Professional Doctoral Study and Motherhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Research Question:

How do mothers undertaking a professional doctorate construct their identity as students and what factors legitimise their identity?

Aim:

To critically evaluate how mothers undertaking a professional doctorate construct their identity as students and what factors legitimise their identity.

Objectives:

1)To explore the subject positions adopted by professional doctoral students who are mothers.

2) To critique the subjective experience of being a professional doctoral student and mother.

3) To analyse the dominant societal forces which legitimise the construction of identifies purported by professional doctoral students who are mothers.

4) To propose recommendations for change, if necessary, as revealed in attending to aims 1-3.

Abstract

This study is a critical discourse analysis of professional doctorate study and motherhood drawn from the interview transcripts of 11 doctoral-student-mothers within a South London university. A lengthy review of contemporary motherhood and of motherhood and doctoral study was undertaken to understand the dominant societal forces legitimising the doctoral-student-mothers' identity, to attend to the third objective of the study. In doing so, a hegemony of intensive mothering ideology was revealed as the 'backdrop' to contemporary mothering. A literature review on doctoral-student-motherhood revealed recurrent themes centred around a 'complex identity,' 'juggling and struggling,' 'belonging' and 'emancipation.'

A Foucauldian critical discourse analysis was undertaken from a critical realist perspective, which revealed three dominant discourses being utilised by the doctoral-student-mothers, these being *synergy, activism* and *belonging and becoming*. Analysis of these discourses revealed that within the discourse of *synergy*, the doctoral-student-mothers were functioning as servant leaders and were altering the distribution of housework in their families. The discourse of a*ctivism* showed that the doctoral-student-mothers were using both scholarship and maternal identity to function as activists through their doctoral studies. The discourse of *belonging and becoming* showed the doctoral-student-mothers were experiencing imposter phenomenon and were using their doctorates for emancipatory purposes, more so than to add knowledge to their professional field. Discussion is interwoven into the analysis of the three dominant discourses. Recommendations for change and future research include a review of academic mentoring for doctoral-student-mothers, an analysis of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on doctoral student motherhood and an analysis of activism as a feature of doctoral-student-motherhood more broadly.

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Chapter One: Rationale

our work should equip

the next generation of women

to outdo us in every field

this is the legacy we'll leave behind

progress

(Kaur, 2017)

In the United Kingdom (U.K.) the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) (2022) shows that 101,350 students were enrolled in doctoral studies in the academic year 2019-2020. HESA data shows that just under half of these, 49,655 are women, compared to 51,340 men. In recent decades, methods of doctoral study have begun to include, alongside the traditional PhD, the taught doctorate and the professional doctorate (Poole, 2015). Professional doctorates are now considered to be well established in British higher education, with the most common professional doctorate, the doctorate in education (EdD) having been running in the U.K. for twenty years (Hawkes and Yerrabati, 2018). The four most dominant professional provinces of PD provision are found to be education, business, psychology and health and social care (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2016) which I find noteworthy, as education and life-sciences are departments associated with a high concentration of women (Brown and Watson, 2010). Professional doctorates are aimed at experienced professionals and are designed to offer a research-based component of professional training, for the purposes of contributing to knowledge and to impact upon professional practice (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2016).

As per the definition of professional doctorates provided by Mellors-Bourne et al (2016) mothers undertaking professional doctorates, such as myself, will be employed in senior professional positions, whilst also studying and therefore combining the threefold positions of mother, professional and student. The triplicate identity of mother, professional and doctorate students is interesting to note as motherhood is found to be *detrimental* to the career progression of women (Baker, 2010) and specifically amongst academics (Baker, 2012) yet women studying for a professional doctorate are considered to be *advancing* their career through the synergistic process of academic and professional up-skilling (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2016). Undertaking a professional doctorate is simultaneous educational advancement and potential career progression, both of which are reported in seminal works by Baker (2010) and Lynch (2008) to be conflicting roles in combination with motherhood.

Whilst studying for a professional doctorate as a mother has been described as transformative and empowering (Webber, 2017a) it is also well recognised that women find the 'juggling act' of managing family life and higher education a challenge (Webber, 2015; Webber, 2017b). There exists an unequal distribution of domestic duties, including childcare in British households, factored by gender (The Fatherhood Institute, 2016) positioned against a British cultural backdrop that is non-supportive of families who wish to parent 'differently,' i.e. with parity for each parent, with a wide range of cultural reference points ranging from parenting guides, magazine articles, advertisements and books depicting fathers as either not engaged in intimate caregiving to their children, or, when engaged, representation is as bumbling and incompetent, with mothers depicted as 'chief parent,' or a 'natural expert.'

This societal position 'leaks' into higher education with female students said to face increased pressures from the demands placed upon them regarding household and childcare responsibilities, in comparison to their male counterparts (Plageman and Sabina, 2010; Moreau and Kerner, 2013).

It is extremely noteworthy that during the Covid 19 lockdowns of 2020, the true gender disparity of domestic life with direct impact on women in academia was laid bare, as mothers were found to spend double the amount of time as fathers home schooling their children, with a marked drop in academic papers submitted by women, whilst submissions by male academics increased (Glaser, 2021). The responsibilities of mothers who participate in higher education creates tension, with women reported to downplay their student identity when at home and retain their role as main caregiver, to be seen as *good* mothers, conversely, when engaged in post-graduate education women conceal their maternal identity, to be seen as *good* students (Lynch, 2010). The new identity that arises through being a doctoral student is found to be conflicted with maintaining previous identities such as that of being a mother (Eisenbach, 2013).

The traditional academic structure was designed with the male scholar in mind (Hill et al, 2011). Women have reported feeling marginalised within the traditional PhD route of doctoral study in part owing to a reported lack of flexibility in the curriculum and a lower rate of part-time participation (Brown and Watson, 2010). Whilst professional doctorates are designed to enable the blending of professional and student lives and as such should enable a more flexible approach to study than the traditional PhD, for women undertaking professional doctorates who are mothers, the contributory demands of negotiating the shifting identity of being a professional, a student and a parent can impact on coping ability. (Webber 2017a).

The complexity of home life and childcare responsibilities are considered obstacles to the success of female doctoral students (Brown and Watson, 2010).

In considering how maternal identity contributes to doctoral study, it is worth considering the concept of 'doctorateness.' There is a shifting perception on the very nature of a doctorate and with this comes a shifting perception of 'doctorateness' (Poole, 2015). Doctorateness is itself a term of much contention but is considered to be the homogenous aspects of the process and outcome of all doctoral study (Murray, 2009). Doctorateness can be considered from two perspectives, either in the attributes of the final doctoral thesis (Trafford and Lesham, 2009), or the attributes of the doctoral student (Denicolo and Park, 2010). When looking at the doctoral student, motherhood as a feature of doctorateness for the professional doctorate student has not been given due consideration as a research topic (CohenMiller, 2014; Webber, 2017a). Where motherhood and doctoral study have been studied the focus has been on the personal experiences related to negotiating the competing *demands* or the *obligations* of motherhood and the desire to nurture personal educational aspirations (Mason et al 2009; Trepal et al, 2014) affecting the mothers' ability to *cope* with her doctoral study (Webber, 2017a). The focus of many studies is rooted in '*balance*,' '*juggling*' and '*negotiating* competing *demands*' (Webber 2015; Webber 2017a; Webber 2017b). Whilst numerous studies focus on the personal experiences of managing motherhood and doctoral study, some go on to recommend ways in which academic institutions can support mothers who are doctoral students, based on the consideration that to do not do so represents a social justice issue (Wladowski and Mirick, 2020).

I agree that there is an issue of social justice in the lack of critical examination of the experiences of professional doctoral students who are mothers and that individual notions of ability to cope are ignoring a wider, feminist issue.

Like others, I find that motherhood is the unfinished business of feminism (Glaser, 2021) and my study aims to go beyond *personal* experiences or indeed institutional support recommendations but instead seeks to delve deeper into how mothers undertaking professional doctoral study construct their identity as students and ultimately, what *societal* factors legitimise this identity. My study seeks to understand why demands and obligation, balancing and juggling are accepted norms for doctoral students who are mothers and why we are accepting these as a female condition rather than a societal issue?

In understanding a literature review to be a survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic, to provide an overview of current knowledge and allowing the identification of relevant theories, methods and gaps in existing research (McCombes, 2021) when preparing for my literature review it become clear that 'motherhood' and 'mothering' were institutions with accepted discourses in their own right. Before looking at the experiences of professional doctorate students who are mothers within my literature review chapter, I first needed to understand what 'motherhood' means in 2022 and without doing so, I would not be able to understand the discourses that my research participants may be drawing from when discussing their experiences of being a mother and a doctoral student. Nor would I be able to understand the context of papers presenting doctoral study and motherhood. It was therefore essential to me and to support the third aim of my research study, this being, '*to analyse the dominant societal forces which legitimise the construction of identifies purported by professional doctoral students who are mothers'* that my rationale would need to address the construction of contemporary motherhood.

This feels somewhat that I am performing analysis before collecting data, but in order to develop my thoughts, ideas and ultimately my understanding, extensive reading around the chosen topic is recommended (Aveyard, 2018) and in doing so, the rationale for my study is supported through an analysis of prior scholarly work on the subject of contemporary motherhood.

1.1 A Background to Twenty-First Century Motherhood

Feminist scholars distinguish between mothering and motherhood, describing motherhood as a patriarchal institution that is oppressive to women (O'Reilly, 2004), denies women their selfhood (O'Reilly, 2010) and according to seminal yet still influential scholars, a bind from which women should be freed (Rich, 1997). Yet I feel that mothering, as a female centred experience can be empowering for women, if women are able to practice mothering from a position of agency, authority and autonomy (O'Reilly, 2004). As such, I identify as a matricentric feminist, in considering motherhood to be the 'unfinished business of feminism' and adopting the position that motherhood and mothers' experiences should be considered as a distinct category of feminist thought and scholarly work, separate to the position of 'woman' (O'Reilly, 2019). An example of this position being that I consider there to be gender pay gap with 'women's work' of caring and cleaning considered to be of low value, but as a distinct issue, for many women there is also a motherhood pay gap (Glaser, 2021) where women with careers are unable to progress or indeed are found to regress professionally upon becoming a parent and as such there exist matricentric issues within feminist thought that are distinct from a more global feminist position.

From this location I provide a background to twenty-first century motherhood, to support my understanding of the contextual arena that the doctoral-student-mothers within my study are positioned.

Ideologies of motherhood, as constructed by society, the media, parenting advice groups and health care professionals are prolific (Pedersen, 2016). Overlapping, contrasting and even competing realms of acceptable behaviours and attitudes are found within each construct. Women, seemingly negotiate the competing, contemporary discourses on motherhood through reconciliation and resistance (Malatzky, 2017). Motherhood, as an ideological construct may have multiplicities of form, yet the overarching aspiration is to be defined as a 'good' mother (Pedersen, 2016).

The dominant discourse in Western society that constructs the idealised form of 'good' mothers is the notion of 'intensive mothering' (Le-Phuong Nguyen et al, 2017). Intensive mothering, a term coined by Hays (1996) through work using narrative discourse with women, has served to describe the prevailing mothering ideology from the mid 1990s onwards. When abiding by the cultural boundaries set by the philosophy of intensive mothering, women are seen to engage in a relentless practice that promotes the investment of huge amounts of time, financial resources, energy and emotion into intensively raising children (Hays, 1996). Mothers assume total responsibility for all the child's needs, which include physical care, but also control of the child's emotional, psychological and cognitive wellbeing (Hays, 1996). The perceived benefit of intensive mothering is that children raised under this method will go on to have a competitive and social advantage over others in adult life (Perrier, 2012).

In following the principles of intensive mothering, several tenets are adhered to, namely that mothers are the best providers of childcare owing to a perceived inherent skill in child-rearing. Fathers conversely, are seen as well-intentioned but lacking in the ability to meet their children's needs competently; mothering requires intensive methods to meet the child's individual needs, seeking to please the child and placing the wellbeing of the child above that of the parents; as intensive mothering is a time intensive pursuit, mothering is seen as an extremely difficult task that should be performed under the guidance of child-care experts and includes pursuing expensive activities to continuously stimulate the child; children are regarded as sacred and owing to this, motherhood is also perceived as having a revered and esteemed status (Hays, 1996). Whilst Hays (1996) work in intensive mothering is dated, intensive mothering is culturally pervasive to this day (Le-Phuong Nguyen et al, 2017) as I will further outline below.

1.2 Media Representation of Intensive Mothering

Douglas and Michaels first described the term 'new momism' in 2004, as a media influenced construction of motherhood. New momism is described as the set of ideals relating to motherhood which are both represented and promoted by the media, whereby superficially, motherhood is celebrated, yet concurrently standards for mothers are set that are unobtainable (Douglas and Michaels, 2004). Representations of motherhood through sitcoms and magazines portray perpetually glamorous yet joyful, spontaneous, fun and completely available women loving every second of being a parent, gleefully performing any task that is required of them, as motherhood rewards their every effort through boundless happiness in return (Douglas and Michaels, 2004). The media representations of motherhood described by Douglas and Michaels (2004) in magazines and sitcoms as 'new momism' have also been analysed by Feasey (2012) who has studied popular television culture and found that the 'myth of the good mother,' this being a mother who attains the unattainable feat of adhering to the principles of intensive mothering, ecstatically, continues to dominate the landscape of television (Feasey, 2012). Analysis of the portrayals of motherhood in television programming still portray an impossible, implausible and unattainable image of motherhood, with the epitomised ideal of 'good' mother far removed from the experience of contemporary women (Feasey, 2012). Additionally, studies have shown that young women's television viewing habits and the 'type' of mother portrayed on television shows will impact the 'type' of mother that she aspires to be (Ex et al, 2012) demonstrating the power of such television portrayals. The pervasive nature of media supports the ideology that intensive mothering is somehow fixed, or natural, through a romanticised image of what 'good' mothering is (Feasey, 2012).

In contribution to TV viewing influencing perceptions of 'good' mothering, I also noted that social media use by mothers as a source of both social support and information gathering is extensive, with social media transcending all social demographics owing to the near universal ownership of smartphones and therefore constant internet access (Arnold, 2016). Not only are mothers *using* social media but as with the representation of intensive mothering portrayed in the television creation of new momism, their experiences of motherhood and mothering are being *shaped* by it, affecting their understanding of motherhood and of themselves (Arnold, 2016). Online accounts of motherhood and family life, through a maternal narrative or 'mommy blogging' are known as the 'mamasphere' (Orton-Johnson, 2016). The mamasphere has created an online space where motherhood is represented but also where dominant discourses of motherhood are challenged, negotiated and redefined (Lopez, 2009). Whilst 'mommy blogging' has been defined as a radical act (Lopez, 2009) 'intensive' blogging, whereby women blog based on the tenets of intensive mothering, is found to be one of the three typologies of the mamasphere with 'reality' blogging and 'confessional' blogging the other two (Orton-Johnson, 2016). Reality blogging seeks to show a 'mundane' and 'normal' version of mothering and confessional blogging seeking to represent a subversive or 'bad' version of mothering (Orton-Johnson, 2016). Both appear to be reactions to intensive mothering and as such, prove the dominance and pervasive nature of intensive mothering as the mothering ideal (Le Phuong Nguyen et al, 2017).

The tenets of 'good mothering' which are found to be synonymous with intensive mothering are found to be present in all media forms including online blogs, forums, Facebook and Twitter (Arnold, 2016). Twitter in particular, has been found as a site for construction of what is seen as a 'bad' mother with confessional hashtags such as #badmoms and similar being used as a means to admit to not meeting the accepted standard of intensive mothering and in doing so, serve to reinforce intensive mothering as the contemporary dominant motherhood ideal (Arnold, 2016). Thereby I find, that whilst the term 'intensive mothering' may have been coined by Hays in 1996, its currency is ever present today.

New momism (Douglas and Michaels, 2004) is considered the offspring of the 'feminist mystique' first described by Friedan in 1963. Friedan (2010) described the feminine mystique as the discrepancy between the reality of women's lives and the image to which they are trying to conform. Friedan (2010 p5) in her work with housewives of the 1960s, many of which were college graduates, described the sense of loss and dissatisfaction experienced by women who ultimately wondered '*is this all?*' when reflecting upon their lives as mothers and housewives, yet were conflicted when the lives they lived appeared to show them 'having it all' as measured by contemporary society. Friedan (2010) described 'the problem that has no name,' a nagging discontentment and dissatisfaction that women had when conforming to a version of post-war femininity that glorified marriage, motherhood and domesticity over a higher education or a career. Friedan (2010) like Douglas and Michaels (2004) cast criticism upon the media and in particular women's magazines for portraying women as the 'happy housewife heroine,' a portrayal of women seen as girlish, childlike and feminine, content with their husband, their home and their babies.

Friedan (2010) even makes comparison to the media portrayal of heroic housewife, with the Nazi slogan 'kinder, kücher, kirche' translated as 'children, kitchen, church,' the rhetoric used by Nazis to restrict women's role to that of growing the population to serve the Nazi war effort.

In light of this it is interesting to note the current #tradwife Twitter handle (2022) and the media interest that this has generated. A #tradwife is the 'modern' fusing of 'traditional' values with social media, whereby women are choosing to reject a job in paid employment in order to look after their home, husband and children whilst also documenting this on social media (Freeman, 2020). The #tradwife movement in the UK is led by Aleena Kate Pettitt who is also founder of The Darling Academy (2022). Pettitt describes how she gave up her career in order to return to a more 'traditional' lifestyle which she considers ultimately more fulfilling than trying to 'have it all' in favour of focussing on her home, husband and children (The Darling Academy, 2022). The Darling Academy celebrates a 'return to traditional values' and being a housewife, promotes the importance of British values and marriages that flourish from a Biblical understanding and as such is found to have clear parallels with the restrictions placed upon women's lives as described by Freidan (2010).

Where new momism and the feminine mystique part company and the #tradwife (Twitter, 2022) unite is that new momism is portrayed as a choice, women have the choice to work outside the home and parent, or the choice to stay at home and look after their children without paid employment.

Yet in spite of women having choices beyond being a housewife, it is asserted by Douglas and Michaels (2004) that feminism has become distorted, as the primary choice an enlightened woman has to make, is to firstly prove that you are a 'real' woman through becoming a mother and then that you are a decent and worthy mother through an extraordinary effort to parent with both selfishness and professionalism at huge personal expense.

In drawing on Friedan's work, Warner (2006) outlines the pressures felt by modern day women to adhere to parenting perfectionism, the burden, pressure, angst and guilt experienced by women in a never ending strive for perfection. As with the women Friedan (2010) interviewed in the 1960s and created the term 'feminine mystique' the women interviewed by Warner (2006) expressed an identical set of concerns and in similarity with Friedan, blamed themselves for their failings, when they didn't live up to their perceived ideals. Like the feminine mystique, the 'mommy mystique' is considered to be an obstacle to collective female perception, the ability to see that the collective culture is supporting a harmful status-quo that makes motherhood so tiresome and difficult. A status quo that binds women to an almost religious adherence to societal roles about child-rearing that are surmounting in universal anxiety (Warner, 2006). Friedan's (2010) 'problem with no name' has developed into a 'new problem that has no name' (Warner, 2006) in that women, for all the choice, education and progress they fought for, have reverted back to the days of the Feminine Mystique, although with a contemporary twist. The distinction between the housewives of the 1960s, #tradwife of 2022 (Twitter) or any other representation of contemporary women is that regardless of whether they are employed outside of the home or not, women have once again made child-rearing their 'life's work' and carry the burden of managing family life single handed.

Whilst feminism is enjoying a moment of strength with the rise of #MeToo taking public prominence, matricentric feminists such as myself are asking, where is #MeToo for mothers? As enlightened, millennial women are entering their thirties and becoming mothers, how has the position of mothering and motherhood been allowed to regress such that the harassment of being a contemporary mother is ignored, whilst sexual harassment is rightfully, being publicly discussed? (Glaser, 2021). By harassment, I mean that the responsibilities for maintaining family life that are placed upon women after having children are restrictive to all other aspects of women's *existence*, her career, her economic contributions, her personal interests are all affected disproportionally to those of men because of the work mothers are burdened with in the private sphere of the home (Asher, 2012) whilst fathers are able to continue to seek refuge in the public world (Glaser, 2021). I also note that working in paid employment does not reduce the domestic responsibilities of women when returning from maternity leave, rather, that through becoming a mother, a woman acquires the responsibility for all domestic chores that she undertook when on maternity leave and continues to be responsible for them when returning to paid work (Asher, 2012).

The notion that women have equality with men in the home is false (Glaser, 2021) a gap opens up between a woman and her partner whilst she is on maternity leave, with the father never developing, or resisting to develop full competence in the boring domestic workload associated with childcare and housekeeping (Glaser, 2021).

The sex roles displayed are more appropriate to bygone generations, and the level of anxiety experienced by women in assuming all the responsibility for intensively parenting (Warner, 2010) and assuming full domestic responsibility (Asher, 2012) is inconsistent with happiness (Warner, 2010) as parodied in the television drama Motherland (BBC, 2022) whereby zombified, exhausted professional women as mothers are found to struggle in a hamster wheel of competing demands of parenthood and work, with the notion of 'having it all' yet failing at all, showing the accepted status quo (Glaser, 2021).

1.3 The Pitfalls of Intensive Mothering

Poor mental health outcomes from subscribing to the tenets of intensive mothering are well reported (Sutherland, 2010; Rizzo et al 2013; Henderson et al 2016). Sutherland (2010) outlines that 'intensive mothering' has becomes synonymous with 'good mothering' which is in turn synonymous with guilt and shame. Work outside of the home is structured upon a model that goes against good mothering and guilt manifests as a result of functioning within this construct, with feelings of guilt recognised as having a link with depression (Sanchez-Rodriguez at al 2019). Rizzo et al (2013) found that aspects of intensive mothering are detrimental to women's mental health. Negative mental health outcomes in the form of increased stress and reduced satisfaction with life were found to be associated with 'essentialism,' the belief that mothers are the best people to deliver childcare at all times, over and above fathers. This notion of 'only mummy will do' is found even within feminist literature on motherhood, whilst describing it as a 'uncomfortable truth' (Olorenshaw, 2016).

The intensive mothering belief that parenting is 'challenging' was found to be associated with higher levels of depression and stress and lower levels of life satisfaction. The intensive mothering belief that a woman's life should be 'child-centred' was also associated with lower levels of satisfaction with life. Henderson et al (2016) found that increased stress and anxiety and decreased self-efficacy are noted in both women who do and women who do not adhere to the principles of intensive mothering, in the face of pressure to be perfect and associated guilt, with a lack of attainment of high expectations as a mother. That is to say, that intensive mothering is not a personal choice, but a *cultural mandate* and as such to escape it personally one would need to escape society and its cultural ideology (Henderson et al, 2016). As such, all mothers are subject to the pressure to be perfect and as a consequence all mothers, biproxy, are affected by the negative psychological consequences associated with intensive mothering.

Poverty has been shown to be a predictive factor for poor mental health amongst mothers (Rich-Edwards, 2006). As found by Abrams and Curran (2010) women who have post-natal depression and are experiencing poverty have been found to consider their maternal identity 'damaged' when associated with the dominant discourse on intensive mothering. Women experiencing poverty and describing their sources of stress have highlighted the negative impact poverty has on achieving the type of parenting that they would like to, through the limitation upon the amount of time that they can spend with their children but can't because of working and in being able to provide the type of experiences that they would like their children to have (Lange et al, 2017). With constant availability and diverse experiences both tenets of intensive mothering, these being reported as sources of stress for mothers who cannot achieve them are measuring themselves as failing based on the dominant discourse.

1.4 The Pervasive Nature of Intensive Mothering

The question remains then, as to why modern women are performing motherhood to the detriment of their own wellbeing? Newman and Henderson (2014) proffer that intensive mothering as an ideology is pervasive and entrenched within our individual consciousness through institutionalisation within society. Collateral to the ideology of intensive mothering is the notion of 'mother blame.' Mother blame is the term used by feminist scholars to describe the derision cast upon mothers for a range of personal and societal issues caused by a 'poor' childhood, leading to a reduction in the wellbeing of families, future citizens and accordingly the nation (Blum, 2007). If not intensively mothering their children, mothers themselves are considered a detriment to their child's wellbeing (Lee et al, 2010), or if intensive parenting is not 'successful' and a child grows up with some form of perceived deficit, then mother blame is the risk that mothers face, in being accused and found guilty of their failings by society at large. Women remain so committed to the dominant ideal, that mothers will accept enormous personal sacrifice in order to comply, indeed self-sacrifice is seen as a necessary qualification for fulfilment in an intensive mothering role (Newman and Henderson, 2014).

