus group alongside individual semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2006) and/or further life historical approaches such as those discussed by Plummer (2001) and Atkinson, (1998) In addition a study that focussed on the views of fathers and/or partners (in the case of same sex parents) to gather their perspectives about parents of either gender returning to work and choice of childcare as well as *their* views on the importance or not of love in practitioner relationships with babies and young children.

Dilemmas about 'Kissing' children that are unrelated to 'us', which was raised by one of the mother's in this study, has not been discussed in detail in this thesis. Ayesha had given a detailed view of her experience of why, as a mother, she considered kissing was a natural extension to a loving relationship between the childminder and her son. However, when she thought about kissing in the context of a nursery she was uneasy about the thought of other adults kissing her son. She said it had made her think differently but she was unsure of why. Subsequently, when Freddie began nursery Ayesha found her feelings changed. Instead of disapproval she found she actually approved of the adults in the nursery kissing her son. She realised that in the nursery the close relationship between the adults and Freddie was equally important as the relationship had been between the childminder and Freddie.

In the thematic analysis presented in Chapter Six as well as the subject of kissing being a focus for further research there were other individual themes that I combined under the heading of 'Idiosyncratic' which are also worthy of further consideration. These were Domestic violence; Death and Illness; Religion; Identity. Throughout the period of my research I have engaged in many anecdotal conversations about the focus of this study. On many occasions this has sparked considerable debate which resonates with the findings from this study. For example, on one occasion a delegate departed from a seminar I was presenting because it had struck a chord so deeply she felt unable to stay in the discussion. However, she later returned to share 'her story' with me. This reaction is the most extreme that I have experienced. However, every occasion when I have raised the subject of loving babies and children when they are in professional early childhood contexts has resulted in continued conversations. Sometimes this has been in quite an informal way, but often this has gone further when I have received emails from people long after our discussion has ended but they have felt strongly enough to want to share with me their thoughts or feedback from a conversation they have had with others. (*Box 7.1*)

Box 7.1 Student Email after a Seminar on 'Professional Love'

Date: Sun, Feb, 15th 2009 19:39:53 +0000
From: Kaitlin.Bakewell<k.bakewell@sheffield.ac.uk>
To: Jools Page <j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk>

Subject: Re: ECE Research group

Dear Jools

I felt I had to write in response to your seminar on this notion of 'love' because of the sheer impact it has already had on me. Not only did your ideas begin to make me think about things during the lecture but I found myself awake at 4am churning with further thoughts and emotions.

In a more personal sense, I have two boys a 7 and a 5 year old. Like me, Alan was born with a cleft-lip and palate and as a result went through very early operations. Just as you described, I was very aware of the nurses that 'went through the motions' you couldn't fault them, they were friendly and dedicated...but then, there were others that appeared to have a very genuine caring response to my baby - which I suppose could be called 'love', not in a mother-child sense but rather a very 'real' response to a baby (and parents) under-going a traumatic event. I don't know how to put my feelings into words, it was more of an instinctive sense or 'gut feeling' that my baby actually mattered to them.

Returning to work was a decision made because I wanted a balance between being a mummy and doing a job I feel passionately about. However, my choice of childminders was very much based on my gut feeling about whether that individual would genuinely care and I suppose love my child. Again I could look through their policies, procedures and paperwork and see that they knew what they were doing. I could listen to past parent reports on the standards of care but it came down to a more personal question 'Is that childminder able to see my child, accept and love them for who they actually are?' My ability to 'feel' a decision was not always accurate meaning that both boys attended a local childminder who quickly indicated that she found them 'difficult, challenging'... It was an endless list which indicated to me that she didn't have that special bond with them - and so I moved them. The boys now have different minders, who I know genuinely love them for who they are and both are very much part of the family. I also have a close relationship with each minder one who sees the well-being of a child as THE most important part of her role and the other who just enjoys being with Rory and is genuinely excited to tell me about his day/achievements.

I agree that the word 'love' is seldom used but as a parent, I want my children to be loved, cherished, and nurtured for who they are.