Intensive mothering has become a hegemonic ideal, as described in seminal work by Arendell (2000). Whilst the impossible to attain intensive mothering model is widely believed to be a media creation, it is found to be perpetuated through maintenance and indeed surveillance by mothers in an individual level (Henderson et al, 2010). Even mothers who do not abide by the facets of intensive mothering, use it as a point of reference against which to buffer their own ideals, further demonstrating its power as the dominant ideology (Arendell, 2000).

Henderson at al (2010) tested Douglas and Michaels (2004) assertion that the 'pressure to be perfect' found in New Momism is perpetuated by the media and found that the pressures placed upon mothers were generated by individuals themselves, alongside other mothers. As such, contemporary mothers are found to be engaging in self-surveillance. As Foucault first suggested in 1975, in discussing 20th century punishment, we have moved to a post-structuralist era, whereby we no longer need only social institutions to enforce control over our behaviour but when faced with dominant or powerful, hegemonic ideals we perform constant surveillance over ourselves. (Foucault, 2020).

Through surveillance of ourselves and our contemporaries, the pressure to be perfect as a mother is omnipresent as we judge and are judged continuously. 26% of the mothers surveyed by Henderson et al (2010) reported that their expectations for perfect parenting came from themselves and did not report that they felt pressure from the media or any dissatisfaction in their support networks. As per Foucault (2020) the women are perpetuating a cycle of internalised shortcomings befitting of the notion of self-surveillance, as opposed to blaming wider societal structures. As such, the mothers are demonstrating 'horizontal violence' a term first coined by Freire (1970) to describe the behaviour of oppressed persons who lash out at themselves or their peers rather than their oppressor. Accordingly, the mothers, in blaming themselves for falling short of the unattainable standards of intensive mothering rather than blame the media or the patriarchy, they turn their frustrations inwardly and horizontally towards others within the same group.

Being oppressed, according to Freire (1970) means living a life dominated by the values of others, whose way of life, is considered right. The oppressed internalise these values, to the detriment of their own and within this process, develop an aversion to their 'own people' becoming aggravated with their way of living but frightened of living any other way. As a method of coping, the oppressed vent their frustrations with acts of aggression, or 'violence' towards themselves and others in the same situation (Freire, 1970). Such horizontal violence is demonstrated in 'the mommy wars' (Steiner, 2007) where women set upon each other in a 'catfight' like fashion to determine if 'stay-at-home mums' or 'working mums' are the better mother, in a faux-feminist debate that negates the idea of choice (Glaser, 2021) or any form of solidarity or shared understanding and as such demonstrates horizontal violence (Friere, 1970).

Intensive mothering has grown in momentum in alignment with what has been coined 'new brain research' (Wall, 2010) or 'neuroparenting' (Glaser, 2021). From the 1990s onwards, parents were advised that spending an increased amount of time one to one with their child, engaging in educationally stimulating activities, with a burgeoning toy market capitalising on 'stimulating' or 'educational' toys, could influence their future intellectual potential, with mothers seen as having direct responsibility for their child's brain being properly stimulated (Wall, 2010). Whilst intensive mothering as an ideology has prevailed since the 1990s, it is considered to have formed its roots with the emergence of developmental psychology. Seminal work by Bowlby (1951) and later Ainsworth (2015) on 'attachment theory' led to the intensification of motherhood. Mothers were considered the primary caregiver and the best or most influential attachment figure. A child without secure attachment (to its mother) was considered at risk of developmental and 'attachment issues' across its lifespan.

The work of Bowlby and Ainsworth has received criticism, notably for the lack of a workable definition as to what 'attachment' is beyond a metaphor (Mercer, 2011), of being incapable of generating a testable hypothesis (Hofer, 2006) and of failing to be updated in spite of new knowledge on child development, (Thompson, 2005). Critics have also accused attachment theory of having discounted, scorned and distorted cross-cultural evidence of both maternal behaviour and infant emotional resilience that would refute the model of attachment (Otto and Keller, 2018).

Whilst it is noted and respected, that Bowlby was a reformer and advocate for sensitive and considered childcare, attachment research did, explicitly, identify 'bad mothers' within a framework of 20th century Anglo-American middle-class culture with psychopathology being the reported consequence should the 'mother-love' needs of an infant not be met through specific maternal behaviours (Otto and Keller, 2018). This position has cemented non-maternal childcare as problematic and also securely reinforced gender roles with women positioned as the primary care giver (Sims-Schouten et al 2007). Whilst contemporary sources may discount attachment theory, a lack of continuous maternal attention having a profound effect on the psychological wellbeing and healthy cognitive development of children remains the dominant discourse. Mothers from Bowlby (1951) onwards are seen to shoulder responsibility for their child's every physical, cognitive and psychological need. Attachment theory is not without criticism from feminist scholars, myself being one and I argue along with others, that attachment theory reinforces the heteronormative, middle-class, Anglo-centric norms of child-rearing (Welling and Nicolas, 2015) and supports the theoretical underpinning to the dominant discourse of intensive mothering.

Likewise, the theory of 'new-brain research' or developmental neurology that developed in the 1990s and promotes that children will develop with greater intellectual potential if they are constantly stimulated by their parents also attracted criticism for being scientifically invalid (Harris 2011). In spite of this, child-centred intensive parenting practices have become accepted as the ideal standard, with 'good' mothers wanting to conform to the increased parental focus on children's intellectual potential and indeed experiencing feelings of failure and guilt when their children fail to exceed the norm (Romagnoli and Wall, 2012).

1.5 Intensive Mothering and Neo-Liberalism

In addition to the neuro-developmental advantages promoted by intensive mothering, as a practice it has emerged in line with neo-liberal rationality (Wall, 2010), neo-liberalism being the set of social, cultural and politico-economic forces that hold competition at the centre of social life. Through competition, individuals are free to see that the 'best' people come out on top (Wilson, 2017). When operating within a neo-liberal framework, mothers invest in their children, as a project, in an attempt to secure the best possible outcome to ensure future success (Wall, 2004). Within the framework of neuroparenting, focus on the first three years of a child's life are seen as the most crucial, the brain is said to be developing at its 'fastest' and the absence of an ever-present mother will result in emotional and cognitive problems in later life (Glaser, 2021). In the UK, a bleak, apocalyptic vision of worsening crime and social disorder caused by childhood delinquency unless there was an improvement in early years childcare was presented by Allen and Smith (2008). Allen and Smith (2008, p10) describe the decline of UK society wherein 'motherly duties are performed sporadically, crack addicts abandon their children.'

According to Allen and Smith 2008, p17) 'maternal responsiveness' is the key to de-railing the social disorder that runs rife throughout the UK as caused by a lack of early years intervention in children aged 0-3 (Allen and Smith, 2008). The Department for Education (2013 p6) described 'great childcare' as 'ensuring our children *succeed* at school, go on to university or an apprenticeship and *thrive* in later life, 'vital to ensuring we can *compete* in the global race' whilst also 'building a stronger society, with more opportunities for women who want to work and raise children at the same time.'

This notion of a mother supporting the 'success' of her children, or options of 'great childcare' being available to support a mother in going back to work, only perpetuates the notion that the accomplishments of children who go on to 'thrive in the global race' is first and foremost the responsibility of a mother and therefore essentialism is perpetuated, unless 'great childcare' is available to support a mother in combining the dual roles of paid employment and mothering, which seemingly are courses for her to navigate with full and individual responsibility, should she not wish to raise the delinquent children alluded to by MPs Allen and Smith (2008). Assuming that the 'great childcare' described by the Department for Education (2013) is rarely free childcare, the ideals of neo-liberalism would therefore be perpetuated by the middle-class children, to the detriment of those from working-class families (Wilson, 2017). The notion of mothers, rather than the state having full responsibility for ensuring a booming and competitive global economy free from criminal delinquents is offset entirely from any governmental responsibility (Glaser, 2021).

In considering mothers' experiences of parenting within a neo-liberal framework, I also consider the impact upon children of individualism, as regarding children in terms of their future economic capital is associated with children reporting negative experiences of contemporary childhood in the U.K (Aynsley-Green, 2019). A neoliberal focus on childhood therefore is found to be detrimental to mothers and children alike.

1.6 Intensive Mothering and Employment

Women seeking to be 'good' mothers and aligning themselves to the ideals of intensive mothering, are found by some to be asynchronous with seeking paid employment outside of the home (Wall 2013; Walls et al, 2016) which is particularly noteworthy in the context of mothers undertaking professional doctorates. Intensive mothering, in placing a huge responsibility on mothers for the future outcomes of their children (Lupton, 2011) is seen as an intervention, at juxtaposition to women seeking a career (Wall, 2010). Conversely, in developing quantitative measures of intensive parenting attitudes, Liss et al (2013) found that intensive mothering attitudes were expressed by mothers who worked outside of the home and those who exclusively looked after their children, with each group expressing the ideology of intensive mothering in differing ways. Guendouzi (2006) questioned whether the trend of women with children working in majority, part-time, was owing to the societal pressures of intensive mothering being impossible to resist and contributed to the trend in the U.K. of women taking more responsibility for childcare than men. Women working part-time and shouldering a greater burden of childcare aligns well with the intensive mothering notion that mothers are better placed to look after children than fathers (Hays, 1996).

Guendouzi's (2006) discursive study found that working women both 'recycle and reflect' the discourse of intensive mothering, a position, it is argued that no longer reflects the reality of working women's lives and leads to a phenomenon of guilt amongst working women, when operating personally and within a society that supports this construct, placing the tenets of good mothering against the contradictory goal of mothers achieving their own career needs (Guendouzi, 2006). Wall (2010) when interviewing working women with children, noted that women altered their work patterns through going part-time or modifying their hours to the extent of working after their children were in bed until the small hours of the morning, to allow them to be present at all times for their children, when they were not in school or day-care. The women Wall (2010) interviewed also described taking care of housework when the children were in bed or altering their paid work hours to allow housework to be done when the children were not there, to allow total dedication to their children during the mornings, evenings and weekends. Wall (2010) unsurprisingly unearthed a tension between the competing demands of following an intensive mothering regimen whilst maintaining paid employment and an aspiration to retain a legitimacy for their fulfilling their own needs, which was found to be linked to what was best for their children. Guilt and personal conflict therefore manifest as the women Wall (2010) interviewed felt guilty for not sacrificing enough for their children, contrasted with a desire to self-nurture, to engage in hobbies, sport, catch up with friends or just to be free from caring for someone else.

Johnston and Swanson (2006) offer a contrasting view of women combining paid employment with adherence to an intensive mothering ideology, in that the women they interviewed also altered their construction of intensive mothering to reconcile the demands of this philosophy with that of their work-status choices.

Whilst all 95 of the women interviewed by Johnston and Swanson (2006) are described as middle class and therefore their choices around work originate from a privileged position, a range of opinions from full-time employed, part-time employed and at-home mothers was sought, and differing constructions of intensive mothering ideology were found. Three themes were identified from the interview transcripts of Johnston and Swanson (2006) when the women described the construct of an ideal mother, these being; accessibility, mother-child happiness and the separation of spheres, depending on the work-status of the mother the women offer different constructions of these three themes.

Looking just at the theme of 'accessibility' to illuminate some distinctions in the mothers' construction of intensive mothering ideology, for at-home mothers this meant at the most basic a constant physical availability, yet at best this meant, patience, tolerance and self-sacrifice, through taking care of the child's needs before their own. For the part-time employed mothers accessibility meant spending time on 'good quality interactions' during the time that they were caring for their children and not at work. Accessibility was focussed on 'good communication' and emotional availability through 'being there.' For the full-time employed mothers, accessibility took the form of psychological availability, but was also focussed on doing tasks that raised the child's self-esteem, taught resilience, empowerment and problem solving. The at-home mothers within this study reported choosing their work status based on their mothering ideology whilst the part-time and full-time mothers discussed their employment choices shaping their mothering ideology.

None of the employed mothers discussed their mothering ideology influencing them seeking employment and it can therefore be surmised that mothers chose their work status based on their mothering ideology and their mothering ideology emerges to align with their lived experience and work status (Johnston and Swanson, 2006).

1.7 Cultural Hegemony of Motherhood

Intensive mothering, through its expectations on what constitutes a 'good' mother is perpetuating a cultural hegemony (Johnston and Swanson, 2006). Hegemony is a Gramscian term, with the notion of 'common sense' at its core (Donoghue, 2018). Hegemony, as outlined by Gramsci (1971) is the way in which dominant classes within society are able to maintain their ascendancy by convincing oppressed members of the society that the established order is in their interests, as achieved through a combination of coercion and consent. A reciprocal balance of force and consent is maintained and normalised, as 'force' is seen to be used in response to 'consent' from the majority, the oppressed therefore are not fully aware of their position, as it becomes a normalised part of everyday life, or indeed, 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971). 'Common sense' is understood as the internalisation and indeed normalisation of a particular ideology which manifests in subjective positions which become innocuous and therefore go unquestioned, as is found with intensive mothering ideology. For a 'common sense' worldview to stake a claim within society, there must be an interrelationship between coercion and consent. For this hegemonic process to take place, dialectical processes must take place between material and socio-cultural life, as such the creation of a 'collective will' takes place and society enters into a socio-cultural unity in regard to a particular, dominant worldview (Ives, 2005).

I find that a cultural hegemony of motherhood has been adopted, as the promotion and dominance of a particular set of ideas have formed a socio-cultural unity through both material and ideational struggle (Donoghue, 2018).

Hegemony is preserved by determining expectations that can be fulfilled by those who are culturally dominant within society (Foucault, 2009) in this case, white, heterosexual, middle-class women, but ensures the failure of others, or indeed sets up for failure, any who try to counter the hegemonic force. Intensive mothering has been criticised for not recognising ways of mothering that are not white, heterosexual and middle class (Henderson et al, 2016) and mothers falling into these groups could be considered those who are 'set up to fail' by the dominant hegemony (Foucault, 1978).

Arendell (2000) reported the 'deviancy discourses.' Although this work is dated, I find it is still relevant in 2022 and I provide a further exploration of Arendell's (2000) work, in light of more contemporary literature. Deviants are those mothers who parent outside the of dominant theme, including homosexual, non-white, low-income mothers, also mothers who used assistive reproductive technology to aid conception, potentially without a male partner either as a single parent or a lesbian parent. Mothers who work are also seen as deviant, as are mothers who do not work and rely on benefits, rather than a high earning partner (Arendell, 2000). In light of the 'deviancy discourses' reported by Arendell (2000), hegemony is also considered to be a site of struggle amongst different forces within society, with the family noted as one of those sites, as institutions attempt to either sustain and construct, or indeed fracture the alliances between and relations of the dominant and subordinate groups within a hegemonic structure (Fairclough, 2013).

Whilst 'consent' may be given by the *majority* in society to adopt a hegemonic position on a form of social life, such consent is seen as spontaneous, or unquestioning, as the result of domination and power relations within that society and as such individuals and groups become responsible for policing adherence to the status quo, or 'common sense' position that has been adopted as per hegemony dictates (Donoghue, 2018). Those mothers who are *outsiders* to the hegemony of intensive mothering, may therefore be attempting to fracture and deconstruct the hegemonic force of intensive mothering (Fairclough, 2013) as opposed to being 'victims' or mothers who 'slipped through the net.'

1.8 The Outsiders

In addressing each of the 'deviancy' discourses (Arendell, 2000) in turn, the first to review is the discourse of gay and transgender women. It is recognised that a lack of scholarly work exists focussing on parenting in transgender and the gender non-conforming communities, with a noticeable theory deficit found to exist exploring issues concerning parents who were assigned female at birth and now identify as transmasculine (Walls et al, 2018). Attitudes towards same sex parents have become more accepting, there is less acceptance towards parents who have changed their gender of are gender non-conformist (Spidsberg, 2007). Transphobia towards parents or potential parents is considered to exist because parenting is constructed in such gendered terms and one cannot change their gender identity without shifting the perception of 'mother' or 'father' (vonDoussa et al, 2015).

As such it was noted by Hines (2006) that a gender transition often led to a relationship breakdown as the shifting, gender mediated roles affected co-parenting, with gendered practices such as housework needing to be re-negotiated within the family. Interestingly, notions of 'traditional' mothering roles are found to exist in lesbian and transgendered peoples' constructions of motherhood, with constructions of a mothering identity and a transgender identity found to conflict, for example 'motherhood' is seen to be a defining criteria for wanting to become a woman and therefore makes a male to female transition acceptable, coupled with the acceptability of being a lesbian parent but being a transgender, lesbian parent not (vonDoussa et al, 2015). It is clear that notions of 'essentialism' are evident here, in that parenting is best done by a mother and parenting is an experience that all mothers would want to have (Arendell, 2000) and therefore that deviancy discourses are replicated within and amongst the gay and transgender community.

Studies looking at black and minority ethnic motherhood in the U.K. are not as prolific as studies conducted in the United States, with the exception of those looking at the disproportionate number of black, teenage mothers in the U.K. (Bernard, 2013). At odds to studies in the US, where different notion notions of 'black' and 'white' mothering are found to have been set in the mid-twentieth century yet remain at juxtaposition to each other, with black mothers portrayed as an oppressive matriarch and white mothers as a smothering fuss pot (Feldstein, 2000). 'Good' mothering in the United States is said to be determined by notions of good, white parenting and more specifically, white notions of femininity (Guillem and Barnes, 2018).

Whilst black women are found to be negatively subject to bias owing to the intersectionality of race and gender when measured against perceived standards of 'good' mothers, with stereotypes such as the 'jezebel' i.e., sexually promiscuous or overly sexualised or 'welfare queen' dependent on benefits which are acquired through multiple childbirths, coming to the fore (Rosenthal and Lobel, 2016). Such explicit claims are not made in UK literature, but notions of good mothering equating to whiteness can be found. UK women of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black heritage are scrutinised and considered as performing poorly when compared to their white counterparts in the number of hours they spend playing with their children per week by Brocklebank et al (2013). Interestingly this study was titled 'social determinants of *parent*-child interaction in the U.K.' yet focussed solely on mothers. It was also stated within the study that, 'whilst play is difficult to define, a child doing things alongside a parent who is carrying out a domestic task *could* be defined as playing' although it wasn't within this study (Brocklebank et al, 2013) and this also assumes that 'domestic tasks' are the remit of the mother too. This study by Brocklebank et al (2013) was heavily influenced by the Marmot review (2010) which reprimanded mothers for not providing opportunities for play, reading and storytelling at least weekly. It is concerning that notions of essentialism, i.e., the mother being responsible and best placed to respond to a child's developmental needs (Hays, 1996, Warner 2006) have permeated policy and research, particularly when this is then portrayed to show 'failures' amongst certain ethnic groups.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women as mothers in the U.K. have also been study subjects when examining the perception of mothers by schoolteachers in rural and predominantly white areas of the U.K (Bhopal, 2014). Fascinatingly, as with other studies, the mothers not only drew upon a middle-class narrative of the value of education (Archer, 2011) but also drew upon a middle-class identity to support them 'fitting in' to the school environment and committed to demonstrating middle class behaviour, such as knowledge of the correct educational standards and measures, to 'perform' good parenting, as they know their race would potion them as 'other' (Bhopal, 2014). It is therefore of note that in spite of the BAME mothers studied by Bhopal (2014) showing dedication and commitment to their children's education, 'good' parents are considered by teachers to be white and middle class with black and minority ethnic parents considered to be disengaged and uncaring concerning their child's education (Chapman and Bhopal, 2013). It is clear that ethnicity, in positioning these women outside of the realms of what is considered a 'good' mother is demonstrating deviancy from the white norms of parenting described by Arendell (2000).

In addressing the 'deviancy' of low-income mother, Hennessey (2015) describes the contradiction that middle-class, wealthy women with high earning partners who chose to 'opt out' of working to care full time for their children are celebrated, yet women living in poverty are celebrated for choosing to 'opt in' to working rather than relying on benefits. The fact that women experiencing poverty may have to work in low-income jobs, in environments that are inconsiderate to family needs (Hennessey, 2015) and as such renders poor women incapable of meeting the demands of intensive mothering also renders them 'deviants' (Arendell, 2000).

Working class women face particular revolt within U.K. culture and are generally portrayed as suffering familial disorder, lacking in moral values and being physically unattractive (Skeggs, 2005). Femininity, when viewed under neo-liberal normative femininity is found to be exclusionary and working-class women find themselves disadvantaged and represented as unsuccessful (Allen and Osgood, 2009). Indeed, working class motherhood has been described as a form of 'failed-femininity' whereby under neo-liberalist ideals, women should wait until they are of an age and earning potential to be able to contribute to the economy through a satisfactory salary potential (McRobbie, 2007) Single, working class mothers face a particular backlash and are represented as the 'abject-mother' by the contemporary press, in particular the Daily Mail newspaper who characterises them as promiscuous, with children by different fathers seen as shameful, reliant on benefits and council housing with a lack of attention to her personal appearance and generally unglamorous (McRobbie, 2013).

The 'deviants' as described by Arendell (2000) would align with Foucault's (2009) notion of those who are not culturally dominant within the current cultural hegemony. The bulk of scholarly work on intensive mothering has perpetuated a cultural divide by focussing on middle and upper middle-class mothers (Elliot et al, 2015). The pressures to conform to an intensive mothering style are found however to transcend race, class and income with women from all racial and social classes, those with a low income and those who are in single parent families found to feel a pressure to conform to the standards of intensive mothering (Elliot et al, 2015, McCormack 2005).

Interestingly, young, low-income mothers are the only group of women found to resist this dominant discourse in not feeling guilty for non-adherence to the cultural norms of intensive mothering and not employing the practices required to obey the tenets of intensive mothering, as seen in middle class, older mothers (Romagnoli and Wall, 2012). Other forms of 'deviancy' from the intensive mothering ideology are found to exist, in particular, two contrasting ideologies in the form of the 'yummy mummy' or the 'chav mum' (Allen and Osgood, 2009). The yummy mummy will be discussed first.

For the 'yummy mummy,' the notion of maternal self-sacrifice seen with intensive mothering is replaced in favour of the neo-liberal ideal of maternal femininity, the yummy mummy is sexually attractive, well-groomed and recognises the importance of spending time on herself (Littler, 2013) in representing a maternal figure that is not 'just' a mummy. (Orton-Johnson, 2017). The yummy mummy is represented as a privileged, highly consuming, girlish white woman in her thirties (Littler, 2013). The particular distinction of this middle-class, heteronormative and white representation of motherhood is that it is linked to dietary practices and self-grooming (Malatzky, 2017) and is propagated to middle-class, older women who have founded a successful career before embarking upon motherhood (McRobbie, 2009).

Literature exists to 'guide' women in achieving yummy mummy status, 'Become a Yummy Mummy' (Foux, 2007), The Yummy Mummy's Survival Guide (Fraser, 2007) and The Yummy Mummy Manifesto: Baby, Beauty, Balance and Bliss' (Johnston, 2008) dedicated in supporting women to not 'let themselves go,' 'lose their sense of style' or become 'frumpy' (Johnson, 2008; Williams, 2007).

At its most superficial, the yummy mummy construct can be regarded at a purely aesthetic level, with the media considered responsible for regaling celebrity women for their successes in remaining, slim, glamorous and beautiful whilst pregnant and when caring for children (Daniel, 2006). The 'yummy mummy' is also found however to infantilise women, with the term considered to have a half-childlike, half-sexualised dialect (Littler, 2013). This notion of media polarisation of women is referred to as 'visual media governmentality' by McRobbie (2013) where the benchmarks of success or failure are regulated and indeed become 'performance indicators' of whether a mother successfully manages life, or not. As such, the celebration of the yummy mummy as a desirable identity, whereby autonomy, consumerism and beauty (Allen and Osgood, 2009) are seen to represent maternal perfection is actually found to represent a classification of what is considered both good and bad mothering in contemporary, western society. Good mothers are found to care for their bodies to allow them to be thin, toned and attractive, 'getting back to normal' soon after giving birth is also a frequent term of reference within the yummy mummy discourse (Yuill, 2012) with the post-pregnant form considered undesirable. 'Bouncing back,' as though from an illness, is another term frequently used, the message being that the female body must return to its pre-pregnancy state as quickly as possible, with all signs of pregnancy eliminated urgently, allowing weight loss and a return to glamour seen as a cause of celebration (Roth et al, 2012).

It is alarming to note however, that during the months following childbirth, women are extremely vulnerable to body image and eating concerns (Lovering et al, 2018) with the resultant levels of stress acquired through the concern with their size and body shape leading women to disordered eating (Rohde et al 2015) as they reconcile their position as being outside the social convention of female slenderness (Lovering et al, 2018). During the post-partum period, women are found to experience pressure to adhere to unrealistic body ideals (Lovering et al, 2018) with the media portrayal of celebrities swiftly returning to their pre-pregnancy shape (Hopper and Aubrey, 2016), potentially leading to increased body dissatisfaction (Lovering et al, 2018). Liechty et al (2017) found that women questioned the realism of media images of pregnant and post-partum women yet concurrently experienced a negative self-perception in light of them, as desire for more realistic representations of the perinatal period and the complex role of social media as an influence in perinatal body image. The yummy mummy discourse is found to align with objectification theory, first described in seminal work by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) whereby women view themselves from the position of an outsider, and view themselves as sexual or aesthetic bodies, for the purpose of being pleasing to others.

A key contributor to reducing the negative effects of objectification theory is to support the notion of admiring the functionality of the body, rather than the aesthetic (Liechty et al, 2015). Although people with disabilities have reported an inverse relationship with their level of disability and level of body-esteem (Taleporos and McCabe, 2005). The yummy mummy discourse totally excludes people with disabilities, with women with physical disabilities considered asexual by some (Esmail et al, 2010).

The idea of mothers as sexually attractive as a key tenet of the yummy mummy (Littler, 2013) is at odds to traditional representation of mothers as asexual beings, seminal work by second wave feminist Rich (1997) describes how mother should not only be self-sacrificing to be considered 'good,' but should also be stripped of all sexuality, as her time for sexual desirability is over. The yummy mummy could be argued to operate within a postfeminist, neo-liberalist era, where women are said to have 'won' the feminist battle for equal rights and are now free agents, able to exercise choice and consumer spending power on fashionable clothes and cosmetics and can 'empower' themselves through 'sexing up' (Jeffreys, 2015). It is also argued that women's fixation on make-up, styling, thinness and fashion serves to maintain their subordinate status (Jeffreys, 2015).

Failure, when measured against the yummy mummy ideal, is represented by the media representation of 'the single mother,' poorly dressed, overweight and dependent on the state (McRobbie, 2013). Maintaining oneself in a stylish and well-dressed form requires money, ergo women must be professionals before embarking on motherhood (Allen and Osgood, 2009). Therefore, clearly juxtaposed to the yummy mummy, are women who have had their babies when they themselves were young and without a well-paid job or, of a lower socio-economic class and unable to partake in the consumerist lifestyle associated with the purchasing of personal grooming products and clothing synonymous with the yummy mummy (Littler, 2013). The yummy mummy is found to represent the uncomfortable notion of 'having it all' (Nash, 2011) where women are expected to have children, earn enough money to allow them to be heavy consumers, which in turn affords them physical attractiveness through healthy food, beauty products and fashionable clothing.

The media is seen to portray the yummy mummy image as an attractive, glamorous and autonomous woman, which is at odds with other representation of motherhood as frumpy and disempowering (McRobbie, 2007).

Contrasted with the yummy mummy is the personification of the 'chav mum' (Allen and Osgood, 2009). The chav mum has become a popular cultural reference as a site of humour, disgust and outrage but ultimately as an abusive term for the working class and white (Tyler, 2008). Humour, outrage and unquestionably *abuse* are demonstrated on the site Urban Dictionary (2022a) categorising the 'chav' as 'the lowest common denominator in English society' and when describing a female 'chav' or 'chavette,' writing, 'must get pregnant as soon as period stars, regardless of age.' The chav as a cultural phenomenon is considered both a media construction and a reconfiguration of class-based social divisions, giving rise to conceptualisations of the underserving poor, or a social underclass (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) that have re-emerged through social class delineations seen within late-modernity (Adams and Rainsborough, 2011) where discourses of self-efficacy, self-control and self-acceleration dominate (Ecarius, 2018).Female chavs on according the website Urban Dictionary (2022b) are referred to as 'chavettes' and described thus, 'regardless of weight will wear clothes two sizes too small…pregnant with her first child before she reaches fifth year…have five kids with different fathers…. also seen slapping her kid around the head and swearing at them in public.' Vilification of the 'chav mum' appears to be commonplace in U.K. culture with the smoking, drinking, swearing Vicky Pollard character of Little Britain becoming synonymous with the 'chavette' (Nayak and Kehily, 2014) and showing her as white, poorly educated, overweight, loud and vulgar (Tyler, 2008).

The chav mum is considered at odds with contemporary ideals of maternal femininity, in such that women having children should first conform to economic contribution through workforce participation, following university education (Wilson and Huntington, 2005). Interestingly, it is argued the chav mum, perhaps in being a younger mother may represent a threat to older, middle-class mothers through her seemingly 'easy' fertility contrasted against the notion of 'leaving it too late' to have children described by older, working mothers (Tyler, 2008). Set against middle-class older mothers with secure financial status, young motherhood is seen as a feminised route to poverty, resulting in a lack of respectability and accruing a pram-pushing chavette status, versus the bourgeoise feminine ideal of the 'yummy mummy,' as defined by class, whiteness, spending power and glamour (Nayak and Kehily, 2014). Interestingly, early or premature sexualisation of young women is considered to occur in families where there is bad parenting and a lack of supervision, allowing the girls exposure to sexual knowledge, with such parenting practices considered to occur amongst parents regarded as 'chavs' and working class, and the overly sexualised young women considered a threat to middle class children though contagion (Howard et al, 2016). The chav mum, when considering teenage pregnancy a working-class phenomenon, is therefore seen to repeat itself through mums having babies when young then creating an environment for their own female children to do the same, although this notion of a home environment amongst working class families that allows early sexualisation is heavily contested (Egan and Hawkes, 2012).

Loughnan et al (2014) report how stereotypes associated with low socio-economic status such as 'chav 'in the U.K, 'white trash' in the USA and 'bogan' in Australia are consistently being used to describe these stereotypically white groups as subhuman, bestial, primitive and feral.

Nayak and Kehily (2014) found that chav mums were used as a site for the projection of contagion and hatred, with terms such as 'scum' and 'dirty whites' used to describe them. It is interesting to note that chav mums are a white, U.K. construct, versus representations of black motherhood found to come under critique in the United States in the form of 'Welfare Queens' (Pruitt, 2017). Welfare Queens is a total contrast to the chav discourse as it is a term referencing black women in the United States, perceived to repeatedly have children to increase the size of their welfare pay-out (Pruitt, 2017). A similar discourse to that of Welfare Queens in the USA is not found within the U.K., with the closest notion being that of 'migrant mothers' who may be considered a drain on public resources and struggling with integration (Erel, 2009). It has been reported that undocumented migrant mothers 'perform' mothering, in a way that they see as befitting with the culture of the country in which they are living, in the pursuit of citizenship (Longman et al, 2013). Another manifestation of the migrant mother in the U.K. is that of the 'transnational mother,' this being mothers who migrate internationally for labour purposes, leaving their children in their country of origin (Madziva and Zontini, 2012). Transnational mothers do not relinquish their mothering role but assume a role as the main earner within the family whilst simultaneously adhering to a gendered role of mothering through providing emotional care and support from afar but leaving others to provide the physical care of their children (Lutz and Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012) and as such demonstrate a form of motherhood befitting with neoliberal, economic version of motherhood at odd with the 'drain on resources' terminology used towards migrant mothers (Erel, 2009).

I have provided a representation of motherhood in the 21st century and have been able to highlight the key tenets of intensive mothering, the hegemonic and pervasive nature of intensive mothering, the additional challenges intensive mothering places on mothers in employment, the strain intensive mothering places upon all mothers' health and wellbeing and have illuminated the groups of mothers who sit outside of those included in the intensive mothering ideal. With an understanding of 21st century motherhood and what this may mean for doctoral-student-mothers, I am now able to present a literature review on motherhood and doctoral study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In a literature review, all available evidence on a given topic is retrieved and reviewed so an overall picture of what is known about the topic can be achieved. In doing so, the value of one individual piece of research becomes greater, if seen in the context of other literature on the same topic (Aveyard, 2018). As such, I reviewed all literature related to professional doctorate study and motherhood systematically, in order to illuminate what is already known on the topic and to guide my research focus to explore what is unknown, or that which can be further explored, building upon the scholarly works that proceeded it. In the initial search stages, a 'broad strokes' approach was taken, to allow me to look at all available evidence on the topic and to support the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Aveyard, 2018). Google scholar (2022) and whole library databases of both the university where I worked and the university where I am a doctoral student were searched primarily, prior to then focussing on specific databases, namely Education Review, ERIC and Scopos. I also searched the British Library EtHOS system for previously published thesis on the subject of motherhood and doctoral study. From extensive reading and experimentation with search strategies it became apparent that the appropriate search terms, with truncation applied should be mother* to account for mother, mothers, motherhood, mothering with synonyms of mum* and mom* to account for mom, mommy, moms and also mum, mummy and mums, then combined with the Boolean term AND assigned to the second search term with truncation doctora* to account for doctorate, doctorates, doctoral. Primary research only was screened for and a date limit of 2009 to the present was set. The abstract, or in many cases the full paper was reviewed in order to screen for suitability.

Studies were excluded on the grounds of being about becoming a mother during a doctorate or about professional progression of mothers who have a doctorate, as these were felt to be outside of the remits of this study.

Database	Search Terms	Results
Education Review	Mother* AND Doctora*	20
ERIC	Mother* AND Doctora*	38
Scopos	Mother* AND Doctora*	135
British Library EthOS	Mother* AND Doctora*	2

2.1 Table 1: Literature Review Search Terms and Results

It feels remis, to not mention studies that were screened and ultimately excluded from my formal literature review but whose content has none-the-less shaped and influenced this study, by virtue of being similar yet different. I will therefore discuss these studies to demonstrate how they have shaped my own study, in spite of not meeting my criteria for formal literature review. An example of such a study is Eisenbach (2013) who wrote an autoethnographical account of her own experience of becoming a mother whilst also a PhD student, research assistant and a wife. Eisenbach (2013) provided interesting insight into her position, through an autoethnographical account, but this was found to not meet the definition of autoethnography provided by Adams et al (2015) in that it was descriptive but did not move beyond description to provide critique of cultural beliefs and practices that shape the experience of being a doctoral student and a mother (Adams et al, 2015). Reflexivity was not evident, as the author did not dig deeper into her connections

with others, her spouse, colleagues or with wider society. In reviewing Eisenbach (2013) there was found to be no evidence of the methodological rigour aligned to autoethnographical research and there was no strive for greater social justice based upon an analysis of the personal or political meaning (Adams et al, 2015). Key themes were noted from Eisenbach (2013) that were also found to be present in both preceding and later research, namely guilt, stress and competing demands as a student, wife and mother.

Similarly, Holm et al (2015) phenomenological investigation of counselling doctoral students becoming mothers during their doctoral study. Although elements of the study were transferable, this study focussed primarily on the *transition* to parenthood during doctoral study and how a mother changes her identity from student to mother upon birth of her baby. It was also situated firmly within the US narrative on tenure and how this affects the right time to have a baby. The participants within my study group, as professional doctoral students could potentially work in all manner of settings, outside or within academia and therefore comparisons to tenure as a motivation or backdrop cannot be made. The subject therefore was not deemed comparable enough to be included, formally, within this literature review. The three themes the study findings revealed, being the protective factors of a mentor and the student's family, issues of an evolving identity in that family life doesn't stop when you're studying and also that being a mother was a motivation to continue or that hindrances, such as mental health, sleep deprivation and negative interactions with educators all have had bearing on my study and therefore should not go unmentioned.

Likewise, Kulp (2016) study on the effects of parenthood during graduate school on PhD recipients' paths to professoriate, was centred on the career progression of women along the US tenure track and not as such on their student identity as a mother. It was also PhD rather than professional doctorate based and therefore whilst interesting and influential reading, was again not suitable for formal review. The primary finding that mothers with PhDs were under-represented in tenure positions is however noted.

Mirick and Wladkowski (2018) study on doctoral students' perspectives on pregnancy, motherhood and academic career goals was again focussed on the US tenure track for academic progression, the sample group also consisted of students who had doctorates, indeed those with doctorates consisted of over half of the group or were studying for a (full time) doctorate and as such was not focussed on professional doctorate students. The findings that motherhood was not considered the norm in academia and should be kept quiet combined with the notion that mothers had to choose between motherhood and academia in spite of not quite being in fitting with the framework of my study, cannot be downplayed and has had bearing on my thinking and moulding of this study. Wladkowski and Mirick (2019) subsequent study titled *'support and recommendations for pregnant and newly parenting doctoral students in health professions'* was a separate arm to Mirick and Wladkowski (2018) looking at full time doctoral students in the US, as opposed to professional doctorate students and in many senses was a comparison of the support offered to 'tenured' paid academic staff, in contrast to the support given to doctoral students.

As such, the study findings that formal support mechanism such as maternity leave, as would be offered to paid staff is not directly applicable to my study, although the requirement for a lactation space and on-campus childcare are not disregarded. The participants described the informal support that they themselves instigated, through the use of personal and professional support networks to support their continuation and ultimately, success on their doctoral programme yet also described programmatic support, in the form of understanding professors and administrators allowing flexibility with the timing of submissions. Kulp (2016) and both Mirick and Wladkowski (2018) and Wladkowski and Mirick (2019) are studies looking at full time, doctoral students in the United States with study aims that do not align closely enough with my own area of study, yet with that in consideration their work has informed mine and should be credited with having done so.

Gibson et al's (2017) UK based study used autobiographical accounts from three women who were mothers working in senior educational leadership roles and studying for a doctorate in education. The three narrative accounts were collectively reviewed with themes generated through a participative process. The purpose of this study was to explore how the multiple facets of a woman's identity draw together to allow her to lead in an educational setting. The focus, ultimately was on leadership, so has not been formally included for literature review owing to a malalignment with my own subject area. This study however has provided insight into the concept of the 'third space,' as described by Bhabha (2012) and Soja, (1996) a subject that was previously unknown to me but has subsequently challenged my thinking and evolution of my own thesis and for this alone, this paper warrants a credit by way of this discussion.

The third space, described by Bhabha (2012) is as a site, both physical and ideological in nature where contrasting ideologies and dominant narratives come into contact, are interrogated and ultimately, challenged. Such conflict brings with it change and learning. Soja (1996) argued that the third is space is neither a physical nor a psychological space but an intersection of both place and mind, whereby both ontological and epistemological assumptions are met with scepticism. Gibson et al (2017) describe the third space as 'occupied' by female doctoral students who are mothers as the place between the other two main spaces we occupy, namely home and work. Within the third 'doctoral' space, one is considered free to be creative and experiment, but it is also recognised that the lack of 'rules' required in the first and second spaces can leave residents of the third space feeling unbound and therefore unsafe or challenged. This is considered of particular relevance to doctoral students, who must use knowledge from both the first and second spaces in the 'third space' to produce a significant body of work (Gibson et al, 2017). The concept of the third space presented a challenge to my thinking, I considered the impact the covid-19 pandemic had on the 'third space' in being the area where people are creative and challenged, when home working became the norm for many in paid employment and also, opportunities for study outside of the home, such as in a library or quiet café were diminished and as such, in very physical terms, the third space may have been lost for many female doctoral students who are mothers and may be both working and studying from home from March 2020 onwards. The covid-19 pandemic is considered to have widened existing gender gaps, with the need to simultaneously care for children whilst working (Arntz, 2020) or in the case of female doctoral students, studying and as such the impact may be heightened in female doctoral students position within the 'third space.'

It is a feature of many studies on doctoral study and motherhood that participants are in majority Caucasian. Appling et al (2018) sought to address this following their US based observation, that there are no known studies reporting on the experience of African-American doctoral student mothers. In seeking to re-dress this Appling et al (2018) conducted a phenomenological study looking at the experiences of eight African-American mothers undertaking doctoral studies in counsellor education. The participants of this study, through being both African-*American* and exclusively students of counsellor education in the US are not well aligned with my study, but, as this is seemingly the only study looking at the intersectionality of race, gender and maternity its findings are noteworthy. Six themes were generated by way of results, these being, increased personal pride, viewing motherhood as a priority, modelling new ways of being an African-American mother, persevering through adaption and resilience, managing a multitude of work-life balance challenges and expecting marginalisation based on race. Whilst the themes of motherhood as a priority, persevering and managing/balancing have been replicated in other studies, the themes relating specifically to race are new and have moulded my thinking on race and groups who may consider themselves oppressed within my study. It is also worthy of note that mentorship and role modelling was proposed as a solution to support women with similar identities during their doctoral journey. Mentorship and role modelling have been advocated in previous studies (Haskins et al, 2016) and will return as a feature of studies reviewed later within the literature review.

So now to the papers formally included in my literature review. After accounting for duplicates and formally screening each paper for suitability, five studies were ultimately selected as suitable for formal inclusion, these being Brown and Watson (2010), Trepal et al (2014), Webber (2017a), Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) and Lundquist et al (2020).The following studies that have been included within this literature review have been rigorously critically appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (2018) checklist for qualitative studies. Critical appraisal being understood to be the structured assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of a paper, to support the assessment of relevance and contributions to my own research topic (Aveyard, 2018). I have chosen to order the papers included in my literature review chronologically, to show the evolution of understanding of mothers undertaking doctoral study, over time.

"Understanding the experiences of female doctoral students" Brown and Watson (2010) has been included not only because it met my inclusion criteria but also as it seems to be a 'starting point' in the contemporary academic conversation of doctoral students who are mothers and is referenced in almost every subsequent paper. Brown and Watson (2010) sought to understand the impact of gender, rather than motherhood, on the doctoral experience of women. As all participants were mothers and a prominent finding from the study being that women's academic careers are not impacted because they are women, but because they marry and have children, this study was a ripe and fruitful starting point for my own enquiry.

Brown and Watson (2010) drew a purposive sample of eight women from two schools within one university in the U.K. Purposive sampling, whilst of course limited by the ability of the study findings to show inference to the wider population is seen as appropriate for a small sample, located in one geographical area with specific defining characteristics (Battaglia, 2011). In fitting with a purposive sampling criterion, all subjects were women who had recently completed, or were soon to complete a PhD. This is a different sample criterion to my study by virtue of not looking specifically at professional doctorates and not explicitly seeking women who are mothers. The women were all mothers and all but two were married. It appears from reading excerpts of the interview transcripts as provided within the published study that all of the married women were in heterosexual marriages with men, this however wasn't attended to as a consideration and as such stood out as the author's adopting a heteronormative position (Leadley-Meade, 2018) which I will seek to avoid in wanting to recognise the diversity of family life and intimate relationships (Chambers, 2012) that may be characteristics of the women in my study. An underpinning methodology is not explicitly stated, beyond the study being qualitative, this is felt to be an omission, through not providing some explanation as to what guided and framed the research strategy and in doing so justifying the rationale behind the research design and analysis (Silverman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data which seems entirely suitable, as the researchers had set the agenda for the topic, this being gender and PhD study, whilst the respondents were able to determine the information produced on the topic (Green and Thorogood, 2010).

A process of coding and thematic analysis has taken place, although again this is not explicitly stated or discussed as a chosen method of analysis. I feel the authors may have fallen into the trap of labelling a qualitative research approach as thematic analysis, without having attended to the rigorous stepwise approach that a true piece of thematic analysis must adhere to (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). With this in consideration, Brown and Watson (2010) present that being a mother has profound implications on doctoral study. The core emergent themes presented are that the timing of study was dictated by domestics demands, more specifically that the age of their children was a determinant in when to start their PhD, as expressed through describing success in a PhD as being relative to domestic life. Secondly that balancing home and academic life was a source of great stress, women were torn between being a wife and/or mother and a student, with the term 'juggling' used frequently to describe how the women interviewed balanced the 'demands' of being a wife and mother with also completing a PhD and the ensuing guilt that came with this. The challenges of managing home life with the demands of a PhD came to a head in the final theme from Brown and Watson (2010) with conference attendance found to be one negotiation too many. The inability to attend conferences owing to not being able to leave a husband and child was summarised by a participant in (Brown and Watson, 2010 p399) and found to be a common sentiment amongst participants, *"I wish I had a wife in addition to a husband to do all of those sorts of things wives do."* It was also clear within this study that women viewed having a PhD as essential to their career progression, but also that being a PhD student was life affirming, enriching and a site of love. Whilst accepting the limitations of this study, the themes it has generated are found to be replicated and advanced by future work and as such it provides a worthy benchmark for ongoing study.

Trepal et al (2014) study entitled *"Great expectations, doctoral student mothers in counsellor education"* studied ten women selected by purposive sampling and drawn from a previous quantitative study looking at motherhood in academia (Stinchfield and Trepal, 2010). This study, whilst inclusive of numerous geographical regions was conducted in the United States and is looking specifically at ten women who are working in counsellor education and studying for a doctorate. It is recognised that generalisability is never going to be a feature of a small, purposively collected sample looking at a specific phenomenon of interest, whereby true representation of the population becomes the mainstay (Silverman, 2019). In this case the population is specifically counsellor educators who are doctoral students and mothers in the US, thereby there are clear differences between this study and my research looking at professional doctoral students, without specification to professional group, who are mothers, in the U.K. That notwithstanding, this study is found to be methodologically robust following CASP (2018) review and its findings have added colour to my own thinking and supported the evolution of my own research.

Trepal et al (2014) undertook a phenomenological study to describe the participants' experiences of the phenomenon of interest, asking the specific question, *'what are counsellor education doctoral students' experiences of being a doctoral student and a mother?'* Phenomenology, as conceived by Husserl in the twentieth century is concerned with studying the world as it is perceived by human beings, within a particular context and at a particular time (Willig, 2001). Trepal et al (2014) sought to eliminate bias from their study, by engaging in the process of 'bracketing', where prior knowledge and beliefs are put aside, allowing attendance to participants' accounts with an open mind (Starks and Trinidad, 2007).

It is my belief that any attempt to set aside one's own beliefs is impossible, however Trepal et al (2014) have attempted reflexivity, that is they recognise similarities and differences between themselves and the participants (Berger, 2013, Teh and Lek, 2018) in articulating their position, relative to the participants, in stating that both primary researchers were counsellor educators and mothers themselves and the third author was a masters student and a mother. With the quality of qualitative research said to be dependent on the reflexive ability to be cognizant of the similarities between the research participants and themselves (Dodgson, 2019) the authors have stated that they documented their own experiences to keep them separate from those of the participants and in doing so attend to their 'researcher lens' (Trepal et al, 2014). It is my belief that this could have been done to a greater depth, attending to Berger's (2013) description of reflexivity by turning said researcher lens onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for the effect that the researchers situatedness may have on the women being studied, the data collected and how it was interpreted. An alternative to this and one that I find preferable is in accepting a participatory approach, as a feminist and thereby interested in the use and misuse of power within a research relationship (Grove, 2017) as an accepted member of the group of study, a participatory approach minimises any power differential as participants and researcher are seen as equal partners, although reflexivity on behalf of the researcher must still be attended to (Dodgson, 2019).

One-to-one Interviews were used to collect data with one 'lead' question, namely *'what is your experience of being a doctoral student and a mother?'* Followed by three further questions about defining balance, the impact of the participants children's ages on their doctoral experience and thirdly on identity as a counsellor educator. Trepal at al (2014) used triangulation to strengthen their data set by all three authors reviewing the data. Triangulation is regarded to improve the credibility and validity of research findings (Noble and Heale, 2019) although the process of triangulation is not clear and my point still remains about the situatedness of the authors and the impact this may have on the findings, triangulation of data is regarded to provide a balanced view of the presented findings (Noble and Heale, 2019). This is further supported by the authors use of member checking to assess if the findings represented the participants experiences. Member checking, or participant validation is a valid technique for exploring the credibility of results with data returned to participants to affirm that it resonates with their experiences (Birt et al, 2016). The use of member checking is a great strength of this study and has impacted upon the development of my own.