I am passionate about teaching and recognise I simply don't have all of the answers; However, there has always been one area of teaching I have felt was my strength, one I have never been able to fully express but just felt. Even as a student teacher, I made every effort to really 'walk with each child' to understand their

struggles, thinking, worries and concerns. I suppose, I would have said - my relationship with the children is my strength. In my very first year of teaching in year one, a parent wrote to thank me at the end of the year and put 'Thank you for being Tyler's mum.' At the time, I found that, well...just odd and almost dismissed it. Actually, I now believe my 'strength' is far more than that and listening to your lecture brought a real sense of clarity and understanding.

As a teacher, I take the time to step into a child's shoes to think about what makes them tick - this includes all children, the high achieving 'always right' children to the children with really negative behaviours. I could give endless examples but what your lecture started to clarify for me ...my care is not because I get paid to, it is totally genuine. I now believe Tyler's mum's message of thanks was actually one of the highest compliments I could have been given - she had seen the results of my care, concern and love for her child and wanted to thank me for it.

In my first degree, I studied Theology and Religious Studies alongside teaching. Biblical teaching is full of the importance of the love one individual should have for another and there is a greek word 'agape' which describes this love a genuine, caring, self-sacrificing for another with no notion of 'reward' or 'gain.' This, I think, is how I interpret the notion of love I am describing above. I realise my Christian background and beliefs will have a strong influence here and I make no apology for that.

I really believe your research is important and has huge significance which is wide reaching....

best regards
Kaitlin

More recently at a staff seminar a colleague who had been unable to attend the session requested a copy of the presentation. I invited her comment and we ended up in a deeply stimulating discussion where she shared complex personal and professional dilemmas about her role as a mother to her two, now grown up, children not dissimilar to the issues that surfaced in my life story interviews. Following a seminar presentation four recent studies by postgraduate students included a reference to the notion of loving babies and children. The students subjected the topic to critical debate justifying and reflecting upon their personal position as mothers and professionally as early childhood practitioners. I have been excited to the extent in which the subject has found its way into their research and how the debate has continued, which suggests to me that further research is required.

As Noddings (2003) argues:

Are we not already guilty of the grossest mockery and disdain when we refuse to discuss these matters as all? Surely, teachers can be just as careful and sensitive in this area as they have learned to be in matters of socioeconomic status, race and ethnic identity. If those sensitivities are not so well developed as we might wish, few of us would recommend that we cease talking about such matters

(p, 184)

7.5: Final thoughts and Reflections

The study was planned against the back drop of recent policy (HMT, 2004) which encouraged mothers back into the workforce and my own views as a working mother who took decisions about leaving my children in day-care, when they were very young, to return to work . I therefore suggest that this study has:

- Highlighted the experience of six mothers when they made decisions about child care early in their children's lives. This qualitative study complements the literature which provides broader, quantitative and generalisable studies by shedding light on the rich detail of women's lives as a key point in their motherhood.
- Identified some of the complex decisions which women have to make when considering returning to work when their babies are young.
- Explored the concept of '*love*' in the context of mothers' choices, beliefs and dilemmas around choosing child care and introduced the notion of '*professional love*'.
- Developed a four-stage process of meaning making which can be used in other life historical research.

I consider these four factors combine to contribute to new knowledge in the field of Social Science.

Though the subject of future work, the findings of this study could offer useful insights to policy makers and practitioners which relate to:

- Practitioners understanding of mothers' perspectives when they leave their babies in childcare settings for the first time and relevant training and emotional support for practitioners who work with the very youngest children and their mothers.
- practitioners appreciation of the need to love children who are unrelated to them, in the context of what, in this thesis I have called 'professional love'

Talking about loving babies and the notion of 'caring' for both mother and child is the key focus of the study reported in this thesis. In her book *Why Love Matters* Gerhardt (2004) states that the 'orbitofrontal cortex' is a vital part of the brain in relation to the development of emotions. She writes

What needs to be written in neon letters lit up against the sky is that the orbitofrontal context, which is so much about being human, develops almost entirely post-natally. This part of the brain develops after birth and doesn't begin to mature until toddlerhood

(Gerhardt, 2004 p.37)

The literature reviewed in this thesis confirms that relationships are fundamental for healthy emotional growth and development and from this basis of secure relationships between children and practitioners, issue of practice in relation to children's cognitive development can be considered. Not everyone who lives and works with young children needs to know the function of the orbitofrontal cortex, but I would argue, on the basis of the evidence presented in this thesis, that everyone who lives and works with young children needs to know why love matters.