Trepal et al (2014) independently coded the interview transcripts before collaboratively developing categories and then ultimately forming themes which then became the results of the study. The transcending theme was that of 'expectations' with three subthemes emerging from this, these being self, counsellor education and society. Within the subtheme of 'self' participants reported guilt for not meeting the societal expectations of being a mother, these being staying at home and caring for their children which is at odds with the doctoral study and requirements to both physically and mentally have time away from their children.

A second expression of the subtheme 'self' is that completing a doctoral programme would bring with it time and flexibility that could allow the women to 'mother' in the way that they would like to, or in one case, a participant expressed that completing a doctoral programme had made them realise that being the 'type of mother' that she wanted to be, was not compatible with researching and publishing her work. What is clear to me from this subtheme of self, is that the doctoral students participating in this study are measuring themselves against intensive mothering (Hays, 1994) ideals and that their guilt, desires and proposed modifications are bracketed within the 'norms' of a mothering ideal as found within Guendouzi's (2006) study.

The second theme expressed in Trepal at el (2014) is specific to counsellor educator faculty members responses to and messages about parenting. As such, this may not be transferable to all doctoral students who are mothers. The participants describe wanting to assess the culture of the faculty they would join upon commencing as a doctoral student and in doing so, found attitudes to mothers which ranged from being ignored to being inclusive. Participants in Trepal et al (2014) also describe how being a mother had parallels with their chosen profession, as a counsellor educator, in that they were able to act as role models to other potential doctoral students and that being a mother gave them credibility, when they were teaching, counselling or supervising. Being a mother was seen as an asset, it enhanced their teaching, allowed them to make connections to other mothers and allowed them to present real-life examples in areas such as human development.

The third theme of 'society' expressed in Trepal et al (2014) study emphasises how participants saw their female gender as having an impact on how they were perceived as parents and doctoral students, with participants expressing that male doctoral students do not have to fulfil the role of primary caregiver and as such have 'freedom' to be a doctoral student. Gender was also referenced in regard to the culture within higher education and a lack of female role models in senior positions. The most concerning finding was that maternity was seen as a barrier to doctoral degree completion, with students being seen not to be 'serious' about their doctoral studies if they became pregnant, not being allowed maternity leave and plainly being advised not to get pregnant. I observed these themes with interest and with consideration of the differences between this study and my own and can now be mindful of what has been demonstrated by Trepal et al (2014) when interviewing participants.

Webber (2017a) study entitled, *"Supporting professional doctorate women students through identity change and turbulent times: who cares?"* sought to address three key points, namely exploring the emotional and practical issues that women experience on a professional doctorate programme, are there barriers stopping women in confiding in their supervisors and thirdly, whose responsibility is it to care? The study used a sample size of eleven women, recruited through a UK based professional doctorate network. The recruitment criteria were that the women must be over 25 years of age, having a long-term partner for over two years and either children under 18 or someone dependent on them for care. Whilst these sample criteria are specific, it is not entirely clear why these particular boundaries are set on the age of participant, the length of time that they had been in a relationship or the age of their children.

My study, looking specifically at mothers on professional doctorates, rather than women (who may well be mothers) on professional doctorates conceptualises motherhood in broader terms and seeks not to impose any 'morality of motherhood' (Chambers, 2012) through replicating normative motherhood ideals in hoping to include single mothers, lesbian mothers and mothers of all ages. My study will also not impose an age limit on the mother's children as a limiter for inclusion. This is owing to '*mothering*' being considered to be a women's experience of childrearing, which may indeed change with the ages of the children (O'Reilly, 2010).

The study used both mind mapping and interviews to gather data through narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, as understood to be the collection of narrative from small groups, to share individual experiences that expose the researcher to the identity of experiences, lifestyle and ultimately identity of group members through a natural, storytelling approach (Butina, 2015) is considered entirely suitable for a study looking at identity change in a purposively sampled group of women. Participants were first asked to mind map their responses to four pre-determined questions concerning their identity before, during and after professional doctorate study, any changes or transformations that had occurred and how said changes had impacted on their different relationships. A focused interview was then undertaken, which was described to be sensitively based upon the responses given in the mind mapping exercise. It is not explicitly stated within the study, if these interviews were held one-to-one between researcher and participant or if they were group interviews. Group interviews have the advantage of being a useful way to discuss sensitive issues (Green and Thorogood, 2010), of which identity change during a professional doctorate, particularly in relation to issues of family, could be considered one.

As the role of narrative interview is to support the participant in 'telling their story' (Green and Thorogood, 2010) a one-to-one setting may be more accommodating. In the second stage of the study, six of the eleven women were selected and provided with a questionnaire focussing on supervisory support. The six women were selected based on having experienced 'turbulence' during their studies, in the form of a relationship breakdown, guilt about juggling family life with their studies, ill health or conflict at work. The interviews and questionnaires were then analysed using a thematic framework analysis. Framework analysis is focussed on maintaining the integrity of respondents' narratives and goes beyond a more basic thematic analysis in seeking to use findings to influence practice (Green and Thorogood, 2010).

The findings of the study were divided into the subsections of family identity, professional identity, summary of main emotional tensions, whose responsibility is it to care?, what students want from a supervisory relationship and the boundaries of the student/supervisory relationship. The first three subsections are most applicable to my own study. In concerning family identity, students reported their identity is being primarily motherhood focussed, with the student's professional role and doctorate having to 'seep around the cracks' or the student switching to part-time work to accommodate the changing needs of her family. The mothers who reported to be in more gender biased households described themselves to be more motherhood focussed than career or work focussed and described the now familiar metaphors of juggling balls, struggling to find a balance and the seemingly omnipresent emotion of guilt.

Professional identity was reported as a challenge for the women participating in Webber (2017a) who describe not only colleagues feeling threatened by their shifting knowledge base, but also the women themselves who again describe challenges in balancing the demands of work, study and home life. This is similar to the findings of Gibson et al (2017) who also describe the change in identity that doctoral level study brings as presenting challenges to both colleagues and to self for women with children. This process of challenge is again considered to be sitting within the realm of the third space as described by Bhabha (2012) as the site where shifting identity is reconciled but that the process of doing so may be both professionally and personally uncomfortable.

Webber (2017a) then goes on to summarise the main emotional tensions both at home and professionally for women students, these being, fear of failure, conflicting priorities, differing levels of confidence, trying to be 'super mum,' balancing family life and illness and relationship break up. A continuum is then presented demonstrating the levels of a student's ability to manage the demands of study, home and work life balance before further themes about the supervisory relationship are discussed.

Webber has provided insight into the specific needs of female doctoral students who are mothers and the insights from this article and other work by Webber (2015 and 2017b) has been essential in shaping my own study. A further analysis of the findings of (Webber 2017a) is found in Webber and Dismore (2020) with particular consideration to the notion of female doctoral students creating time and space to study, which in turn supported the development of this study through an understanding of the use of 'family capital' for women doctoral students to 'carve out' time and space as accrued by her position within the family.

After reviewing Webber (2017a) I was left feeling however, that the findings from this study present what I already expected. From reviewing the contemporary 'backdrop' to mothering, it was my expectation that along with other studies Webber (2017a) would find the women were 'negotiating the struggle', 'balancing,' 'juggling,' feeling unsupported both at work and home, finding themselves failing as mothers, students or professionals. This sense of dissatisfaction was purposeful. I keep returning to my original question, which hopes to delve beneath the *personal* experiences or indeed into how mothers undertaking professional doctoral study construct their identity as students and ultimately, what *societal* factors legitimise this identity? Why are the conflicts described by Webber (2017a) accepted norms for doctoral students who are mothers and why we are accepting of these as a female condition rather than a societal issue? I am left longing to know, is there another way? I am also left wanting to learn about doctoral student mothers outside of heterosexual dyads and those who speak from any other discourse than that of intensive mothering. I am desperate for an alternative narrative and now have it imbedded in me as a doctoral student undertaking research to be aware of not using intensive mothering as my frame of reference.

I am now aware that this niggling dissatisfaction with what is continuously reported as the female doctoral student mother's experience, is my paradigmatic alignment with feminist critical discourse analysis, as described by the leading authority Lazar (2007 p142) feminist critical discourse studies, *'aim to show up the complex, subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in different contexts and communities.'*

I now recognise that the goal of my research is to be emancipatory, I do not wish to purely 'report' but as a feminist doing critical discourse analysis, I hope to critique any discourse which maintains or sustains a patriarchal social order and in doing so, privileges men and disadvantages women (Lazar, 2007). The studies reported so far do not, I feel, go beyond what is already know and in doing so, actively perpetuate current discourses that do not serve female doctorate students who are mothers. I recognise that I wish to participate in 'academic activism' that is, to raise *critical* awareness (Lazar, 2007) of the position or doctoral students who are mothers.

A study that I found a joy to evaluate and began to go beyond what I consider myself to already know on this topic, as it has been so often reported upon, is Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017). This study sought to explain how women undertaking a doctorate in education through distance learning balanced and integrated their multiple identities, namely those of mother, student and professional in order to persist on their program. The word 'balance' seems to be synonymous with mothers in higher education but the notion of identity integration and how this supports continuation of study was new. Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) were looking at the *process* of how women develop a sense of self and how the intersectionality of self is negotiated. The overarching aim of the study was to generate a theoretical model explaining the process in which women come to develop as scholars and intersect this identity with other identities, especially motherhood, which in turn affects their persistence to doctoral completion. Grounded theory is considered an appropriate methodology when little is known about a topic (Mills and Birks, 2014).

Having extensively reviewed the literature on motherhood and doctoral level study, I am confidently able to say that little is known about the experience of or enactment of identity for female doctoral students beyond the popular narratives of 'juggling and struggling' which have proven a frustration for me in being so frequently replicated and ultimately, accepted and perpetuated. I therefore warmly welcomed Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) study in using grounded theory, in being able to produce, or construct an *explanatory* theory in uncovering a process that is inherent within the area of inquiry (Mills and Birks, 2014). Using a grounded theory, following Corbin and Strauss (2015) guidelines Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) developed a theoretical model to demonstrate women EdD students' progression from student to scholar and how this identity intersects with other prominent identities, the most salient being that of a mother. The sample differed to mine in that the women were recruited from two universities in the south-east United States and were enrolled exclusively on a distance learning EdD program. The women were eligible for inclusion if they were either currently pregnant, had children at home or a desire to have children, so 'motherhood' was actualised by a desired identity as much as it was a concrete one. In addition, the women had to either have been published in a peer reviewed journal, presented at a conference or had a desire to either publish or present following dissertation. This is entirely in fitting with the aim of Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) in wanting to understand the transition to 'scholar' but is notably different from my study. Of the 17 women ultimately sampled, all identified as heterosexual, 15 had children and 2 desired children.

A range of data collection methods were used, all in fitting with grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) namely questionnaires, interviews and life maps. Following data collection, coding and categorisation (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) three, prominent identities were described, i) female with primary descriptions of mother and wife ii) professional iii) academic with the core of each identity being a strong sense of self as a 'steward.' In interpreting a woman's journey from student to scholar, key internal elements were identified, namely i) competence in research ii) confidence to conduct research iii) positive attitude towards research iv) envisioning self as 'motherscholar' or woman scholar as well as the behaviour of aligning. In relation to competence in research, this was described as being acquired early within the doctoral program that was then followed by confidence acquired through workshops, presentations in class and at conferences, which in turn generates a positive attitude towards research (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al, 2017). As a positive attitude towards research grew and the women engaged in scholarly activities with confidence, the women were then able to envisage themselves as scholars, or more specifically 'motherscholars' that is their strong identity as mothers was able to intersect with their scholarly identity (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al, 2017).

Most fascinatingly, the motherscholar identity was formed through observing other female faculty members who role model their identity as scholars but also by formally engaging with 'strong female faculty' who demonstrate the intersection of their scholarly self with other identities and are seen to have found a balance between their intersecting identities. The notion of 'motherscholar' is fascinating to me and I am intrigued by The Motherscholar Project (2022), which showcases a visual representation of women in academia.

This website showcases women in academia using the concept of 'motherscholar' whereby women are offered the choice to identify as a legitimate worker and scholar, whilst also recognising the role of mothering. A motherscholar is said to be intrinsically standing up for herself and others, in showing that women can and do succeed in all ranks of academia, with children of all ages, from all ethnic backgrounds, from all parts of the world (The Mother Scholar Project, 2022). The Motherscholar Project (2022) organises events such as lectures or presentations, to support other motherscholars around the globe in order to empower, build community and provide resources to enhance the success of motherscholars globally.

The Motherscholar Project was generated following the PhD thesis of Cohen-Miller (2014) titled, *'The Phenomenon of Doctoral Students Motherhood Mothering in Academia: Cultural Constriction, Presentation on Self, and Situated Learning.'* This phenomenological study of four women undertaking full time doctoral study in the United States sought to answer the research question, *in what ways do doctoral students experience motherhood/mothering in academia?'* Cohen-Miller (2014) was looking specifically at women who had become mothers whilst on a doctoral program. Three themes were generated by Cohen-Miller (2014), firstly that mothering in academia was a gendered experience, whereby cultural constructions of motherhood and mothering in academia had to be negotiated, that mothering in academia was a strategic experience where women had to find ways to present themselves to accommodate their dual roles, but thirdly and most relevant to this discussion is the mothering in academia was imbedded with a varied sense of belonging.

It was noted that role models, in the form of other academic mothers helped doctoral students to envisage themselves as an academic and a mother (Cohen-Miller, 2014). This concept of a doctoral student mother envisioning themselves as an academic or scholar as aided by role modelling, mentorship, encouragement, kindness and a positive attitude from other powerful, successful female academics who are mothers is described by Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) as a 'transformational educational experience.'

If combined with active engagement in developmental opportunities is what ultimately determines success in the transition into a motherscholar. It is therefore of equal interest to note, that one of the core identities described by the women in Rockinson- Szapkiw et al (2017) is that they regard themselves as 'stewards.' Stewardship is seen as a core value in both their academic and professional identities and their research was seen as an altruistic endeavour to serve, advocate, contribute make a difference. This is fascinating not only because academia and successful academics are regarding as being uncaring (Lynch, 2010) but also that doctoral students who are mothers are so often reported as experience guilt for neglecting to care for their own families (Webber, 2017a) yet this finding from Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) suggests that care is at the very core of these academic mothers motivations and that being *in receipt* of care from other female academics is the key to their doctoral success.

Lundquist et al (2020) study is a recent addition to the small body of research looking at doctoral study and motherhood, with this study looking specifically at doctoral student mothers of young children, based on previous studies such as Brown and Watson (2010) reporting the age of the doctoral student's children having a significant impact on her student experience. Lundquist et al (2020) explicitly state a feminist underpinning to their study in illuminating the experiences of women in higher education as being aligned to social institutions and attitudes forming the basis for the position of women in society (Ardovini, 2015). This is entirely in fitting with my understanding of feminist praxis, in that revealing the gender ideology and institutional power asymmetries, such as those within the institutions of higher education and motherhood, that become intertwined with social identities, such as those of mother and doctoral student, it is then possible to challenge hierarchically gendered social orders (Lazar, 2007).

Lundquist et al (2020) recognise the current ideology of motherhood being that of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) and draw upon previous studies which demonstrate how the strive for perfection as a mother combined with the competing demands of doctoral study manifests in stress and a sense of failure as described in seminal work by Lynch (2008), Brown and Watson (2010) and a study looking specifically at the wellbeing of female doctoral student mothers by Haynes et al (2012). Haynes et al (2012) contribute to the knowledge base of doctoral student mothers, in looking specifically at wellbeing.

Haynes et al (2012) position their enquiry from the premise that doctoral student mothers are engaged in all familiar, 'juggling' of their multiple responsibilities and that doing so can lead to reduced satisfaction of their studies and of their lives in general, ultimately leading to 'divestiture,' or the loss of sense of self, or a student sensing an unwanted change in who they are. The study concluded that wellbeing for doctoral student mothers was both an individual and a social process, that is both dynamic and unique to each woman. Yet as Lundquist et al (2020) recognise, many studies show that the pull that women feel between their roles as mother and student manifests in guilt (Brown and Watson, 2010, Trepal et al 2014). As stress and guilt are seemingly synonymous with doctoral student mothers experience, whilst the mechanisms for coping may be individual (Haynes et al, 2012) I support the premise of Lundquist et al (2020) in wanting to explore doctoral student mothers experience from a feminist perspective, in looking at how societal and institutional expectations of mothers affect their doctoral student experience.

Lundquist et al (2020) looked exclusively at counsellor educator doctoral students with children under five years old and as such are considering a specific doctoral mother population which is at odds to my study, however, as this study seeks to address societal and institutional issues, with a view to informing said institutions, the educators within them and the women themselves, with a view to reduce attrition rates of doctoral student mothers, I feel philosophically aligned with this study in spite of the specificity of their sample being at odds with mine. My study will include women with children under five years old (and any other age) which is the area of interest of Lundquist et al (2020) based upon the high physical, emotional and mental energy required to parent this age of child.

Lundquist et al (2020) conducted a phenomenological study and as such sought to explore the individual experience of a phenomenon that a group have in common. The group were eleven women on a doctorate in counsellor education, ten of which were enrolled full time and one part time. This is again a different population to my sample who will be on professional doctorates and therefore will not be in full time study and will most probably be combining being a mother with their doctorate and with paid employment. Also, in contrast to my study, the authors (Lundquist et al, 2020) report that they approach the study from a constructivist paradigm, outlining the work of Ponterotto (2015) in shaping their understanding of the reality of an individual's experience as being both individually and independently constructed. I do not share this viewpoint but instead find myself more aligned with *social* constructionism, in the belief that discourse constructs reality (Willig, 2009). Social constructionists argue that the world we experience is the product of social processes and that the social reproduction of meaning is through language (McNamee et al, 2020).

This relativist position has been criticised by those who feel that there is more to social and psychological life than language (Willig, 2009). Parker (2014) criticises the relativist approach to social constructionism as having a preoccupation with language, ignoring material oppression. Social constructionism from a relativist viewpoint is accused of focusing on epistemological critique whilst ignoring social critique and therefore creating a political void, Willig (2009). Those who appreciate the underlying structures, which facilitate the necessary conditions for particular discourses to emerge, are said to adopt a critical realist epistemology (Parker, 2014).

Both Parker (2014) and Willig (2009) advocate a critical realist approach to discourse analysis, through analysis of the historical, social and economic conditions that facilitate discourse. Critical realism has developed as a paradigm in the belief that neither positivism, nor interpretivism goes far enough in transforming individual learning or societal norms, as such critical realism follows a subjective epistemology, akin with interpretivism, but shares an objectivist ontology with positivism (Coghlan and Brannick, 2019). I therefore land in the position of undertaking a discourse analysis through a critical realist lens and akin with Parker (2014) believe that there is more than language and in undertaking a discourse analysis one must attend to the conditions that make the texts possible. As such, I am undertaking a feminist critical discourse analysis in considering the gendered ideology of mothering and being a doctoral student will impact upon doctoral student mothers experience and use of discourse (Lazar, 2007).

In spite of my slight philosophical differences with Lundquist et al (2020) I share their feminist lens and appreciate their endeavour to illuminate the experiences of doctoral student mothers. The study used interviews as their method of data collection and used a phenomenological process as described by Moustakas (1994) of coding, clustering, thematising to allow for textural-structural descriptions of the phenomenon of interest to be developed which, ultimately generated the study findings. The findings were six emergent themes of ambivalence, increased use of coping mechanisms, striving for balance, superwoman syndrome, indistinguishable roles and leading by example. Ambivalence as described by Lundquist et al (2020) is the point at which the priority role of mother met with the strong desire to be a good doctoral student and professional.

At this point of ambivalence, the participants describe feelings of guilt, pride and exhaustion, often simultaneously, yet always with being a mother as priority, with other thoughts and feelings being in conflict with this role. Guilt, as described by Lundquist et al (2020) has been reported within this literature review (Trepal at el, 2014, Webber (2017a). Yet pride is reported here in a different format to previous studies. Emancipatory thoughts and feelings have been reported in all previous studies (Brown and Watson, 2010; Trepal et al, 2014; Webber, 2017a., Rockinson-Szapkiw et al, 2017). Emancipation has been described in relation to the doctorate itself, through it being life affirming, enriching or a site of love (Brown and Watson, 2010) Emancipation has been described with completion of the doctorate allowing the mother to be the type of mother she wants to be (Trepal et al, 2014), or through having her eyes opened and feeling cleverer than they believed themselves to be (Webber, 2017a). The development of competence and confidence into the role of a motherscholar identity has also been reported through undertaking a doctorate (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al 2017). The participants in Lundquist et al (2020) seem to describe *pride* as something different to an emancipatory experience as I have understood from the previous studies.

Pride is referenced in the participants ability to juggle their competing demands, of parenting, studying and for some, working. This is at odds to what I have termed the 'struggling and juggling' narrative found in previous studies (Brown and Watson, 2010., Trepal et al, 2014., Webber 2017a). Pride is also described through validation (Lundquist et al 2020) which has not been described before. The exhaustion described in meeting competing demands as a mother and student is much more in fitting with the 'struggling and juggling' narratives described in all previous studies, with the exception of Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017).

The 'multiple mixed emotions' that Lundquist et al (2020) is also a new finding, as it blurs themes that have been generated by previous papers. In Lundquist et al (2020) the participants describe the complexities of being a doctoral student with young children, in fitting with what I have termed the 'struggling and juggling' narratives of previous papers (Brown and Watson, 2010., Trepal et al, 2014., Webber 2017a) *but* this is intertwined with 'beauty and depth' being added to participants lives with terms such as 'humbling,' 'empowering,' 'validation,' 'while it's tough and difficult, I love it' being used to describe the *mixture* of conducting a doctorate as a mother being hard and this concurrently forming part of an emancipatory experience is new. Whilst a doctorate being an emancipatory experience has been described in *all* of the previously reviewed studies, this has always been when describing the personal effects a doctorate has, or, in the doctorate facilitating a type of future mothering identity which is desirable, the experience of 'the struggle' as emancipatory in its own right is new and fascinating.

The subsequent themes of 'increased use of coping mechanisms' and 'striving for balance' are replications of similar themes seen within previous studies and speak to the totalitarian nature of contemporary mothering, with mother being the primary source of care for their child and other family members and therefore, anyone else caring for the child is regarded as 'childcare' or 'help' and that the needs of the family must be primary over the needs of the mother completing her doctorate.

'Superwoman syndrome' is presented as a finding in Lundquist et al (2020) and again is not a theme that has been explicitly presented before, although it aligns with the 'struggling and juggling' theme. Superwoman syndrome is presented by the participants in Lundquist et al (2020 p275) as the requirement, as a woman and a mother, to excel in all roles, as described beautifully by one participant.

'I'm trying to, you know, be this superwoman, this supermom, you know, make sure that my cape stays blowing in the breeze, but, like, sometimes that cape gets really tattered, you know, and it's dirty, it's dusty, and I'm just standing there like, "Yeah, I've got it all together." Like, "No I don't!"

A 'supermum' discourse has been used in previous feminist studies on motherhood (Choi et al, 2005 p167) with women feeling that they are failures if they are not able to perform as 'supermum, superwoman, superwife and super everything' through their ability to care for a baby, undertake domestic tasks and take care of others. 'Superwoman' has historically been said to represent a cultural presentation of femininity (Ussher et al, 2020) and has been described in more recent works looking motherhood (Warner, 2006, Asher, 2012) whereby women are expected and portrayed as being able to cope with multiple competing demands. Women, therefore, feel inadequate when not able to live up to this representation, or 'myth' of motherhood and therefore adopt a 'supermum' persona to hide their perceived inadequacies (Choi et al, 2005). This is found to be described clearly by Ludquist et al (2020) as the participants define the responsibilities and obligations upon them as 'numerous and heavy' whilst using the analogy of a superhero in a dirty cape to describe not measuring up to the supermum ideal.

The theme of 'indistinguishable roles' presented by Lundquist et al (2020) is complex. As with previous studies, there is described to be a lack of separation between roles with multiple identities described as complementary, the term motherscholar is not used, and the descriptions do not echo Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) narrative on a burgeoning motherscholar, rather that the student identity is complemented by their mother identity, much more in fitting with the participants in Trepal et al (2014) who felt that being a mother was an asset to their credibility as a teacher.

Where Lundquist et al (2020) differs again to the notion of a motherscholar identify is that participants described their multiple roles as being in conflict with one another, owing to competing responsibilities and deadline demands, which is much more in fitting with the 'struggling and juggling' themes of Brown and Watson (2010), Trepal et al (2014) and Webber (2017a) however the conflict is also seen as part of this complementary fusion of mother and doctoral student, with one participant noted as stating, *"these identities are constantly feeding each other, enhancing the other, shaping…changing…challenging"* (Lundquist et al, 2020 p276).

Another time that this fusion of identities and the conflict involved in this has been a positive to a mother with a complex identity is when reading Darroch and Hillsburgh (2017) study looking at mothers who were elite long-distance runners. The participants in Darroch and Hillsburgh (2017) reported guilt and conflict at their changing priorities upon returning to training after having their babies but also found that being an elite athlete enhanced their motherhood. Previous studies looking at female elite athletes have shown that it is possible to create an identity which fuses child rearing with competitive sport (McGannon et al, 2012 and McGannon et al 2015).

In spite of 'intense training' seen as oppositional to the commonly understood construct of a good mother, Darroch and Hillsburgh (2017) have shown that as sport is such an integral component to elite athlete mothers' identities that they can actually use the 'good mother' construct as a way to blend their identities as athletes and 'good mothers' through regarding their athletics as complementary to their mothering. This has left me questioning if the 'intense training' required for competitive sport is comparable to that required for doctoral study or indeed the notion of having an integral identity as a sportswoman is comparable to the identity of doctoral student that is seen to work as a complementary finding in Lundquist et al (2020).

Lundquist et al (2020) describe 'leading by example' which could equally have been titled, 'role modelling' as the participants describe how they role model for not only hard work and dedication but also for holding the family as a central priority in their lives. Role modelling was highlighted as a finding by Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017) although this was more in relation to the creation of the 'motherscholar' identity, a construct that I found socially inclusive and feminist.

I was left disappointed by the descriptions of role modelling in Lundquist et al (2020) which appear to focus on the process of study rather than the value of study to the individual women or society at large. In focussing on, 'hard work,' 'dedication,' 'what it means to love your spouse' and even 'what it means to be in conflict,' I was left feeling that the participants were promoting the core components of a meritocracy, in that individuals can 'rise up,' 'climb the ladder,' 'come out on top' through hard work and competitive self-interest (Littler, 2018).

I was also left with an impression of the 'mumpreneur' a definition of which has been developed over the past decade and is commonly parodied as the mother who develops her own business from the kitchen table, whilst her children crawl beneath it (Littler, 2018 p179). I was disappointed not to find notions of the more egalitarian motherscholar identity represented, yet I understand that the hegemony of intensive mothering is situated firmly within a neo-liberal framework and as such, it is unsurprising that meritocratic principles permeate the participants lives (Lamar et al, 2019).

A summary of each paper is also provided as an aide-memoir prior to the summary of themes, in table 2. Upon reviewing all five papers looking at doctoral study and motherhood, four themes were identified, as tabulated below in table 3. These themes are titled, complex identity, struggling and juggling, belonging, emancipation, with different representations found amongst the data set within each of the papers reviewed.

Authors, Year and Title	Site	Methodology	Participants
Brown, B. and Watson, P. (2010) Understanding the experiences of female doctoral students	U.K.	Not explicitly stated beyond being 'qualitative.'	8 women who had recently completed or were soon to complete a PhD All women were mothers All but two of the women were married
Trepal, H, Stinchfield, T. and Haiyasoso, M. (2014) Great expectations: doctoral student mothers in counsellor education	U.S.	Phenomenology	10 women all of whom were studying for a doctorate in counselling
Webber, L. (2017) Supporting professional doctorate women students through identity change and turbulent times: who cares?	U.K.	Framework Analysis	11 women, recruited through a professional doctorate network. All women were over 25 All women had a long-term-partner for two years or more All women had children under 18-years-old or someone dependent on them for care
Rockinson-Szapkiw, A., Spaulding, L. and Lunde, R. (2017) Women in distance doctoral programs: how they negotiate their identities as mothers, professionals, and academics in order to persist	U.S.	Grounded Theory	17 women Women who are on an EdD program Women who are currently pregnant, had children at home or a desire to have children All women were heterosexual
Lundquist, B., Rubel, D. and Ng, K. (2022) Experiences of counsellor education doctoral student mothers with young children	U.S.	Phenomenology	Women undertaking counsellor educator doctorates Women with children under five years old

2.2 Table 2: Part 1: Literature Review Papers Overview

Themes	Complex Identity	Struggling and Juggling	Belonging	Emancipation
Brown and Watson (2010)	Conference attendance is problematic	Timing of study is dictated by domestic demands Balancing home and academic life is a source of great stress Conference attendance is problematic	Children are reported as barrier to doctoral degree completion Conference attendance is problematic	PhD is life affirming, enriching and a site of love
Trepal et al (2014)	Gendered roles (student and mother) Completion of doctoral study will bring time to be the type of mother the participants *want* to be	Gendered roles (student and mother) Guilt for not meeting societal expectations of being a good mother	Gendered roles (in higher education) Assessing the culture of the faculty Being a mother is an asset as a teacher	Completion of doctoral study will bring time to be the type of mother the participants want to be
Webber (2017a)	Motherhood focussed identity, job and doctorate fitting around family needs Professional focus lose balance when taking on the EdD	Guilt Juggling balls Struggle	Work focussed Identity transformation at work with negative feelings/perception	Learning more on the EdD, not necessarily a comfortable process, seeing things that wouldn't have seen before "I feel like I'm cleverer than I thought I was."
Rockinson-Szapkiw et al (2017)	Development of motherscholar identity through role modelling		Confidence Competence Development of motherscholar identity through role modelling	Confidence Competence Development of motherscholar identity through role modelling
Lundquist et al (2020)	Indistinguishable roles Leading by example	Guilt Exhaustion Increased use of coping mechanisms Striving for balance Superwoman Syndrome		Pride Multiple mixed emotions

Table 2: Part 2: Literature Review Themes

Undertaking this literature review has supported me in understanding the doctoral process for mothers which will in turn support my discourse analysis of women combining professional doctoral study with motherhood. I am grateful to the authors for their knowledge, which has illuminated the experience of doctoral student mothers and assisted me in my study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Critical Realism

This discourse analysis is undertaken by adopting a critical realist approach. Choosing a research method depends upon the researchers' assumptions about society (Bowling, 2009). The three main research paradigms being positivism, interpretivism and critical realism (Alderson, 2021). Positivism is the dominant philosophy underpinning scientific methods and assumes that all phenomena are measurable using deductive principles. Human behaviour is seen as a reaction to external stimuli which can be observed and measured using scientific principles (Bowling, 2009). A positivist philosophy adheres to the principle that there is a stable reality, which exists outside of our observation of it and that through empiricism, or only studying phenomena which can be observed through the senses, knowledge about the world can be gained (Green and Thoroughgood, 2019). Through a positivist enquiry therefore, knowledge is that which can be studied through scientific experimentation, yet it is my opinion that people are complex and unpredictable, entangled with their interacting social contexts and relationships, which cannot be 'unravelled into variables' for examination (Alderson, 2021).

Interpretivism is considered to be the broad alternative approach to positivism (Alderson, 2021). Interpretivism, does not seek to establish the reality of the world, but is more interested in people's interpretation of it. The aim of interpretive research is therefore to understand the world from the point of view of the participants, rather than attempting to derive an explanation of the world (Green and Thoroughgood, 2019).

Through an interpretivist lens, knowledge is that which can be experienced subjectively by individuals, adopting this relativist position considers there to be no truths, with interpretivists interested in individual awareness, or construction of experience with attention paid to perceptions and hermeneutics, rather than to facts (Alderson, 2021). Critical realism emerged through the work of Bhaskar (1979) in response to shortcomings in both positivist and interpretivist philosophies for limiting reality to that which can be 'known'. One of the most important tenets of critical realism is that ontology is not reducible to epistemology, that human knowledge does not capture all reality, there is a far deeper reality operating beyond human knowledge (Fletcher, 2017) known as the 'real' realm of reality where causal mechanisms and their influence can be discovered (Alderson, 2021). Ontology, to critical realists, should be separate from epistemology. To positivists, to 'experience' is that which can be experienced using the senses, which does not account for the epistemological tenet of thinking, analysing or 'making sense' of things that have been observed (Alderson, 2021). Interpretivists, including constructionists, view all facets of reality as being socially constructed and often engage in discourse analysis (Crombie and Nightingale, 2009). In assuming that our understanding emerges from our thoughts subscribes to a totally subjective epistemology, at the expense of any ontological version of a stable reality, how an individual thinks is therefore 'the way things are' (Alderson, 2021). Critical realism is able to overcome the contradictions of positivism and interpretivism by working with both paradigms at an empirical level, trying to understand and analyse reality, through aligning with the positivist ontology that the world does exist independently of our thoughts and then through adding a third level of 'real' but unseen causal influences and their effects (Alderson, 2021).

Critical realism seeks to both explain and *critique* social conditions, in the belief that there is a 'real' social world to discover, explanations should be given to the casual mechanisms that shape events, for the purposes of analysing social problems and making suggestions for change (Fletcher, 2017).

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is historically aligned with psychology (Parker, 2014) but is utilised across the social sciences (Wetherell et al, 2014) including for educational research (Mullet, 2018). Discourse analysis focuses on the use of language to serve individuals in accomplishing personal, social and political processes (Willig, 2014). To discourse analysts, a text is the materialisation of available discursive resources, which the author of the text draws upon to construct a version of events (Willig, 2001). To study discourse is to study language in use or, put another way the study of discourse is the study of human meaning making (Wetherell et al, 2014). Historically, discourse analysis has been undertaken from a relative perspective, in considering discourse as the means to understanding the truth, with material practices said to be produced by discourse and only fully understood when converted into and examined as, discourse (Edwards, 1996, Potter, 2015). In critical realism, language is understood to construct our social realities (Sims-Schouten et al, 2007) in following a subjective epistemology (Gunnarson et al, 2016) whilst also recognising the conditions that make the discursive texts available and as such accepts that there is 'more to language' in addressing the dominant structures which validate available discourses (Sims-Schouten et al, 2007). The world is considered to be both socially constructed and 'real' in the belief that a material world underlies discursive accounts of social phenomena (Parr, 2015).

As this study seeks to explore the subjective experience of being a mother undertaking a professional doctorate, understand the societal forces that legitimise these subject positions and make suggestions for change, critical realism is found as a suitable paradigmatic approach. In fitting with a critical realist methodology, this study will utilise discourse analysis as the method of knowledge generation.

Several traditions operate within discourse analysis, including semiotics and pragmatics (Wodak and Meyer, 2016), conversation analysis; the concept that talk in interaction has a social function (Antaki, 2008); ethnography of communication; the study of discourse which focuses on ways of experiencing, demonstrated in particular ways of speaking (Ray and Biswas, 2011) and discursive psychology; the study of the discursive practices as opposed to cognitive processes used to achieve social and personal objectives (Willig, 2001). Critical discourse analysis is distinct from the range of discourse studies noted above in that it is problem oriented, not interested in analysing a linguistic unit in isolation but in analysing and explaining social phenomena (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) through the analysis of discourse, whilst analysing the relationship between discourse and social processes, to address social wrongs (Fairclough, 2013). The analysis of discourse is 'critical' in that it should be oriented towards critiquing and ultimately changing society as a whole, rather than seeking to simply explain, or understand the phenomenon of interest (Wodak and Meyer, 2016).

In fitting with a critical realist enquiry, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an analytical approach for not only describing, but also interpreting and explaining the way in which discourses construct, sustain and legitimise social inequalities (Mullet, 2018). CDA can take a number of forms, dependent on the research goals and theoretical perspectives, yet emphasises the role of language as a power resource (Willig, 2014).

The primary aim of CDA is to uncover implicit or concealed power relations (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) and is considered a useful tool for educational researchers who wish to explore connections between educational practices and the social context (Mullet, 2018) cementing further its applicability to my study. At its core, all critical discourse analysis aims to reveal structures of power and prevailing ideologies, that is to reveal the hidden, but latent everyday beliefs that participants, often from diverse backgrounds, hold as a common-sense view (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) and as such the links between Gramscian concepts of hegemony and common sense and critical discourse analysis are clear (Donoghue, 2018).

Power in critical discourse studies is generally understood from a Weberian perspective (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) in that power is the ability of an individual to achieve their will in spite of resistance from others (Beetham, 2018), but understanding as to the *source* of power differs dependent on the philosophical alignment of the researcher. I find myself in alignment with a Foucauldian perspective on power, whereby power is seen as an invisible, but systemic, structural feature of society. With this understanding, domination is not found to manifest through the overt pressure of one person over another but through multifarious forms of domination that may be exercised within society at once, with the creation of 'subjects' and 'actors' who may be unaware of the positions that they have assumed (Foucault, 1975). As such, discourse is seen as the representations of the embedded powerful and dominant forces within a society, at a particular point in history (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Power, in CDA when understood in Foucauldian terms, sees discourse as a manifestation of social action, which is determined by the social structure and can in turn reinforce, or erode said structure (Wodak, 2015).

Foucault introduced the union of power and discourse with dominant forces in a society said to control what is considered to be knowledge (Foucault 2009) and as such, discourses are reproductions of dominant forces within society as a representation of how dominant groups within society exercise power over the oppressed and how, in turn, the oppressed resist such abuse (Wodak, 2015). Foucault argued that within any period of time, there are constraints upon how people are able to think, governed by the conceptual environment in which they operate (Gutting, 2005). The conceptual environment influencing what people know and therefore how they think, as derived from the discursive surroundings into which they are born. Knowledge, therefore, is conditional and depends on an individual's location in history, geography, social class (Jager and Maier, 2016) and it could be argued, motherhood status. Discourse, therefore, emerges as a performance within the historical determinations of the time, the result of a construction of rules and unities (Foucault, 1972). Dominant discourses provide the conditions to the legitimate ways of both seeing and being within the world and accordingly become seen as 'common sense' (Willig, 2001 p106). The idea of dominant discourses becoming common sense (Willig, 2001 p106) originated from a severe description by Foucault (1994 p131) who describes discursive formations maintaining a 'regime of truth.' The production of truth in Foucauldian terms is affected by political, economic and institutional regimes and is operated through the economy, society and culture (Foucault, 1994 p133). Therefore, what we believe to be the truth, or knowledge, is in fact specific to the historical context of the time. It is found that discourse, in particular when considering discourse as an institutionalised way of talking as understood by Foucault, both legitimises and secures hegemony (Jager and Maier, 2016).

To study the 'historiography of thought' is known as Foucault's archaeological approach (Gutting, 2005) and examines the boundaries and laws that formulate the 'strata' of historic events that affect the history of ideas and support totalities in human thought (Foucault, 1972). Language is said by Foucault (1970) to partake in this process of uniformity and the archaeological approach considers discursive events as the object of study (Flynn, 2003). Words are 'things to be deciphered' (Foucault, 1970) with an 'archive' described as the collection of rules and prior events that permit and prevent certain practices from being accepted within the society of the time (Flynn, 2003). In examining the systems that develop over time to allow what can and cannot be said it is found to be the repetition of discourse that forms linguistic rules, which permit the institutionalisation of certain discourses over others (Foucault, 1972). That is, to study how people with diverse interests and diverse backgrounds can find themselves thinking in surprisingly similar ways (Wodak and Meyer, 2016).

A symbiotic power/knowledge relationship is found to underpin all discursive practices (Flynn, 2003). The advancement of knowledge can only proceed should it resemble the collective worldview of the time (Foucault, 1970). The characteristics of knowledge at any given time or 'episteme' is said to appear across a range of texts and are said to belong to the same discursive formation (Foucault, 1972). Foucault (1972) advocates the analysis of discourse as the search for discursive unities, the *rules* which make it possible to examine the sociological, economic or political relations which exist between statements and to explore, 'what was said in what was being said' (Foucault, 1972). As such, discourses are not merely a reflection of reality, but also shape and in turn enable reality.

In doing so discourses make use of 'subjects' that is in reviewing subjectivity from a Foucauldian perspective, subjects are seen to be the creators of discourse, whilst concurrently being created by and 'subjected to' discourse. Subjects are therefore seen as both co-producers and co-agents of discourse, because of their entanglement within the discourses available to them within their position in society at a given time and place (Jager and Maier, 2018). Discourse analysis, from a Foucauldian perspective is therefore surmised as the analysis of the on-going *production* of reality, as conveyed by active subjects, as opposed to an analysis of *meaning*. Discourse, through creating subjects, in turn determines their actions and materialisations (Jager and Maier, 2018). As such Foucauldian critical discourse analysis is considered the most suitable methodology for a critical realist researcher wishing to study the subjectivity and experience of being a professional doctorate student and a mother, whilst also examining the societal forces that legitimise such identities.

3.3 Method

A recognised challenge of conducting critical realist research is that critical realist literature is often focussed on philosophical and epistemological debate with little focus on *how* to carry out research (Satsangi, 2013). Critical discourse analysis likewise is seen by some, as an emergent approach with few resources to guide its application (Mullet, 2018). I contest this view, as it is recognised that critical discourse studies do not attempt to provide one specific theory, neither is one specific methodology characteristic of research within critical discourse studies (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Critical discourse studies are united in the common interest of deconstructing ideologies and power, with the critical discourse analyst able to make their own position and interests explicit through their chosen scientific methodology and a commitment to maintaining a self-reflective approach throughout their research study (Wodak and Meyer, 2016).

With these factors withstanding, this study has adopted a Foucauldian discourse analysis, whereby in analysing the discourse one analyses the relationship between discourse and subjectivity (Willig, 2001). When analysing discourse from a Foucauldian perspective, discourses are seen to both facilitate and constrain what can be said and by who, thereby discourse analysts focus on the availability of discourse within a culture, with regard to the implications for those who live within it. The 'culture' under analysis is mothers undertaking professional doctoral studies and reviewing the implications for those living in it will illuminate the institutional practices that legitimate power relations, which in turn, validate the discourse (Willig, 2001). This study will follow the six-stage approach to Foucauldian discourse analysis outlined by Willig (2001) and is expanded upon in table 4, on p94.

Ethics:

Ethical approval was successfully obtained via the university ethics board. Full details of my ethics application, with attention to informed consent and data protection are outlined fully in appendices 1-4. I approached my ethics application as an assignment in its own right, with feminist research primarily focussed on correcting injustice (Ruan, 2022) having research that was completely ethically oriented was a primary consideration to my work. I was commended by the ethics panel on my application, which can be read in full in my appendices, however I provide a brief overview of feminist research ethic below.

It is important to reiterate that this study is conducted by a feminist researcher and as such the study should be utilised as a means by which to document the lives of women and illuminate gender-based stereotypes and biases for the purposes of revealing women's subjugated knowledge (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2013). In order to reveal women's lives and knowledge, ethically, feminist research ethics are centred on understanding, criticising and correcting the means by which gender functions to sustain an unequal system of power (Lindemann, 2019). Feminist research ethics is defined as a commitment to research practices that 'recognise the power of epistemology, boundaries, relationships and the multiple dimensions of the researchers' location throughout the research process' (Ackerly and True, 2010 p10). In recognising power as formulated by the identity of the researcher and the researched and also acknowledging that said power will inform both the interview process and knowledge production (Ruan, 2022) I consider myself a peer of the doctoral-student-mothers in my study and as such seek to eliminate any power imbalance, however, I also recognise my privilege in access to their personal lives.

I therefore maintained a participatory approach, as a feminist and thereby interested in the use and misuse of power within a research relationship (Grove, 2017) I consider myself a 'member' of the group of study, using a participatory approach minimises any power differential as participants and researcher are seen as equal partners, although reflexivity on behalf of the researcher must still be attended to (Dodgson, 2019). Therefore, in regarding 'boundaries' and the 'multiple dimensions of the researcher' as described by Ackerly and True (2010) I invested heavily in reflexivity to support the notion of revealing women's lives (Lindemann, 2019) and as such to clearly describe the contextual, intersecting relationship between the participants and myself (Dodgson, 2019). In doing so, I sought to ensure trustworthiness (Teh and Lek, 2018) to the knowledge shared with me by the doctoral-student-mothers and stay true to the feminist research principle of revealing women's lives (Lindemann, 2019) by ensuring that the 'story told' was 'theirs' and not mine. Reflexivity was maintained through journaling my own thoughts and feelings after interviewing the participants with a reflective approach used to ensure I had clarity of thought between my own feelings and what was expressed by the participants. I can confidently say that I told 'their' story, with transparency as to what is my opinion and belief clearly exemplified.

Participants:

Participants were recruited from a University in South London. Participants were invited to participate if they were currently undertaking a professional doctorate and were a mother. No limitations were placed on their ages or the age of their child(ren). I did not provide any defining criteria as to what a mother was. I therefore allowed for purposive sampling, whereby individuals were selected for their specialist knowledge of the phenomena of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

I originally aimed for ten participants but owing to interest in the study I ultimately had eleven participants, two of which had very recently completed their professional doctorate. I do not provide any demographic data on the participants, beyond that which is revealed within their interview transcriptions and subsequent analysis, this was an active decision, based upon my understanding of discourse analysis, wherein to provide specific demographic data is 'considered inappropriate' (Willig, 2001 p97). This inappropriateness is based upon the idea that to provide such information is in itself a means of constructing an identity, as opposed to examining the means by which people from differing backgrounds can think and feel in surprisingly similar ways. That is to say that in discourse analysis, it is the discourse that constructs the subject, not the subject who makes the discourse (Jager and Maier, 2016) and I ultimately seek to examine the discourse, not the individual.

Data Collection:

Data was collected during an hour long, audio transcribed interview. The interview was 'fluid' with participants invited to tell me anything about themselves they felt was relevant, with questions and conversation flowing from that point onwards. Within 48 hours of the interview, I made a transcript of the recording. I then sent a copy of the transcript to the participant to check for accuracy and also for the participant to state should they wish for any sections of the transcript to be removed, prior to analysis. Several participants asked for sections to be removed, which was performed immediately in all cases. Upon all interviews being undertaken, transcribed and checked by the participants, I followed Willig's (2001) process of Foucauldian discourse analysis. I have provided an outline of Willig's (2001) process of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis with an example of its utilisation in my work, below.

Stage 1	Discursive Constructions	Identification of all the ways a discursive object is constructed within a text

After highlighting all parts of the text where doctoral-student-motherhood was discussed, I looked at all the 'ways' that it was talked about. Using the discourse of 'synergy' as an example, the process I followed is outlined below. Initially I identified the 'ways of talking' about doctoral-student-motherhood, such as the relationship between doctoral study and children, doctoral study and family, doctoral study and friendships, doctoral study and course mates, doctoral study and housework.

Stage 2	Discourses	Look at the various discursive constructions within wider discourses

In examining these relationships, it became clear that each of them was about, 'cause and effect,' the way that doctoral-student motherhood effected these relationships and in turn was affected by them. As such the doctorate was seen to be entangled within existing relationships with a function in its own right. An example of the 'function' of doctoral-student-motherhood is shown by Augusta, below.

*Augusta: So what happens is that he will **study at the table with me** so he might be doing something and I might be doing something …..**I think, I did think that it was quite useful because obviously I want him to be successful don't I, in my mind I thought it was quite useful that he saw me study** but actually I think it was in him anyway I'm not sure that me, I just think it's been very **companionable** that we've been able to sort of **do it together.***

Stage 3	Action Orientation	What is achieved by using a discursive construction at each point *within the text*

In the excerpt above, Augusta is seen to use orientate herself as being a 'good mum,' in describing her and her son studying together, the advantages of this being that he has an academic role model in her and that she is doing the 'right thing' as a mother in supporting his academic advancement, in order to support his 'success.' Augusta is seen to fulfil the tenets of intensive mothering through her commitment to her son's success and progression.

Stage 4	Positionings	What position does the speaker take up? What discursive location are they talking from?

Augusta can then take the position of a mother who is invested in her son's future and progression. This achieves the act of removing the focus of any time spent on her education, as being advantageous for her son and as such, cements her as a 'good mum.'

Stage 5	Practice	Certain practices become legitimate *forms of behaviour* within certain discourses, such practice, in turn, reproduces the discourses which legitimate them. What are the possibilities for action within the discursive constrictions used within the text

In practice, for Augusta to stop studying her doctorate would be to lose her position as his educational companion and role model. Good mothering is being achieved through studying together and ensuring her son's success and progression, so doctoral-student-motherhood should be continued.