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APPENDIX 1

University of Sheffield School of Education RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

- This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (U-REC) -

Complete this form if your project involves human participants (either directly through physically participating and/or indirectly through providing data and/or tissue) **AND does not involve the NHS.**

A guidance fact sheet on how to complete this form can be downloaded from:
www.shef.ac.uk/researchoffice/support/winning/ethics/system.html.

If appropriate, this form must be accompanied by:

- A completed [Participant Information Sheet](#)
- A completed [Participant Consent Form](#)

(please confirm the applicability/inapplicability of these on the application form's cover sheet)

Once the form(s) has been completed (and the applicant's name and date inserted into the footer of each page) it should be emailed to: STAFF - The School of Education 'Ethics Administrator' (m.l.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk). STUDENTS: The course secretary . A signed, dated version of 'Part B' of the application form should also be posted to the appropriate person above.

The identity of your Ethics Administrator is at:

www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/03/26/85/ethics_administrators.pdf.

Who should complete this form?

Normally the Principal Investigator in the case of staff-led research projects or normally the student in the case of supervised student research projects.

Special note for projects involving the NHS (including Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers):

If your project involves the NHS and/or is a clinical trial of a drug then complete the NHS research ethics application form (commonly known as the COREC form) and send it to the appropriate NHS organisation.

The COREC form is available electronically from the COREC website: www.corec.org.uk
COREC, the *Central Office for Research Ethics Committees*, is the body that manages the NHS's ethics review system.

The NHS's ethics review procedure is explained in a factsheet:

www.corec.org.uk/applicants/help/docs/Guidance_for_Applicants_to_RECs.pdf

The following types of 'research' require ethics review via the NHS:

- patients and users of the NHS
- relatives or carers of patients and users of the NHS
- access to data, organs or other bodily material of past and present NHS patients
- fetal material and IVF involving NHS patients
- the recently dead in NHS premises
- the use of, or potential access to, NHS premises or facilities
- NHS staff – recruited as research participants by virtue of their professional role.
- Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers *

* The introduction of the EU Clinical Trials Directive (2001/20/EC) into UK law now means that 'Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers' (i.e. Clinical Trials of Drugs) must now be ethically reviewed via the NHS and, specifically, by an NHS Research Ethics Committee recognised to ethically review Clinical Trials applications.

University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Application Form

Cover Sheet

Name: Jools Page

Member of Staff

Student

Course: PhD

Module

Tutor/Supervisor Dr Cathy Nutbrown

Date: 12th March 2007

I confirm that due to the nature of the project, in my judgment the use of a 'Participant Information Sheet / Covering Letter / Pre-Written Script' – i.e. use of a method to inform prospective participants about the project (mark 1 box):

Is relevant:	Is <u>not</u> relevant:
√	

I confirm that due to the nature of the project, in my judgment the use of a 'Participant Consent Form' (mark 1 box):

Is relevant:	Is <u>not</u> relevant:
√	

University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Application Form

Part A

A1. Research Project Title: *Mothers, Work and Childcare: choices, beliefs and dilemmas*

A1.1 URMS number (if known):

A.2 Contact person (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised-student research projects):

Title: *Mrs* First Name/Initials: *Jools* Last Name: *Page*
 Post : Department: *School of Education*
 Email: *edp03jmp@sheffield.ac.uk* Telephone: Mobile: *07738082718*

A2.1 Is this a supervised-student research project?

If yes, please provide the Supervisor's contact details:

*Dr Cathy Nutbrown – Reader in Education, School of Education,
 University of
 Sheffield. Email: c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk Tel: 0114 222 8139*

A.3 Other key investigators / co-applicants (within or outside the University):

Please list all (adding more rows if necessary)

Title	Full Name	Post	Responsibility in project	Organisation	Department

A.4 Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: *March 2007*

End date: *August 2009*

A.5 Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

- ~~involves testing a medicinal product *~~
- ~~involves investigating a medical device *~~
- ~~involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *~~
- ~~involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *~~
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- ~~involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose~~
- involves only identifiable personal data with no direct contact with participants
- involves only anonymised or aggregated data
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- involves disabled adults with physical or mental incapacity or physical or mental illness

	has the primary aim of being educational (e.g. student research, a project necessary for a postgraduate degree or diploma, other than an MD or PhD)
X	has the primary aim of being educational, student research for the purposes of a PhD.

A.6 Briefly summarise the project's aims, objectives and methodology?
(it must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

Aims and objectives

This study examines the policies, practices and relationships which underpin and influence women's decisions about work and childcare. Having established the political and theoretical positions prevalent in England in the early 2000's the study proposes to take a qualitative approach using life historical interviews to investigate the decision making and experiences of mothers decisions to return to paid employment or not when their babies were young (under one year of age) and their reasons for choosing particular forms of childcare.

Methodology

I intend through purposive sampling to identify between six and twelve women who have distinct and individual stories to tell taken from respondents from whom I have easy access who represent a range of experiences. For example: married,/partnered, single, professional, unqualified, working, non –working to ascertain a response to my empirical question and a set of pre-determined field questions and who would be willing to take part in life historical interviews to be presented by the researcher as interpreted and edited data.

In the context of the interviews with mothers I intend to consider the possibility of interviewing practitioners who work or have worked with children under three in relation to either the mother's own stories or in relation to practitioners who wish to convey their perspective in relation to the complexity of caring for babies of mothers who have decided to return to work when their child was under one year of age. The sample would be drawn from either snowballing or purposive methods.

I intend also to keep a diary of anecdotal conversation which I have gleaned from practitioners, women and others whom I come into contact who willingly give their view point on the subject. I will use this in my research as anonymised anecdotal data.

A.7 What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

Due to the nature of Life historical work, it is by definition qualitative research intended to elicit deep level information from the informants. From the outset, as the researcher I will need to ensure that I am clear about the focus of the research, the time commitment required and a specific code of conduct with regard to the respect and dignity with which levels of personal and private information is reported. It is my intention that this will be made explicit in the participant consent form and accompanying literature and discussed in detail at the first interview. At the beginning of each separate interview I will ask a specific question related to the

continuation of the data collection and how it is reported and gain explicit permission at frequent intervals for me to analyse and report on my findings. I will ensure that the informant understands her right to withdraw her permission to use the data at any time and that her wishes will be respected.

A.8 Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

The interviews will need to be carried out in premises that are mutually convenient but more importantly conducive to a quiet relaxed atmosphere (I hope to gain permission to tape record each of the interviews) and surroundings that put the informant at ease. I do not foresee a risk to personal safety but this will need to borne in mind and a risk assessment considered on each occasion. I will put measures in place to ensure my whereabouts in known with address, contact details and duration of visit.

A.9 How will potential participants in the project be (i) identified, (ii) approached and (iii) recruited?

Identified

1. I will use a combination of convenience (taken from respondents from whom I have easy access) and snowball (respondents who possess the desired characteristics to meet the aims of the study) and purposive (handpicking) sampling methods to yield a response from mothers e,g work colleagues, former students, friends.

2.I intend to identify mothers who represent a diverse range of experiences in relation to the study and have identified their willingness to take part in life historical interviews.

Approached

Having identified the survey sample I will then contact the respondents informally by either face to face, email or telephone and outline my intended study. I will explain the process, including their time commitments and their role as a respondent in one or both parts of the data collection: questionnaire and interviews.

Recruited

Subsequent to their initial informal agreement I plan to write to each respondent with an outline of the study with explicit details of the two stages of data collection.

Identifying informants the sample will be drawn from respondents who identify: willingness to take part, age differential, profession, choice of childcare, location.