Stage 6	Subjectivity	What are the consequences for the participant of having taken up a subject position? What can be felt, thought and experienced?

Augusta has adopted the 'common sense' view of wanting success for her son as being 'obvious.' By providing her services to him, through role modelling doctoral study as his mother which will in turn impact upon his success, Augusta is demonstrating leadership and specifically servant leadership through her service to satisfy her son's success. Augusta can then identify as a leader, which is an empowered position.

Table 4: Willig (2001) Stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis with an example of its utilisation

Stage 1: Discursive Constructions

All interview transcripts were reviewed and any areas where being a professional doctorate student and mother was discussed were highlighted.

Stage 2: Discourses

All text whereby doctoral-student-motherhood was highlighted was analysed and the discourses used were identified. Three clear discourses manifested, these being:

i)   Synergism

ii)   Activism

iii)   Belonging and Becoming

Each of the three discourses, including an analysis of action orientation, positioning, practice and subjectivity are presented below. Subjectivity is presented as what traditionally would be considered the 'discussion' chapters of a thesis, as the experiences of the doctoral-student-mothers in my study, are drawn from wider societal issues and will be discussed as such.

Chapter Four: Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Discourse One: Synergism

"The simultaneous action of separate agencies, which, together, have greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects" (Collins English Dictionary, 2022).

When using the discourse of synergism, the doctoral-student-mothers talked about collaboration with their children, family members, peers in their study group and with their research participants. The physical negotiation of time and space to study between the doctoral-student-mothers and their children and the synergistic effect that this had on their households. For a doctoral-student-mother, the process of doctoral study is not one of a 'lone venture' but one that is entangled within their mothering, between family members and children and one which both effects and is effected by the dynamic identity that is doctoral-student-motherhood.

In the following excerpt, Augusta describes her and her son studying together, the advantages of this being that he has an academic role model in her and that she is doing the 'right thing' as a mother in supporting his academic advancement, in order to support his 'success.' Augusta is oriented in her actions towards being a 'good mum' who supports her son and can speak from the position of a mother who is invested in his future and progression. This achieves the act of removing the focus of any time spent on her education, as being advantageous for her son and also means that in practice, for her to stop studying her doctorate would be to lose her position as his educational companion and role model.

> *Augusta: the only thing that probably **helps me** is that my son is very academic, so erm, so he's just very capable at school and he's also a child that likes studying, so what's sort of happened is, **as his intellectual ability has grown**, it's sort of **grown together***
>
> *Lucy: Oh how lovely*
>
> *Augusta: So what happens is that he will **study at the table with me** so he might be doing something and I might be doing something .....**I think, I did think that it was quite useful because obviously I want him to be successful don't I, in my mind I thought it was quite useful that he saw me study** but actually I think it was in him anyway I'm not sure that me, I just think it's been very **companionable** that we've been able to sort of **do it together.***

Note, that Augusta speaks with firm positioning to intensive mothering, her use of '*obviously* I want him to be *successful* don't I? Places a 'common sense' position on success being the goal of mothering a child and the 'usefulness' of her son witnessing her doctoral study will allow her doctorate to become part of the process to supporting her son in his future success. The hegemonic nature of intensive mothering within a neo-liberal framework is clear here, as this 'common sense' approach to her doctoral-student-mothering is explained as 'obvious' (Donoghue, 2018).

Below, Augusta describes the joy of studying with her son, as their studies were found to have some similarities, which again orientates her as a 'good mum' supporting her son in having 'deep conversations' and utilising his academic abilities, positioning herself and her doctorate as part of maintaining a close relationship, spending large amounts of time studying with her son, as oppose to shutting herself in a room to be private in her studies and take time for herself. In practice therefore, doctoral study becomes an act of mothering.

*Augusta: the other lovely thing about Adam is that **he is very good at critique so I will let him read my work and sometimes he comes up with the most really, you know amazing things that he's seen in it which I probably wouldn't have noticed,** so erm **I have involved him a lot, maybe more than I would have done just because he has that ability, you know he can sort of, reads what I've written and be critical just as if it was an undergraduate here, he'll say oh mummy don't quite get that bit....***

*…he's doing his A-levels now, so he's doing four, he's doing chemistry, biology, classics and history, he's**, the lovely thing is and this is so lovely, is that my Doctorate is around technology but it's going to be written with mythology interwoven in it so what has been lovely for us is that because he's into classics and he's studying classics, he's been really helpful to me***

*…..so, his studies have had some resonance with mine which has **been really, really good** ….but there are moments when **it is really magical** because he's, you know it's like having **a really deep conversation**, so..*

Physical negotiation of space was described by Augusta in her use of the kitchen table as a communal study area for her and her son.

> *Augusta: At the table and also because **I don't have a proper study** the kitchen table was or work, **is our workplace,** I've got pictures, that I took, with the dining table towering with his books and all his GCSE stuff and my books and we be eating around, **it's terrible really,** I've changed that now cos I one day woke up and I thought we can't keep eating around all this….*
>
> *Lucy: We eat around piles of books as well*
>
> *Augusta: ….**but yes so for many years that table, the family eating table has become like the study, you know the place where we sort of study***

Here Augusta orientates herself as a doctoral student without a separate study area with the kitchen table being the location of both her and her son's study. Augusta's notion of 'I've changed that now' was in reference to eating around books, not around studying at the kitchen table. This is turn positions the doctorate and study within the household more broadly as 'at the heart' of the home. In practice therefore, study becomes a central feature of family life with 'eating around piles of books' having been a feature of family normalcy. This in turn suggests that for Augusta to take her study outside of her family, by only studying in the library or her office at work for example, would be to remove something that is 'as familiar as the kitchen table'.

Sue, like Augusta in her description of 'piles of books on the table,' describes how the three students, herself, her son and her son's girlfriend collaborated in the physical negotiation of space in the house to study.

> *Sue:…..so he's, you've got somebody that's out working on building sites **and the rest of us are all going like this (mimes writing)** so very luckily, I live in not that small so **we do actually have spaces**, that helps I think, so we've got a small box room upstairs **I work on the computer up there, Brad works at the kitchen table cos that's where he likes working and Judy, she works the other side of the kitchen table,** or, she worked up in the bedroom, right, she's like a person who likes to balance the computer, you know, one of those, balance the computer, in **the living room and luckily as well, we have two living rooms as well, so we all had a space**,*

Sue, in contrast to Augusta describes having enough room in her house for all three students to pick a space to study. Yet in similarity to Augusta, a person studying in one, or many rooms of the house, including shared and central spaces like the kitchen table, or living room, is a feature of family life. Sue orientates herself as living in a house where study happens everywhere and positions herself and her doctoral study within the studying household. To be studying, for Sue her son and his girlfriend is like being 'part of the furniture' in much the same way that studying was a feature of the kitchen table in Augusta's home. In practice therefore, to be a doctoral student is not exceptional for Sue but part of how the family experience their home life. To not be a student would in fact separate Sue from her son and his girlfriend.

Clare provides insight into the synergistic approach to study in her household as her and her son morph into a 'student house' when both studying, outlining the respectful approach required to allow both her and her son space to study.

Clare orientates herself as being the person who is responsible for cooking, 'we're going to be eating beans out of a tin' and cleaning 'I did realise I needed to get the house cleaned,' but acknowledges that when faced with a deadline that she must let go of her responsibilities, which allows her to position herself as a student, during that time.

*Clare: I imagine when it comes to assignment time I do get stressed, I'm not going to…***we should ask Mark about that actually (laughing) I mean I did laugh, 'cos he had a load of work he needed to get done for college over Christmas and I was coming up to an assignment deadline for mid-January and at one point I was like, we're just going to be like a student house, eating beans out of a tin and everything else (laughing) cos there's just not going to be time for anything else**

Lucy: Oh like an undergraduate student?

Clare: **Yeah exactly it's going to be like chaos, I did realise I needed to get the house cleaned, cos all that kind of stuff goes I guess and we do get into this sort of tension between where he'll say 'mum I can't because I've got college work to do' and actually, 'yeah but Mark I've got this to do' and it's that kind of tension of oh, you know, you've both got an important thing you want to get done and making sure we're respecting each other's space for that***…*

Clare elaborates how her and her son 'manage each other,' in terms of negotiation of space to study and the collaborative approach they have adopted to make this work, which is highlighted as a description to how her son has not influenced the content of her doctoral study but has influenced the 'space' required to complete it.

Clare: **No and I think partly that's probably because mine is so profession based so he wouldn't be able, he wouldn't have the knowledge to be able to influence what we're talking about**

Lucy: It's too niche

Clare: Whereas if I was probably talking about something around supporting young people, young adults with autism then, he's got friends who've got autism he could talk about that, but **he doesn't have the experience to actually fit to my topic***, I think that's probably where that's coming from I would suspect.* **I was just thinking when you were talking about influencing the study, one thing that did come up was actually that did influence was, was actually being able to find physical space, because we never study in the same room first of all but sometimes he, erm, sometimes I'll need to actually go out of the house and go somewhere where I know it's quite where I can just crack on and I'm not going to get distracted, cos its, there's that bit of washing and it's that, how do you block off that bit, of the other stuff around to be done and the pub where my son works is actually really quiet during the day so I got to the point where I was going in there to finish off the essays cos it was just that I didn't have the Wi-Fi code so I'd just be in there writing and that was it**

Lucy: Yep, zoned in, zoned in

Clare: **And that was working really well and then Mark was needing to write for his course some comedy sketches, he's doing**

Lucy: Comedy sketches?

> *Clare: Yeah, so they're doing comedy in his acting course at the moment, so he had to write some sketches **so he thought, where can I go that its quiet? I know! (Laughing) He trotted off to work and just did everything there and he said he's managed to get it done**, there are a few students, they work together, they managed to sort of knock it out in like half an hour because they had all that other stuff removed, **so I guess in first, it's been more of that sort of skills sort of stuff and space and how you actually manage each other rather than content***

Clare described how she has to get out of the house so as not to be distracted by the washing, she also describes the need for negotiation with her son about sharing domestic work, in light of them both having academic work to do, with the son clearly regarding his academic studies as his priority, seemingly disregarding his mother has academic work also, implying that domestic work is seen as Clare's responsibility in the household, to Clare's annoyance.

> *Clare:…so he does have some stuff that he does and **that's when I say, 'Mark don't forget you've got to do' and that's when I hear, 'I'm doing college work'** and I'm thinking, that was a really big glare by the way, for the purpose of the recording (laughing)*
> *Lucy: Yeah I did get that, I saw you fuming*

In practice therefore, Clare and her son really do morph into the 'student house' that she described earlier but again, study for them as a family and the way that they negotiate this by using the local pub to study, eating convenience food and accepting that the house may get messy at study pinch points are also showing an enactment of normalcy of study for the two of them. To be a student, for each of them, is being demonstrated as a practice and feature of their family.

Danielle, like Augusta, describes herself as studying with her daughter and in doing so, orientates herself to being a 'good mum' in sharing her study time in an act of togetherness which in turn allows her to position herself as a positive role model, resulting in her daughter considering further studies. For Danielle to stop, would also be the end of her providing the 'right example' and as such to continue is the practice that is generated from this discourse of togetherness and role modelling.

Danielle: Yeah! Absolutely, **she would say, well I got this assignment, well you know, same here, you know we were studying and we would check, we would share a revision technique or a completely different subject, she did maths**, *I had no idea what she was studying*

Danielle: Well **she is thinking of further studies**

Lucy: Is she?

Danielle: **I have provided the right example you see**

A sense of 'togetherness' in study alongside role-modelling is also presented by Suzanna who outlines a collaborative approach to study, albeit with much younger children with reference to 'her work' of the doctorate and her son's 'work' of spellings. Her children attending Forest Schools, for the purposes of her doctorate is also outlined, again showing a discourse of collaboration, with it being 'on the positive side' showing educational stewardship. Suzanna is therefore found to orient herself as a 'good mum' in providing a positive role model and positioning herself as a mother invested in involving her children in her educational endeavours, to their advantage. This is contrary to her presenting herself as 'selfish' for 'making' her children attend Forest School sessions or ignoring their schoolwork to focus on her own studies to the detriment of their learning.

> *Suzanna: I, you know I kind of,* **I'm proud of it** *in a sense and* **I do tell me children that I'm doing studies and that I want to become doctor mummy** *and you know these kind of things and they know,* **they've heard about what a PhD is because my brother has just submitted** *actually, he's got his viva tomorrow….*
>
> *…. Lucy: Good for him, yeah yeah, so your kids know the word PhD and they know that you're doing a doctorate*
>
> *Suzanna: Yeah* **and you know that I'm doing learning and they know that it's part of a job and so my seven year old he does have some spellings and things like that and we talk about, I'm going to do my work and he's going to do his work and you know those kinds of things and also because I keep making him do all these Forest School sessions and I'm like well we have to go to them because I want to find out about these and my subject is about these things so they, I suppose it makes me, I guess I might explain some of the things I'm doing slightly more, so I guess I involve them in it in that kind of way, but I think that's on the positive side.**

In practice, it is seen that for Suzanna, doctoral study again becomes an act of mothering, in role modelling academic pursuit to her children and in 'making them' attend Forest School sessions as a means to involve them.

Danielle, like Augusta, utilises her daughters advanced skill in English, as Augusta was supported by her son's knowledge of classics and critical analysis, but this is not presented as being part of an act of motherly support, it is an act of reliance from a mother who has English as a second language.

This is a contrary discourse and stands out as 'different' in that Danielle is able to comfortably orientate herself as requiring her daughters help and position herself within an adult-to-adult transaction outside of mothering responsibility.

> *No, I have done, **during the taught phase of my EdD, I would give it to her to read, for you know, grammatical errors that kind of thing**….French is my first language, is the first language I learnt to speak and write and I know that sometimes in my writing it doesn't, you know it's not an English person writing it, **so I get my daughter to read mine**, I'm getting better but it's a very slow process for me.*

In practice therefore, Danielle is free to choose to involve her daughter, or not and the doctorate is seen not as an act of mothering but instead as a synergistic union between equals. Unashamed assistance from a child is also described by Clare who describes her son as being the most supportive when she has worked through the night, owing to this being relatable to him.

> *Lucy: Have you done any crazy all-nighters?*
>
> *Clare: Oh yeah (laughing) and I did think, oh for God's sake you know you're too old for this!?*
>
> *Lucy: Admitting to doing an all-nighter studying is kind of like getting too drunk as an adult and thinking when will I learn, you know?! (Both laughing) It's that same sense of shame I think, so you have done, you will admit to pulling all-nighters?*
>
> *Clare: **Absolutely, its actually, it's funny because that's probably where Mark has been the most supportive actually, trying to make sure I've got energy drinks and that sort of stuff around! And that sort of thing…..***
>
> ***…..I think that's the bit he can relate to the most, the staying up all night and trying to get things done..***

This dialogue orients Clare as being a bit foolish in having left her work to the last minute but also positions her as similar to and therefore relatable to her son, who it would seem has also stayed up all night to get his work done. Whist Clare may have felt some regret for having needed to work through the night, she does not express any guilt or shame in relation to how this affected her relationship with her son, he is described as being a source of support and care during this event. In practice, this gives Clare permission to be an imperfect student as she is not role modelling this behaviour to her son, rather she is being accepting of it as a reality of being a doctoral-student-mother.

This is an oppositional position to the one outlined below by Augusta. 'Co-dependency' is described, it clearly does not have an equal weighting as Augusta orientates herself as a 'bad mum' in her actions for having relied on her son for help. For Augusta to help her son with grammar is outlined as permissible, but for her rely on him for technology is seen as a breach as to what is acceptable within this dynamic. The resultant guilt then cements a position of Augusta being relied upon to help her son academically but any reliance in reverse is impermissible. In practice therefore, mothering is again seen as an inherent act of doctoral study, in that the benefits of learning flow from mother to child, there is a 'line' at which any assistance from the child becomes a reversal in responsibility and is therefore a breach of mothering responsibilities.

*Augusta: And we tried and we couldn't retrieve it and I can remember I felt gutted, but he was fifteen and **I thought I cannot be angry with him because it's not his responsibility** and **maybe I shouldn't have been asking him anyway** and I can remember I just looked at him and he hugged me and we just stood in the kitchen like in slow motion just, it can't have been for very long but it felt like it was for a long time, because he knew that I was devastated and I didn't quite know, I didn't want to react cross but I felt so pissed off that it had happened, erm, so **it was a very sort of odd situation** but I think that's, but then **after that I did think you know, maybe I shouldn't be relying on him because I am very dependent on him for certain aspects** that are more technological, erm**, as he is for me cos I'm quite good at writing and spelling** and stuff **I do the same for his grammar and stuff** so **we've got this symbiotic thing going***

Lucy: It sounds nice

*Augusta: But it, but that moment was really awful and I thought **oh I shouldn't have made him**, **I should have gone and got help***

Lucy: It shows how reliant you were on him really doesn't it?

*Augusta: Yes, **so co-dependent***

Augusta then goes on to explain the support she receives from her family at moments when she has felt that she cannot continue.

*Augusta: All the time, yeah, and **there are times when I think I'm gonna walk away from it, you know it's too much and Adam's seen me in that state where I said I can't do it**.*

Lucy: Yeah

> *Augusta: Err and he,* **he's always been very sweet and said oh mummy you can do it, I know you can do it, you know very nurturing of me and so is my husband as well, they've never been negative** *even when I've sort of fallen apart and said do you know what this is too much, erm* **they've always said no, come on you can do it.**
>
> *Lucy: How nice.*

This orientates Augusta, in doing her doctorate, as something that generates a positive reaction from her family, the use of 'they've never been negative' positions Augusta's doctorate as something that doesn't cause resentment amongst her family, indeed they are a source of motivation to continue through their support, this facilitates the practice of not giving up.

Like Augusta, Mel also references family as a source of support, as she describes how her doctorate 'sits within' her family and the level of support she receives from her wife, whilst also her wife is 'the point' of her doing her doctorate and as such, is a huge source of motivation. This orientates Mel as 'doing something good,' for the benefit of her family, which in turn positions her as 'able to keep going' and denounces any possibility of studying for a doctorate being an act 'at odds' with her other roles of being a wife and mother. This enables Mel, in practice, to continue, as she is doing her doctorate for her family.

*Mel: **we talk about what I'm studying** and you know like Anja came to like my Master's graduation and stuff like that like what we do as a family, **we all talk about it…***

*…but **she's like super supportive**, but like that's what I mean, it's not, it's not like oh because I have to do that, it's just the role that I play in the family and if it, we're just, we're like**, really supportive of each other like she's, she just said like you're the cleverest person in the world and I'm like, I'm not, but like her, like me getting my MA like she tells everybody like I'm doing my doctorate, like she's super supportive, she's read like all of my work, like I get a lot of support from her, particularly with the doctorate cos it's like, why am I doing this? Am I, like why am I talking about race, I get people telling me not to do that and so she's kind of my point, of like, do I keep doing this and she's always like propping me up…***

Jen describes, in a similar way to Mel, how her son is 'at the heart' of everything she does, in reference to her always having studied and also the way that her son helps her.

*Jen: **So he's always been part of that when we've been growing up together, he's always known what I was doing and how I was getting on with it, is he part of, he's, I mean yeah, or is he within it, he's at the heart of everything I do, but, yeah he's always part of what I do and he's always in the sphere of what I'm doing and I would always see him helping me in lots of ways….we will talk, cos he's doing his teacher training, we will talk about education inequalities, we'll talk particularly around **** area and that where impoverished and it is much harder to access the resources isn't it, than it is elsewhere?***

> *So again, social justice would be a big thing in Brad's mind, but we do bounce ideas back and forth now, more, that we are able to its much more of an adult relationship, yep*

The use of 'growing up together' is suggestive that the mother-son pair are progressing academically together which allows Jen to orientate herself as a 'good mum' who is leading her son down an advancing academic path and as such position herself as a mother who is as interested in her son's academic advancement as she is her own, through this fusion of their shared learning journey. As with the previous doctoral student mothers, 'carrying on' becomes a permissible practice within this discourse.

A family oriented, collaborative approach to a doctorate is shown by Suzanna, with her husband and her negotiating the 'right way' to study for a doctorate. Suzanna's husband being of the opinion that you shouldn't do a doctorate 'just because you want one', rather it has to be based on a passion for the topic. This passion for the topic is provided, by attending forest school sessions with her children, demonstrating that both her husband and children have collaborated in Suzanna's doctorate. Suzanna is therefore able to orientate herself as 'having done the right thing', as Suzanna has not done the thing that her family 'would all hate' by doing a doctorate purely based on desire, rather she has interwoven her desire for doctoral study with the needs of her children and family and as such can position herself as having considered the needs of her family in her doctoral choices. In practice, Suzanne can continue with her doctoral study, safe in the knowledge that she is doing it 'the right way.'

*Suzanna: Well because **I just didn't know what it was, I hadn't got the idea, you know the thing, because I thought, you know my husband kept saying, you know you've really got to want to write something, you can't just do a PhD because you want to be doctor, you know you can't, that's not the reason, you've actually got to have something that you want to say, you've got to feel the burning thing because if you don't feel it, it's just going to be a terrible experience, we're all going to hate it and I thought, yeah that's right** and I tried, I did try a few different ideas and I met with a few various people and I thought, could this work? And then I thought, oh I don't want to do that, you know, no, that's too boring, or, that'll just depress me, I don't want to do that and actually it was, **then I was interested by forest schools and I thought you know, that's what I want to look at…***

Ellen also draws upon her family as being 'affected by' her doctorate, by discussing how her husband provided photography to complement her poetry and her own mother's pride in her achievements. The notion of 'making a family member proud' again allows Ellen to orientate herself as a 'good daughter' and again positions her as 'doing something worth doing' in studying for a doctorate. Involving her children and husband ingrains the doctorate within the family, to not continue would be to have wasted *their* time and as such, Ellen's continuation positions her as 'doing the right thing' in spite of her children thinking that it takes up too much of her time. A description has not been provided by Ellen of her 'absence through study' rather that her study and her family are one and the same thing, with family holidays used as a source of content. The practice that this discourse generates being that continuation is the right thing to do as a dutiful daughter and considerate mother.

> *Ellen:* **My husband did the photography** and **these are on our holiday** *so we didn't have any copyright issues or anything…*
>
> ….**obviously I've got my mum to look after**. I should have said also, **she's a great encourager, she's always throughout my life, she's always interested in wanting us to progress and the family and always interested in what I'm studying and interested in seeing my poems and always you know she's, proud**
>
> Lucy: What an amazing influence, so it sounds from what you've said that your husband and your mum are your
>
> Ellen: **Supporters**
>
> Lucy: Supporters, I was trying to think of a sports analogy and I couldn't, cheerleaders
>
> Ellen: Yeah, yeah, yeah
>
> Lucy: And your children don't quite get it
>
> Ellen: **I don't think they totally get it, I think they do to some degree, I think probably the eldest, the eldest daughter and probably the youngest daughter get it, to some degree cos they are proud of me, but I think it's more my son that doesn't, but I think the other two do, they do get it, but they do think it takes up too much time and they wouldn't do it themselves, well my eldest might do at some stage**

Ellen's children, in spite of not 'getting it' are involved in her doctorate and are 'always happy' to listen to and give feedback on her poetry, as is her husband who has already been described as a photographer and helping with the computer.

> *Ellen**: Husband always for the computer, children Jenny is at home, so Matt and Jenny, I read all my poems to them and then they say, 'no I don't like that,' or 'I think you should change that' or 'that doesn't quite add up,' so I always read all my poems to them, aloud and written, so they've always been happy to do that and they'll always give me their opinions, like, 'Ellen why can't you write something that's more cheerful? Not another depressing dementia poem!' Or something like that, but they always read them and always comment and always give me feedback***

Pride from children for a doctoral-student-mother is described by Lindsey, as is the role her children play in her doctoral study, although their involvement is described as rare.

> *Lindsey: So you know and then I've been ill, I got hospitalised after flu and pneumonia and **I think some people have thought, why don't you give up?** I have got this streak of me like, I'm gonna get there, so **and the kids are proud** and I'm thinking keep it quiet, I'm not wanting to broadcast what I'm doing, I say you know I might not finish, just..*
>
> *Lindsey: They're**, the one that lives away is very proud and he thinks it's marvellous that I've taken it on,** so he's recently got a first, a bachelor of art, wants to do a masters but has got to get a bit more money together to go on, cos they know they've got to be independent of me financially to do that, **Sally of course will broadcast it and tell me not to be so quiet and humble,** the youngest one couldn't care less really, he's, he does understand what a PhD is, not quite what a Prof Doc is, you know I've tried to draw parallels but he's not, he's too interested in his mates and to really pay attention to that*

> *Lucy: And you help them with their work, do any of them, given that they're all academic, do they help you with your work then?*
>
> *Lindsey: No, no I **mean very occasionally, my daughter did actually look at my participant information sheet and comment on the consent form and point out that I hadn't actually put name as an example, or, 'your personal details will not be disclosed' and I thought oh yeah that is an important one to put and it reminded me that I'd have to put the name of the workplace on the participant, you know as a non-disclosure, you know cos that's gonna be an important thing in***

Lindsey has orientated herself as being unsure if she will complete, whilst her children are proud and wishing she wasn't 'so humble.' This allows Lindsey to position herself as someone who carries on, based on her children's pride, in spite of having been very unwell and as such is being a 'good mum' in carrying in on as her children 'think it's marvellous.' The practice that this permit is that to discontinue would be to let her children down, making her doctorate part of a sacrifice rather than a personal indulgence.

An alternative perspective on 'pride' is offered by Maria, who describes her daughter as a motivating factor for completing a piece of doctoral study. This notion of 'not giving up because my child isn't giving up' allows Maria to orient herself as studying 'in honour' of her child as opposed to for her own gain and positions her as being 'pulled along' by her daughter in reverent admiration. Reverence for her daughter's ambition and motivation is demonstrated in practice, as when Maria's daughter's laptop breaks, Maria is 'required' to share hers and plan her time around this accordingly.

> *Maria:….when the Res 3 came up, I hadn't really done very much work and its obviously ten thousand words and I think I had something like a month to write it, so I set out and **Belle was working so hard, that I thought if she can do it I can do it, although we have to share my laptop 'cos hers has crashed**, so I mapped out the days that I could do it… so banged out the ten thousand words…*

Maria describes how her daughter's academic studies motivate her own work. Note that the daughter comes to Maria, not Maria to her daughter, yet Maria orientates herself as being motivated by her daughter's work and as such can position herself as being swept up in a tide of energy that flows from her daughter to her.

> *Maria: so again we have been, kind of I suppose, only recently she started to write this stuff and I've kind of, **she will come to me and we'll discuss it and we'll discuss structure and stuff like that and ideas and things,** that, it's not been a conscious process, it's just been something that's happened, so we're always talking about oppression, not only of women, you know some of the stuff she's written about with rape as a weapon of war involves men and masculinities and stuff like that, and I suppose, and **it's interesting, it's really interesting what she's writing about, and it kind of, it energises as well, to make you think yeah I want to write some of this as well, so yeah..***

In practice, Maria considers her academic endeavours as a reaction to her daughters, as such, if her daughter studies, Maria is motivated to study.

The 'effects' of mothering upon doctoral study are outlined by Clare, who describes how both she and her young-adult son are studying and working, resulting in them eating late in the evening together, which leaves Clare tired.

Clare describes how her son being out until late in the evening, with her waiting up for him to return and the resultant tiredness from this affects her doctoral study. Clare is also seen to orientate herself as a 'good mother,' who waits up for her son as an act of maternal sacrifice, this then positions Clare as a doctoral student as being secondary to her maternal responsibilities, as her parenting leaves her too tired for study.

*Clare:… **he's studying as well, the course that he's on tends to run quite late so we both tend to not get home until sort of seven o'clock or so anyhow***

Lucy: Is his college fairly near where you live or is he travelling too?

*Clare: No its fairly, so he gets the shuttle bus back it's not so bad, **but it means we're both in later, eating later, by the time, I'm just knackered***

Lucy: I can totally relate to that

*Clare: And you know he's, he got a job in a pub recently as well and **if he's either out with his mates or he's working, I tend to wait up until he gets in, if he's not finishing at two getting home at three, I sort of, kind of maybe looked at something but I'm so tired I probably half asleep on the settee by the time he gets in anyway, I'm knackered like for that weekend, you think, I've done nothing, I'm just trying to sort of, I feel like I'm always trying to play catch up, which I didn't do so much when he was little it was just..***

In practice, therefore, the act of waiting up for her son allows Clare to 'do nothing' on her doctorate over the weekend, whereby playing catch up is seen as a feature of being a doctoral student mother.

In view of the synergistic approach to doctoral-student-motherhood that has been demonstrated, one of the familial reactions to there being a doctoral-student-mother in the home is that other members of the household having to 'step up' to cover areas of domestic responsibility that 'belong' to the doctoral-student-mothers. In some instances, notions of selfishness and resultant guilt are still presented.

Augusta presents an orientation towards homemaking being her responsibility.

> *Augusta: Yeah and that adds, I do think that adds a bit of a tension, erm **I mean my husbands but if when I'm studying, he doesn't notice things that need to be done**, erm so for instance if I've been studying upstairs I could come downstairs and find that washing up's still in the sink, that the tum.. you know the washing's still wet in the washing machine, erm you know, there's chaos everywhere and, erm, you know if it was the other way round, he would have come down and it would all be cleared up, because do you know there is, **there is still all that thing that I have to be on top of all of the organisation in the house.***

Augusta describes how she finds it hard to let go of her homemaking duties in order to concentrate on her doctorate.

> *Augusta: Erm, even though he's very sweet and he'll bring me tea, **he doesn't see the muddle and I think I'm a bit of a control freak so I don't like muddle, so it will affect my thinking if downstairs is in a muddle***
> *Lucy: So it affects your study?*
> *Augusta: **It will, it'll disrupt it because I want to go and tidy it up, so..***

Letting go of domestic responsibilities is a requirement for Augusta, if she is going to produce quality pieces of work.

> *Augusta: I'll see that something needs to be done and its very, I can very easily think oh, I'll just tidy that cupboard or I'll just fold those towels, so I think I'm always, erm, **I'm always sort of thinking about home, but then home is absolutely important to me and how my home looks and it always has been, I'm a bit of a homemakery person.***
>
> *Lucy: Does it, ahh, do you have to, so I'm hearing from you that if, you can either let yourself get engrossed in your studies and forget about the home, or you can kind of dip into your studies and kind of do a bit of both, study, tidy, study, tidy, study, tidy.*
>
> *Augusta: **The quality of the study is very different.***
>
> *Lucy: Right.*
>
> *Augusta: Yeah, I can dip in and out if I'm doing some revisions or if I'm tidying up the references of if I'm maybe, I don't know, if I'm just re-reading something, or you know going over something, **but if I'm writing, writing, it's no good doing it, for me it's no good dipping in and out because I just don't get the depth, then I have to lose myself in it.***
>
> *Lucy: Yeah, yep, I understand that*
>
> *Augusta: **Otherwise I can't, I just can seem to, to produce anything.***
>
> *Lucy: Yep, I understand.*
>
> *Augusta: So it's a different quality I think.*

Letting go of domestic responsibilities in order to concentrate on doctoral study has resulted in Augusta's husband, under her management, 'upping his game' in contributing to housework and with less prompting, cooking, with cooking his preferred chore so that he himself doesn't go hungry.

Lucy: And what about, I can appreciate that it effects your study, what do you think the effect is on you as a mum if the house is in a mess? Or on Adam, whichever jumps out at you?

*Augusta: I don't think Adam would really, I don't know if he's really notice, he might but I've never really discussed it with him, but **I would feel that the house wasn't, wasn't cosy, or wasn't, quite somehow, I'm someone who likes aesthetics, you know I'm one of these people, I would say my home is quite, it's quite eclectic, you know its full of books and art and it's all sort of quite jumbled but its organised jumble and I like home to be cosy and I like to nurture the home and I like to make sure the cushions are plumped and that there may be a candle lit or the lights giving ambience or and actually that doesn't get done, those finer details which I think I provide, I don't know if all women provide it wouldn't, do, forget, get forgotten you know like the heating might not get switched on or do you know, do you know what I mean (both laughing) or I might go in and there might be towels all over the floor and you know normally I would just, just wouldn't and, and that does wind me up, but if I keep checking on those things I would never get anything studied so, I have had, had to sort of let go of that a bit and erm, and I find that sometimes if I start writing early and I get so, in, in, absorbed into it, I forget all about that background noise for a while, but if I get up and down and don't get too in focus, I'll get distracted.***

Lucy: And with regards to stuff not getting done that would be done if you were free and not studying, has that ever come up in conversation with your husband, have you ever addressed the fact that things don't get done unless you do them and one of the consequences of your studying is that they maybe don't get done? And I appreciate that that's quite a personal question.

*Augusta: Yeah it, it has come up, erm, ah and **to be quite honest he has upped his game, you know obviously he can see how worked up I'm getting and because he knows I will run myself ragged, you know I'll be running around all the time so there are occasions where he's definitely upped his game and it has been noticeable and actually Adam has as well he's started to be a bit more helpful to me but more often than not I would have to request that help, you know it's not, they could quite very easily begin to sort of erm you know get a bit complacent again, but the one thing that my husband really has done err, is he will cook which is a real bonus.***

Lucy: Is that a new thing? Or a doctorate related thing?

*Augusta: **Doctorate related thing, he has, he has been doing the meals much, much more than he normally would erm because, I don't know what you're like when you're studying but I forget to eat sometimes when I'm studying.***

Lucy: Definitely

*Augusta: **And then when I do stop I'm so starving that I just eat anything, erm, so it is nice that I know that he will, he will provide the food really, he will, he will do that and that has, that has developed I think during the doctoral period that he's realised that erm, that that's one thing that he can do and maybe that's something he likes whereas housework is not, not something, it doesn't bother him the housework, but he wants to eat (laughing).***

> *Lucy: Yeah, yeah, yeah (laughing).*
>
> *Augusta:* ***He doesn't care about the towels on the floor but he definitely would want to eat*** *(laughing).*

Augusta, prior to her doctorate, was 'lead housekeeper' in the family and it would seem that doctoral study has been a catalyst for some change in this regard. Augusta attributes the position of lead housekeeper owing to it being more 'natural' to her and the differences in her and her husband's employment, with her her doing 'mental work' as an academic and her husband on a building site.

> *Lucy: Were you the main housekeeper would you say when you were working full-time as well?*
>
> *Augusta: When Adam was small I definitely was yeah, I definitely was cos Bill, Bill,* ***imagine he's working on a building site, you know by the time, it's hard graft, it slightly different from the mental work and, an also I think it came more naturally to me so I would just get on and do it, so I definitely did more but that's changed, I think now****, because erm, he's got more domesticated, I've made him more domesticated*

In spite of the progress made by Augusta making her husband 'more domesticated' her expression of doing her doctorate 'the long way round' demonstrates a position of doctoral-student-motherhood and the resultant domestic responsibilities such as 'managing the house and sorting your father out' being a mismatch.

> *Augusta: I said to him, Adam, you know I know you're working hard and actually you're doing it the right way, I said because you do, I said, I, mummy would have been far better off, if she'd done this when she didn't have all the other things that are going on, I said imagine if you were doing this and you were managing the house and sorting your father out, I said it's not the right, it is the wrong, a long way round and obviously,*

Sue describes how she has given up activities, so as not to distract from her mothering and caring responsibilities whilst a doctoral student. Sue orientates herself as a woman with duties, for her children and family, her doctorate becomes positioned as something which takes her away from her duties, which manifests as the practice of stopping seeing friends and theatre trips. Sue, whilst imagining herself as selfish, is in fact neglecting leisure to ensure that her doctorate does not impact on her family life.

> *I think, you know juggling things, maybe juggling you know, family, it's not just children though is it? I think when you're a carer, you're caring for lots of people, there are lots of, there are lots of people you know, you get it at both ends cos you get parents as well, and I think there is that juggling but I think, I think you do become quite selfish and you have to, I mean I stopped seeing friends, I go to the theatre a lot obviously with my drama but I just stopped going to the theatre, I had, just had to stop, because it was taking up, eating into too much of my time, so things do, I think you have to make decisions and they're some of the things that went for me*

Sue describes the 'terrible' experience of her husband taking on more responsibility for homemaking. Sue, working as a teacher alongside doing her doctorate is orientating herself as remiss for not having prepared a meal for the family, especially her husband who had been working on a building site, her position is that as she had 'only' been teaching all day and should be responsible for cooking, rather than 'choosing' time on her doctorate. Demonstrating food preparation being her responsibility, rather than that of her husband's, which allows experiencing feeling 'terrible' that cooking is left to her husband.

> *So it was interesting when all three of us, we had a very funny year and my poor partner, you know the thing is **we'd all be home you know or be going to work, teaching** and then home and he's come home, no dinner, there'd be nothing, **he'd been out on a building site all day**, he left, he went shopping, food shopping, we'd go, what's for dinner? **Terrible, he had the worst out of it all I think, cos fancy going to work all day and then he did everything, he did all the housework***

Sue's guilt, in part seems to be down to her 'not having to' do her doctorate, as a woman who is at retirement age and not planning on 'using' her doctorate for career progression. This reduces her doctorate to a 'hobby.' With Sue's doctorate orientated as a hobby, Sue can be seen to be selfish, by herself and her family. In practice therefore, the family are seen to accommodate Sue's 'hobby' by taking on extra domestic responsibilities.

Sue: Oh he did all the cooking yeah

Lucy: And that wasn't usual? That was because of the doctorate?

*Sue: No, he's always, we've always, we've shared things, you know we kind of share, we do it to the best of our ability, you know one will do one thing and one will do the other, the best that each one of us can do, we've always kind of swapped and shared things but really, when **it got to that point that I was telling you about, that poor man, he took over and we wouldn't have known what was in the fridge cos he used to run up the supermarkets, he had to cook cos we didn't know what was in there,** we'd just be open, you know*

Lucy: Ready, steady, cook

*Sue: Yeah, he'd come home and we'd all be going (writing) and I'd be in my dressing gown, cos I'm a terror, I just don't get dressed I just start and then you could find me at five o'clock and I'll still be there if no one comes to collect me, you know I'd just be in that study going, or whatever it is that you do, perhaps you just lean over and go, oh, I can't do it, but yeah, he really, **there were points where he really ended up doing a lot of the domestics in the house, and trying to, which he must be so pleased, he must be so pleased now***

Lucy: So if you could say the main way that a doctorate affected your parenting what would you say?

> *Sue: **Well I think it's terribly selfish isn't it? I mean, you have to be very, very selfish, if you are gonna see, I mean if you are gonna take up,** well I don't know this is a bit, if you spoke to **** (supervisor) there's this thing about**, both my partner and my son call my doctorate, mummy's little hobby, that's what they called it and that is in my thesis at the beginning, you know and I've told people on my course and they said, oh mummy's little hobby, you know (laughing), yeah, hobby! And that is them being ironic and you know, but that is what they referred to it as, its mummy's little hobby!***
>
> *Lucy: And do you think it's selfish given that your son was an adult?*
>
> *Sue: I don't, I'm not sure that I necessarily mean selfish but I think you have to be, if you decide to do something, well I could have taken up something else couldn't I, rock climbing or whatever, it's all, if you do something like that, well if you do running or something like that, if you do marathon running you've got to train, you've got to be dedicated and if you do a doctorate, it's another thing that you've actually, if you're gonna have some degree of success you've got to be quite focussed and do that, if you're gonna succeed you've got to concentrate on that thing, otherwise you're not gonna get there and then of course you'll let yourself down which is**, if you don't have to do it like me** and you let, then what is the point of doing it?*

Ellen describes selfishness in pursuing a doctorate, whilst also outlining how she has sacrificed her hobbies, rather than her mothering and caring responsibilities to 'make way' for her doctorate within her family.

> *Lucy: Have any of your children or your husband ever given you the impression that you studying a doctorate is selfish, or an indulgence? Have you ever felt that or not?*

Ellen: **Selfish to some degree, yeah, yeah, because it's taken up my thoughts as well and sometimes they'll say , you don't even hear us,** *at home I tend to use my dining table and my laptop, my husband is self-employed an he's got the office and a computer***, so sometimes if I'm deep in thought and typing and things I don't even hear them, I switch off,** *that's partly from being in a big open plan office upstairs and* **I have to be able to switch off otherwise I could never get any work done. So it is selfish in a way, because it stops us doing things, that we would do, we haven't been , we haven't had a holiday, we haven't booked anything, so we would have had more holidays and probably some invitations I have had to refuse, so I think it's selfish, I think I am selfish**

Lucy: Do you? You think it is?

Ellen: **Yeah, I think I have been selfish in some ways, because it does affect them, but I still try to do everything that I can, I still run the home, I still do all the household, mostly**

Lucy: Do you?

Ellen: **My husband does cooking and shopping cos he loves cooking, he's better than me and he likes it and he does the shopping**, *I would just order on-line myself, but***, so I've got my mum to look after as well**

Lucy: Does she live with you?

Ellen: **No, she lives in London but it takes about an hour to get there. I look after my mum, I used to look after my mother-in-law and my mum, but my mother in law died so now I've just got my mum to look after, she's ninety-two** *and mentally she's fine but physically she's much more frail now.*

> *So in some ways I think I've been selfish, but in other ways I'd be more of a nightmare to live with if I wasn't, so I think they know that, they know me and I can't be sitting watching television and I'd be so bored and despite the fact they think I work too much and I'm a workaholic, if I say to them, should I give up work, they say no, because they think you wouldn't last a week, you'd be so bored, so they know that that's part of my makeup, but they think I should be doing hobbies rather than an interest and they know I'll always be doing something, but they think this has taken a toll on me, which I think it has*

Ellen describes her doctorate as 'an interest' with her family thinking that she should be 'doing hobbies' rather than an interest.

Like Sue, Ellen describes sacrificing her hobbies to allow her to 'still run the home' and look after her mum. Ellen, in orientating her doctorate as 'an interest' which requires her to 'switch off' from her family. Switching off manifests as not 'hearing' them and not booking family holidays or attending family events, something that a 'hobby' presumably wouldn't do. In considering her doctorate as pursuing her own interests, rather than meeting the needs of the dementia community, or supporting the learning of Occupational Therapists in training as alternative perceptions, Ellen is able to consider herself as selfish.

Ellen describes her son feeling that her doctorate is a 'waste of time,' time which would be better spent with family, or in the pursuit of (his) hobbies.

> *Lucy: And so your son in particular you mentioned as, he sees it as a waste of time and it takes up too much of your time, what do you think he thinks it is that you should be doing?*

> *Ellen: **Spending more time with the family,** he's just got two dogs, we always have lots of discussions about dogs, you know when I finish will I get a dog, **he thinks I should be out walking, enjoying my life and doing, his passion,** so he's studies different things but his passion, whatever he's doing he'll be passionate about, so he can see in me, parts of him, cos whatever he does it a hundred percent, he either doesn't do it at all, or he does it a hundred percent and at the moment he's got this hundred percent passion on dogs and he's just got two dogs**, so he thinks I should be out doing other things, other than working or studying***

Ellen outlines how her doctorate has impacted on her husband and her daughter below. How she has given up her evening classes, a loss for her but that her husband is impacted by her lack of availability for socialising and availability to him. Ellen is seen to orientate the doctorate as something that is 'in the way' of her responsibilities as a wife and mother and positions her pursuit of doctoral completion as impacting on her husband and daughter through lack of availability to spend time with them, Doctoral completion, in practice becomes the means by which she can spend time with her family and in doing so, get her life back, *I've got to do it, I've got to meet it, I can't have lost seven years of my life to do it and not finish.'*

> *Ellen…he's always been a help to me, but it's also a big, he just can't wait for me to finish now, because at this stage**, it sort of severely effects our social life**, because someone'll ring up, you know friends will ring up, we're going away do you want to come and join us for the weekend?*

*We often hook up with friends, we'll often go and do a day trip to France regularly, go out for a nice mean have a nice walk and go shopping and all these sort of day trips and things and at the moment, whereas before I will juggle, I will just juggle and keep up with all the social things **I've given up all my evening classes, I've given up my guitar evening classes, I had to give up on recently a friend said, you want to go to France for the day? And I had to say no and then my daughter said, we're going away for a week do you want to come to the Peak District for a few days? And I had to say no and that impacts him because if I'm saying no, then he's either going on his own or it's not going,** so it's had a, and **also just the constantly thinking about it and sometimes he will get annoyed, he'll say, you work all day and then you come home and you're on that computer and if you're not on the computer you're thinking about it, or you're not even hearing me,** so the last, probably the last six months, cos I'm behind, I'm behind with work and I know the deadline is looming and I feel the pressure of it now and I've got to do it, I've got to meet it, I can't have lost seven years of my life to do it and not finish*

Augusta, like Ellen, described the loss of family holidays owing to her doctoral study.

Augusta: Adam hasn't any real properly family holidays, you know he's always working too and he's work ethic

Lucy: Studying work or does he have a job as well? Part time job?

> *Augusta: No he's done things like work experience it's all around, you know getting into medicine and this sort of stuff so he, he, I think hasn't had much erm, he hasn't had that, been spoilt in the sense of having lovely holidays in the sun, but he says he doesn't want them and he's not **bothered but a bit of me does feel guilty that he hasn't been taken on holidays because I think our last break was 2015 we had a week in France in a friend's little flat, that was the last break we had, so we, you know we haven't had any holiday, it's not healthy and I know it's not healthy and it isn't really that normal I don't think, I think most people do have, normal if you're not doing a Doctorate maybe? And I think to myself, poor little sod** you know, the school where he goes, they go to The Bahamas and then they go to Europe then they go to, it's a whole new*
>
> *Lucy: On school trips?*
>
> *Augusta: No the parents*
>
> *Lucy: Oh the parents*
>
> *Augusta: So they might have a place in France and then they'll have a skiing holiday and then they'll go somewhere else and **Adam goes back and he says, what's he done, National Trust if he's lucky. Totally different.***

Augusta describes how the loss of family holidays has been more acute during the final stages of her doctorate.

> *They are, they are very good like that, yeah you know cos it is disruptive, **I mean we haven't had proper holidays because every single holiday I use for writing**, so for, not so much in the taught component but in the**, particularly in the last year or last eighteen months when I've been writing up, cos I'm a bit delayed it has really had a bad effect on, on social events and because imagine the summer holiday you know I'm, as soon as I've got summer holiday I just sit down and write, Adam's on summer holiday so we don't have a summer holiday as a family and the same thing happens at Easter, the same thing happens at half term***

Augusta, alongside a loss of family holidays, described a loss of time with family members.

> *I don't see much of my extended family a great deal **probably because I'm doing the doctorate I don't have time***
>
> *….so I have got extended family but I don't really see much of them which is quite sad, erm, but a lot of that is I think, seven years of**, you know every holiday studying and neglecting social things.***

Loss of time with family is termed a sacrifice, but Augusta also describes herself as preferring to use time that could be spent with family, to write.

> *definitely, I mean not all of it, but I definitely, in the writing stage in particular, I have fretted, err, you know when events are being planned that, you know, that I can't really cope with it and **I'd rather be writing** and that's the reality of it, you know like, so for instance I would say to Bill do you mind taking Adam to this because **I really want to write**, erm, and a bit of me thinks, oh that's so sad, he's only gonna do that once, but, you know, what can I do?*
>
> *Lucy: Yep*
>
> *Augusta: You know, you know some, **some sacrifices have to be made** but it's a very big sacrifice when its, its experiences with your only, only child, really, my only child yeah, so it is quite hard.*

Like Ellen, Augusta is orientating her doctorate as *in the way* of time with her family. 'Preferring to write' is not understood to mean that Augusta would rather write than be with her family, rather that she would rather remove the obstacle that prevents her from spending time with her family.

The pursuit of doctoral completion therefore becomes the means by which to get her family time *back* and reward the investment that has been made by all family members. For Augusta, as for Ellen, her experience at the final stages of her doctorate is one of honouring her family's commitment and sacrifice.

> *if I don't actually write, get it written, and erm, and such a, it would be a complete disaster, **all that investment, all those missed events**, that would be just horrendous…*
>
> *…Augusta: And it will go away but there have been plenty of times when I've said, I'm jacking it, I can't do it, I can't do it*
>
> *Lucy: And what stops you?*

> *Augusta: Oh I think the sheer, I think there is something about being the first one in the family to ever do it, I think there is something about wanting the achievement, **I think it would disappoint Bill and Adam terribly, you know the sacrifices that have been made***

Sue, Ellen and Augusta's position on selfishness is very much at odds with Mel's.