A.10 Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

YES NO

Please explain the proposed process for obtaining informed consent. If informed consent or consent is not to be obtained please explain why. You may want to consult Section 2.4.3 of the University's Ethics Policy or the guidance fact-sheet on consent at: www.shef.ac.uk/r/researchoffice/RO/ethicsreviewsystem.html. Students

should ensure that they have fully discussed their proposed procedures with their tutor/supervisor.

Informed Consent

Informed consent will be obtained in writing. I intend to use the university participant consent form accompanied by a letter detailing the project and the role of the participant in the process of data collection. The letter will explain the explicit nature of the life historical interviews including processes for the respectful handling of sensitive information. Participant's attention will be drawn to their right to withdraw at any stage of the project. At no point will participants be coerced into giving information or to take part in the project in any way. A code of conduct will be agreed with each participant to ensure a professional and ethical code is adhered to at all times. An indicative list will include:

- The purpose of the study;
- The individuals or groups that may be affected by the research study;
- Why the particular person was singled out for participation;
- The time commitment;
- The benefits and/or risks how will they be managed;
- Voluntary participation;
- Reliability/ validity
- Confidentiality/Anonymity;
- Outcomes and Findings;

A.11 What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

By agreement I will seek to alter the names of the participants to protect their identity in the study, being respectful about how instead they would prefer to be identified. I will keep written notes and with permission tape record each interview which will then be transcribed and written up.

All personal data in hard copy will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home address. Anything of an electronic nature will be stored on either a memory stick and/or CD for the purposes of accuracy and reliability and stored in a locked filing cabinet alongside taped interviews. At the end of the project all personal data will be either returned to the respondents or destroyed according to their individual wishes.

Participants will be informed of the details of my supervising tutor and the University of Sheffield complaints procedure should they have cause for concern regarding the abuse or lack of due regard to ethical procedure.

A.12 Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

YES NO

University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Application Form

Part B – Declaration

Full Research Project Title: insert title here

Mothers, Work and Childcare: choices, beliefs and dilemmas

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project (project) in accordance with the University of Sheffield's (the University) policies and procedures, which include: the University's '*Financial Regulations*'; '*Good Research Practice Standards*'; and the '*Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue*' (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the project's external research funder.

In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

- The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol (protocol) without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter sent by the University ethics reviewers (reviewers) notifying me of this.
- I undertake to inform the reviewers of significant changes to the protocol.
- (if applicable) If this is an application for a 'generic' project, all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.
- I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).
- I understand that the project (including research records / data) may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (i.e. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

Name of the Principal Investigator (or Supervisor in the case of a student project):

Dr Cathy Nutbrown

Name of student (if applicable):

Jools Page

Signature of the Principal Investigator (or student and Supervisor in the case of a student project):
sign here

Date:
12.3.07

Ensure that you complete the form in full (including inserting the applicant's name and date in the footer of each page) and sign and date "Part B".
If appropriate, enclose a [Participant Information Sheet](#) and [Consent Form](#)

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title:

Mothers, Work and Childcare: choices, beliefs and dilemmas

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the project?

I am currently studying for a research doctorate (PhD) at the University of Sheffield and am especially interested in mothers' views about work and childcare and their choices when their babies are under one year of age. The study examines the policies, practices and relationships which underpin and influence women's decisions about work and childcare, and I have established the political and theoretical positions prevalent in England in the early 2000's. I want now to carry life historical interviews to investigate the decision making and experiences of mother's decisions to return to paid employment or not when their babies were young (under one year of age) and their reasons for choosing particular forms of childcare.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this study because either you have returned to work when your baby was under a year old or you have decided not to return to work when your baby was under one year, and you have shown an interest in taking part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will incur no consequences for you. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without any difficulty for you, and you will not have to a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part I would meet you at a mutually convenient time and venue and carry out a series of interviews in relation to the study as outlined above, which, with your permission I would tape record. I would anticipate that each interview would last approximately an hour and that I would need to meet with you on at least three occasions, however, this would be in negotiation with you. I am interested in

your story and the factors that have influenced your decision making. After the interviews have taken place I will transcribe the data, a copy of which I will return to you to check for accuracy and further comments and annotations prior to analysis. I will use the anonymised findings from the interviews carried out with you and others as the basis of my thesis.

What do I have to do?

You will need to decide if you wish to participate in the research and if you have any questions or queries that have not been addressed here.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Due to the nature of life historical work, it is by definition qualitative research intended to draw out detailed information from the people who are interviewed. I intend to discuss this in detail at the first interview with you. At the beginning of each separate interview I will ask a specific question related to the continuation of the data collection and how it is reported and gain clear permission at frequent intervals for me to analyse and report on my findings. I do not foresee any risks or disadvantages to you taking part in this research as it is entirely voluntary and any information shared will be confidential. However, if at any time during the research you feel unable to continue, you are at liberty to withdraw without the need for explanation. If you should experience the need for advice, support or counsel in relation to the project, I will ensure that as a responsible researcher I furnish you with the names and contact details of such appropriate external agencies who are expert in the field.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that the work will inform me sufficiently to carry out further research in the field in relation to the findings from this project.

What happens when the research study stops?

If the research stops sooner than expected then this will be explained to you and the reasons why.

What if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong you should initially inform me or if this is not possible my supervisor Dr Cathy Nutbrown – Reader in Education, c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk Tel: 0114 222 8139. If you are not happy with this outcome, you can contact Dr David Fletcher, Registrar and Secretary, The University of Sheffield, Firth Court, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN, email: D.E.Fletcher@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: +44 114 222 1100

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is disseminated will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. By agreement I will alter your name to protect your identity in the study, being

respectful about how instead you would prefer to be identified. I will keep written notes and with permission tape record each interview which will then be transcribed and written up.

All personal data in hard copy will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home address. Anything of an electronic nature will be stored on either a memory stick and/or CD for the purposes of accuracy and reliability and stored in a locked filing cabinet alongside taped interviews. At the end of the project all personal data will be either returned to you or destroyed according to your individual wishes.

The only time that this would not apply would be in the event of concerns relating to the protection of children, in which case I would be obliged to report such information and comply with the designated agencies as appropriate.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

At the end of the project the findings from the research will be written up and form the basis of my thesis, a copy of which will be kept in the University of Sheffield library. If it is likely that the data collected during the course of this research might be used for additional or subsequent research or consequently be published more widely then I would inform you of this fact and where appropriate seek additional permission. If you should wish I would be happy to furnish you with a summary of the outcomes of the study or the details of how to access the completed research in its entirety.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Jools Page

Who has reviewed the project?

In line with the University of Sheffield ethical guidelines this project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee and meets the School of Education departmental ethical procedures.

Contact for further information

Jools Page

Tel: H - 01227 760934; M-07738 082718

Email: jools.page@kent.gov.uk; or j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

PhD Student supervisor

Dr Cathy Nutbrown – Reader in Education,
School of Education,

University of Sheffield,

388 Glossop Road, Sheffield,

S10,2JA, Email: c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk Tel: 0114 222 8139

Last but not least...

I would like to thank you for taking the time and interest to be part of this project. You will be given a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and a signed copy of the Participant Consent form to keep.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
EXAMPLE PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Mothers, Work and Childcare: choices, beliefs and dilemmas

Name of Researcher: Jools Page

Participant Identification Number for this project: 1

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
4. I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies:

One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor.



The University Of Sheffield.

FAO Jools Page

Head of School
Professor Peter Hannon

Department of Educational Studies
The Education Building
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

March 2007

Telephone: +44 (0114) 222 8083
Fax: +44 (0114) 279 6236
Email: c.m.gaffney@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Jools

Phd Research Proposal:

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that you can go ahead with your research project, with the following conditions:

.....None

This is subject to receipt of a signed hard copy of Part B (Declaration) of the School of Education Research Ethics application form which is available at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/ethics>. This hard copy is then held on file. This ensures that we comply with university requirements about signatures.

Yours sincerely

Chris Gaffney
Research Degrees Administrative Secretary