> *Like, it depends what you mean by selfish, so I think because like Anja's had a period of study and I've supported her with that and I've supported her with like a career change and she also supported me when I was off of work and I took a step down so like technically I could be earning more money right now and Jayden's just been there like through all of it, like in terms of you saying like I'm not here I'm doing this and again that tending to be at weekends or half-terms and things like that, then it does feel like, if you're under pressure points like that person said, well why wouldn't you give that up and me saying, but it's for me**, so I guess if you count selfish as doing something for yourself, yes, but I just think that's healthy, like everybody has to have something that they do for themselves, otherwise you're just going to resent the people that you're around and it's something that as a family, you know, potentially this could lead to more work** and I kind of, my plan is to have one foot in the uni and have one foot as like education consultant so that I can chose some of my own projects and this is kind of part of it because it's like people want to see doctor, they want that kind of status, I need to have some stuff published for certain people to kind of invite me to things and that kind of stuff, **so if anything its potentially gonna give me more flexibility in what I do later down the line and enable me to do some stuff that I enjoy and not just stuff that I have to do which will make me happier and make me a better parent and wife***

Mel, in fitting with a synergistic approach to doctoral-student-motherhood orientates her doctoral study as *for* her family, positioning doctoral completion as something that will bring opportunities that will benefit her son and wife along with herself. In practice, doctoral study becomes an act of sacrifice for the family as well as being something that Mel wants to do for herself.

It has been shown that for a doctoral-student-mother the doctorate itself is situated within the mother-child relationship and the wider family with synergistic effects clearly outlined above. I feel that this situatedness of a doctorate is not there are an *obstacle* to mothering, but actually takes a *form* of mothering, with the doctorate and doctoral mothering functioning to 'serve' the needs of the child and wider family, through role modelling, collaboration and the provision of opportunity. As such, doctoral-student-motherhood is subjectified as a form of servant leadership.

4.2 Subjectivity: Doctoral-Student-Motherhood as Servant Leadership

The doctoral student mothers are describing their experiences in alignment with the principles of servant leadership. First described in seminal work by Greenleaf in (1991), it begins with the premise that 'the servant-leader is servant first.' This is exemplified by the mothers in my study, who lead their children, by providing guidance, tutoring, role modelling and a study companion. Yet, in ensuring at all times that the needs of child and family come first and indeed in their position that their children's study requirements are more important than their own, show their position as servant, clearly. A servant leader has a desire to serve others, an attitude of compassion and service that forms the basis of trust, credibility and relationships (Brown et al, 2020).

The servant leader, places themselves 'in the passenger seat' with resources and support directed towards their 'followers,' in this instance, children and family members, with no expectation of acknowledgement. I find it an uncomfortable observation that the principles of servant leadership align with the servitude of intensive mothering, but, recognise that leadership manifests within the boundaries of what culture, in a given time will accept and when the societal restrictions are too binding, leaders challenge the cultural dimension (Schein and Schein, 2018). I see doctoral-student-mothers use of servant leadership as a means of *challenge*, with intensive mothering seen as a manifestation of servitude, servant-leadership as a doctoral-student-mother is seen as a form of *rebellion*, through mothering differently. To function as a servant-leader, I feel, is to work *within* the constraints of the intensive mothering ideology, yet at the same time, challenge it, with a manifestation of power seen through the demonstration of the qualities of vision, caring for others, altruism, humility, hope, integrity, trustworthiness and interpersonal acceptance (van Dierendonck, 2010). Servant leadership has also been described as 'horizontal leadership,' that is serving those around you every day, helping them to be the best that they can be, offering yourself freely as a resource and committing to being there for those around you when they need you (Mahon, 2011). This sense of availability and omnipresence for those that you 'serve' is synonymous with contemporary description of motherhood (Glaser, 2021).

A literature review of servant leadership identified seven 'dimensions,' these being the forming of meaningful relationships with followers, the empowerment of followers, the growth, and success of followers, ethical behaviour, the demonstration of conceptual skills such as the balance of daily work with longer term goals, putting followers first and creating values for followers beyond the 'organisation' (Ehrhart, 2004). A more contemporary evaluation and the one to which I align finds three defining features; an other-oriented approach to leadership; manifested through one-on-one prioritising of follower individual needs and interests and an outward reorientation of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and the larger community (Eva et al, 2019). It is my position that one of the elements of the subjective experience of doctoral-student-motherhood is that servant leadership acts as a *functional* dimension of their identity. The first two facets of servant leadership as outline by Eva et al (2019) perfectly align with the discourse of synergism drawn upon by the doctoral-student-mothers. The focus of 'follower first and then on to the success of the mission' (Gandolfini et al, 2017) or 'other-oriented approach' (Eva et al, 2019) of servant leadership is clearly demonstrated by the doctoral-student-mothers as a facet of their identity as is the calling to make a positive difference for others (Eva et al, 2019). The synergistic approach that is taken to doctoral study and motherhood with children and other family members to produce the 'products' of successful doctoral completion but also a role model, a shared way to study and enhance the 'intellectual capital' of the family is clearly in fitting with servant leadership. The notion of 'expecting nothing in return' (Brown et al, 2020) is evidenced by all the doctoral-student-mothers.

The notion of role modelling and acting as an aspirational, motivational academic force within the family is in fitting with the servant leadership as is recognising the need for 'followers' in this case, children's support and need for psychological wellbeing (Eva et al, 2019) as evidenced by the doctoral-student-mothers examples of 'putting their children first' through giving up their studies to support their children, sharing their computers, negotiating physical spaces for the doctoral-student-mothers and their children to study or not studying because they are providing caring duties such as waiting up for their children.

Sociologically, the concept of 'family' has been described as resembling an organisation, more so than the more commonly used description of the family as 'institution' (Rogers, 2017). In regarding the family as an organisation, it becomes possible to see how family roles can become linked to 'organisational goals' and as such, how doctoral-student-motherhood can be a site for leadership. It could be argued that the collaborative and synergistic approach taken to doctoral study by the mothers with their children is part of a neo-liberal pursuit to ensure future success for their children (Wilson, 2017). The cultural and historical background of intensive mothering should not and cannot be undervalued as the hegemonic backdrop to contemporary motherhood and is evident as a 'force,' within the discourse of synergism. I feel however, that an *alternative* reading of this activity is presented by the mothers within this study which demonstrates that the doctoral-student-mothers should be *celebrated* as servant-leaders with servant leadership being a form of maternal agency (O'Reilly, 2010). That is, through practicing servant leadership within their family, the doctoral-student-mothers, as leaders, are indeed *revered* for their knowledge and power and as such have found a site for resistance to the dominant discourse of intensive mothering.

As such, the doctoral-student-mothers are enhancing their maternal agency and acting from a position of power (O'Reilly, 2010). Power and leadership are said to be intertwined, with leaders enacting power to ensure that they and others reach pre-determined goals, although said power can be used to either influence people, or control people (Ross et al, 2014). For a servant leader, such as the doctoral-student-mothers, power is used to influence (Ross et al, 2014) as has been seen through the use of role modelling, the 'use' of a doctorate on behalf of a child and a collaborative approach to doctoral study as a mother.

When regarding education, such as a professional doctorate, from a normative perspective, the value of education is to increase an individual's capabilities, to expand their freedom to achieve activities that are of value to them (Nussbaum, 2011). Servant leadership being enacted by the doctoral student mothers, however, demonstrates education not being used to expand individual capabilities alone, but also in expanding the capability of others. Whilst quality of life and well-being are at the heart of education (Nussbaum, 2011) again this is with an additional focus towards their children and others for the doctoral student mothers.

Servant leadership has had great success in education, internationally, with effective schools said to be characterised by servant leadership (Gocen and Sen, 2021) and good school leaders being those that serve the school community and society at large (Al Mahdy et al, 2016). In higher education, servant leadership has been found to affect a higher level of commitment to the organisation from its staff (Aboramandan et al, 2021).

Doctoral-student-mothers are found to maintain a servant leadership approach within their own homes, which is, I believe, in recognition that the enactment of power as a leader is constrained owing to being a mother within a professional sphere and manifests in a domestic setting.

Motherhood is conceptualised by many as a barrier to women's professional leadership (Burn, 2019). Women are perceived as more nurturing and nurturing in turn is perceived negatively, having the effect of undermining women, particularly mothers', leadership potential. As such, mothers are demoralised in the workplace to more low status 'housework' to the detriment of their leadership advancement (Williams and Multhaup, 2018). Stereotypes endure that mothers are both less competent and less committed to their work than non-mothers (Eicher et al, 2016) and with women in heterosexual couples still found to do most of the parenting work at home, whilst receiving a wage penalty after having children (Killewald, 2012) the effect on leadership potential becomes clear, as the combination of restrictive career paths, lower pay and restrictive stereotypes form the 'maternal wall' (Williams and Dempsey, 2014). Owing to the 'maternal wall', non-mothers are found to not have children because of the conflict found between mothering and professional leadership (Jones et al, 2020) and women with children are found to not meet their professional leadership potential, hence leadership manifests elsewhere, as evidenced by the use of servant-leadership by the doctoral-student-mothers, within their own families. In contrast to practices that may dominate professional workspaces for mothers, professional doctoral study and motherhood becomes an outlet for leadership, with servant leadership behaviours demonstrated. This finding is very much at odds with the 'struggle and juggle' descriptions of doctoral student motherhood so commonly found and detailed within my literature review.

Motherhood, when regarded as disempowering and oppressive through the societal devaluation of 'motherwork' and endless private tasks assigned to mothers is contrasted starkly by the doctoral-student-mothering as a site for leadership (O'Reilly, 2010). Within the discourse of synergism and the resultant subjective experience of servant leadership, one of the facets that cannot be ignored is the synergistic effects that manifested towards housework. The doctoral-student-mothers reported that partners or children were assuming a greater responsibility for housework, for which they felt guilty, or that the mothers were reducing their time spent on hobbies or socialising to ensure that they continued their position as homemaker.

It is recognised that there is a gendered imbalance of housework, with household tasks still assumed to be the responsibility of women (Altinas and Sullivan, 2016; Sayer, 2016). Whilst it has been argued that there is an inverse relationship between the financial reliance of a woman upon her spouse in a heterosexual relationship and the amount of housework undertaken (Hook, 2016) the notion of responsibility for housework, including food preparation was evident amongst the doctoral-student-mothers. One of the synergistic effects of the mothers undertaking doctoral study was that other household members had to take on responsibility for homemaking, or the doctoral-student mothers, sacrificed hobbies or time with friends to ensure that they could retain their position of homemaker. To not continue as main homemaker was generally considered a breach of maternal responsibilities with guilt reported, to sacrifice hobbies or friendships to continue as homemaker was considered 'par for the course.'

This is in alignment with studies that report that although there is a relationship between paid work and housework, with less housework being undertaken by working women than those who are financially reliant on a male partner, it is still the case, that working women do more housework than the men they live with, even if they are the higher earner within the relationship (Lachance-Grezla and Bouchard, 2010). What is evident, is that there is a gendered division of domestic responsibility which is moderated, but not absolved, through having paid employment (Aassve et al, 2014). I find this interesting, as whilst undertaking a professional doctorate is designed to influence professional practice, many of the doctoral-student-mothers (Augusta, Maria, Jane, Sue, Jen, Ellen and Lindsey) all described their professional doctorate as bearing no relation to their employment and therefore not linked to their earning, or future earning potential. I find it plausible therefore that the professional doctorate does become positioned as a 'hobby' as described by Sue and therefore the resultant guilt at breaching the gendered position of homemaker is made possible.

It is recommended that to shift the gendered balance of housework to greater favour women, that within educational programmes gender relations should be highlighted, alongside more flexible perceptions of gender roles, which in turn may challenge gendered practices, such as what it is to be a 'good mum,' or a 'good dad.' (Mandel and Lazarus, 2021). I therefore recommend that as part of the induction process for all participants in doctoral study that the gendered practices of housework are highlighted and that one of the expected consequences of undertaking a doctorate is that a shift in household responsibilities may occur. I argue that the shift in domestic responsibilities that manifested amongst some of the doctoral-student-mothers, should be celebrated as an effect of doctoral study which prompted a shift towards empowered mothering.

Empowered mothering is that of reclaiming power for mothers (O'Reilly, 2010). That in becoming a servant-leader within their household a change in identity manifested that allowed for the mitigation of patriarchal mothering, through the absolution of household tasks, albeit with resultant guilt, did in fact result in an increase in maternal agency. I believe that educational institutions have a responsibility to raise the consciousness of doctoral-student-mothers on their programmes to alert them to possibility of a shift in domestic responsibilities.

Children and housework are argued to 'close the door' to women's' access to higher education (Oakley, 2019). Housework has not been considered a 'serious' enough topic for public policy to engage in (Oakley, 2019) but I argue that to ignore housework is to ignore women and for academics running doctoral programmes, recognition of the extra household duties undertaken by women in heterosexual dyads should be highlighted in pursuit of social justice. This discussion is not at the exclusion of people in same sex couples. Many studies looking at the lives of LGBTQ+ people has focussed on public spaces (Barrett, 2015) I, in alignment with other academics (Pilkey, 2013; Cook, 2014) recognise the meaning given to the home for queer families and as such, wish to explore the different formations that family can take (Chambers, 2012). Traditionally, lesbian and gay people eschew the normative relationship between sex, gender and housework (Civettini, 2016). Running the household as a 'queer space' is said to destabilise traditional gender roles and destabilise traditional heteronormative, gendered household practices (Barrett, 2015). A queer home is understood to be a place where hegemonic, heteronormative homemaking practices are resisted (Pilkey, 2013). Being a member of a queer household does not correlate entirely with non-normative gender practices towards housework, with housework used to 'perform' gender (Civettini, 2016).

Whilst it is recognised that housework is a pervasive aspect of the gendered narrative in families, through which families navigate and define gender and gendered relationships, it has also been noted that same-sex couples use domestic labour as a method of gender display (Wong, 2012). Through gender performance, housework is used as a tool to create and maintain a gendered identity (Schneider, 2012). A person can choose to present themselves as a 'husband,' or 'wife,' through choosing to either engage in, or avoid housework, based on its stereotypical association with femininity (Civettini, 2016). This is not exclusive to same-sex couples, masculinity and femininity can be performed through housework in other-sex couples too. Seminal work by Thebaud (2010) found that men who earn less than their female partners do less housework than other men, the rational for this being that to not be 'main breadwinner' combined with increased duties as a homemaker is seen as too great a challenge to their masculinity, ergo avoiding housework strengthens their masculinity. Women who earn more than their husbands do not contribute less to homemaking, again as a means to maintain a feminine display, which may be challenged by their 'main breadwinner' status (Offer, 2014).

The doctoral-student-mothers in my study could be said to be feeling guilty about their abstraction from homemaking, through their professional doctoral study, as it presents a challenge to their femininity. The mothers who continued with primary responsibility for housework, did it at the expense of their social lives. Many of the doctoral-student mothers were the 'main breadwinner' within their family, some were single parents, some were divorced and some were in lesbian relationships. Whilst as a discourse analysis this study is not concerned with providing individual 'descriptions' of people, but rather looking at the wider discourses that they draw from.

It is my perception that housework as a performance of femininity was a feature and that the guilt felt for a reduction in housework was as a result of housework and femininity being inextricably linked. The meaning given to housework as a discourse, in turn provides meaning to positions on gender and identity which are impossible to escape (Foucault, 1972) as a mother in any form of relationship, or as a single mother. With motherhood seen as the 'ultimate femininity,' (vonDoussa et al, 2015) to be failing in housework is also, to be failing as a mother.

Within the philosophy of matricentric feminism, motherhood is regarded as a site of power, a site of social engagement and as a site of social change, which is brought about through activism (O'Reilly, 2019). The mothers in their use of servant leadership through their doctoral-student mothering are undoubtably finding a site of power and as will be shown below, are also heavily drawing upon a discourse of activism, as is befitting with a normative approach to education with social justice at its core (Gibson et al, 2017).

4.3 Discourse Two: Activism

Augusta was first to describes her doctorate in altruistic terms. Augusta very much orientates herself outside of academia, despite being a Senior Lecturer she has 'no intention of having an academic career.' As such she is positioned as a student for the greater good, a 'better person,' hoping that 'somebody will benefit from it' which, which in practice manifests as the 'somebody' not being her.

> *I mean I've no intention of having an academic career, that , you know, I'm not going to go doolally and start working 'til seventy churning out papers, but I do think that I'm a better person for it, and that I will help other people even if I'm not publishing, something, somebody will benefit from it*

Danielle describes her son as a motivating factor, through being the mother of a disabled child and wanting social justice for disabled students. The motivating factor for doctoral research being her experience as a mother.

> *Danielle: Well the research I'm going to be doing? I'm going to be looking at the experience of disabled students in accessing support at the university, from their perspective, so that's where it's at, I haven't looked at it for six months*
>
> *Lucy: And is that motivated by your own experiences?*
>
> *Danielle: Well yeah I guess I'm motivated by my experience as a mother of a disabled child, yes totally, absolutely, completely, because it's just so hard for disabled students, just to be accepted in the first place, because you are different, but also to make sure they have an equal right, it all about social justice, have an equal right to fulfil dreams like we have you know?*

Danielle orientates herself as a mother of a disabled child and positions herself, in doing her doctorate as an advocate of equal rights for disabled students, the resultant practice within this discourse is that doing a doctorate is an act of activism to ensure social justice for disabled students.

Sue describes how she 'used her doctorate' for her son, when liaising with his university. The use of 'for once I suspect that I used my doctorate,' implies that the doctorate had not been used, in a professional or personal sense, prior to it being employed as a means to help her son. Sue describes herself as never using the title Dr and denounces it as 'not being her,' suggesting that she only 'uses' her doctoral status to help her son. Sue's 'use' of her doctorate is as the parent of a child who needed help.

> *…and of course, Asperger's is something that comes with high levels of anxiety so all these things, this fits with a pattern of, anyway**, for once I suspect I have used my doctorate** because, I wrote a letter, you know an e mail letter about three pages long and I outlined all the things and I just went**, I am taking over, I am interfering and I am standing as an advocate for Brad**, this is what has happened to Brad, I outlined it and they wrote me a letter back and **went well, we don't care who you are and I did write doctor Sue** **** and they basically went, it needs to go to extenuating circumstances and you need medical evidence….*
>
> *….**So in the end, I don't, I may have helped Brad***
>
> *Lucy: Do you think your doctorate did anything?*
>
> *Sue: When, so Brad's got a lovely girlfriend, right, and she, but she's in ***** and she said write and write on in Dr Sue **** and she said that will do and I'm going, I don't think it will Judy I don't think it will but and then when I got the letter back it was quite rude really, **but well you know and I was thinking well this hasn't***

> *worked, no doctor Sue **** has done anything and I never call myself Doctor I*
>
> *never, but now the university keep e mailing me, Doctor Sue **** and I keep*
>
> *thinking, who's this person? It aint me! So I may have helped my son because*
>
> *I may have found some ways round the system* which I perhaps wouldn't have
>
> known about if I hadn't kind have been in that kind of uni academic setting

Sue details how she helped her son through her advocacy for him, as a role model helping him to 'engage with the world.'

> *Sue: And course,* **when you are anxious and can't deal with the world you**
>
> **can't engage with, you can't engage with anybody** *he hates e-mailing, he hates*
>
> *asking favours,* **so you know, in a back handed way, I may have kind of helped**
>
> **my son get through the last bits. I mean, it must help to have a role model**
>
> **you know, surely, you know**

Sue, like Danielle, is orientating herself as the mother of a child who needs help, in Brad's case, owing to a mental breakdown and having autism with associated high levels of anxiety. Sue positions herself as an advocate for Brad which enables the practice of her 'using' her doctorate to help him. Sue does not appear, within this discourse to have 'used' her doctorate, or her title of Dr for another reason previously and as such, her doctorate is solely used for the purposes of maternal activism. It is also interesting to note, although Sue did not offer any link between her professional life and home life, the subject of her doctorate, which is also focussed on activism for pupils with special education needs.

> *Sue: **SEN, its voice, voice and participation** and it's connected to education healthcare plans*

Suzanna describes how her doctoral topic was born out of attending Forest School sessions with her children, with concern evident both in regard to the protection and nurture of the environment but also in regard to children and contemporary constructs of childhood.

> *Suzanna: Yeah, I mean I didn't, I thought if I'm gonna do a PhD I've got to really want to do one and **I've got to find the thing** that I want to do and I kind of explored various things at various different times and then I didn't find a thing, and **then I suddenly knew what it was** and so **I'm interested in Forest Schools and the kind of construction of nature and ideas of kind of parenting and constructed childhoods and the way that we, that parents think they have an idea of childhood which they're trying to project onto children** and the kind of blossoming of forest schools that there is at the moment, they are all over the country and they are kind of quite en-vogue, but **I think there is something problematic about them because I don't really think they are about kind of environmental concerns and educating children about nature**, as far as I can see they are kind of an experiential nice thing for children to go to, which I don't think is bad, I think that's nice for kids **but I think in kind of a bigger, environmental way its problematic** and I guess I, what I wanna research as such is parents perceptions and their motivations for why, they chose their children to attend these sessions and **I've been going to them with my children** and I've been, you know I see there is really, it's not what I thought necessarily the people going to them,*

> *they're not all white middle class which I think is interesting, not that, not that that's gonna be my focus,* **but I'm interested why people attend them and what's kind of, what's their, what's their concept of childhood which they're trying to give their children…**
>
> *…. Yeah I think it comes from sort of, you know,* **nostalgia, retrospective ideas and ideas about the world, the way people want the world to be***, than the world it actually is, cos really, if you really wanna have that wild, re-wilding children, free range, it's not about a bunch of grown-ups standing next to their child, in a kind of controlled, woodland space with a kind of whittling stick when the parent's kind of doing it for the child in case they, kind of, hurt themselves, really, that's about letting kids be free and go and run around on trees and do stuff without any parental supervision and that kind of, is at odds with the supervisory, kind of protected childhood that we kind of have, so kind of risk averse all those things, I don't, I think that there are some contradictions going on there and that's what I'm interested in exploring*

Suzanna then further unpicks how being a mother has impacted on her as a doctoral student, which clearly links to her choice of topic, as did Danielle's link to being the mother of a disabled child.

Suzanna: But the other part of your question, so you asked me how does my doing a doctorate impact my parenting, but the other one how does my parenting impact my doctorate, **I think that it's having children, I don't know that I would have come to this idea if I hadn't had children,** *although I was interested by geography things vaguely, vaguely I was interested by it but not, you know, not in a massive way, but I think* **, because it's made me think about how you , you know, parents have got ideas about childhood which they are projecting on to and whether or not they are their ideas or they come from external ideas or they're historical ideas and I think that everybody has got some kind of agenda when children are not really free, because they're completely controlled and kind of, sort of, subjugated by society in which they're around and I think that it's kind of, I feel sorry for them because there are so many different agendas being put onto them, I think it's pretty confusing, because there are some that are all about fitting in and you know conforming and getting good SATS results and all these kind of things and there are other approaches that are about aspire and kind of alternative kind of things and all these different agendas and it's hard to know, you know, kind of where to be, I kind of think that the forest school thing is kind of, sort of touches upon these different things and I think that it's a kind of, why is it particularly now that it's becoming vogue and is it to do with all these screen things and is it a kind of counter thing to that, but it hasn't, it's not also a new idea, you know it's still going back to the Scouts and these kind of things, so it's kind of like an old idea that's had a resurgence, erm so, you know, don't know, I think that being a parent made me think about you know, kind of critical reflection on parenting**

Not only is Suzanna showing that her doctoral project came from her own experiences with her children, but a protective stance over both constructs of childhood and consideration to the environment, as below.

> *Suzanna: but I guess I'm interested in social justice from an environment perspective, cos I'm interested in nature and ideas of conservation and looking after nature and I kind of think that if you're doing forest school that's what should be going on it should be kids, looking after nature...*

Suzanna is positioning herself as a doctoral-student-mother who is critically reflecting on parenting and constructs of childhood and the impact that these have on children and the environment. This position supports Suzanna in orientating herself towards social justice, for children and nature. As such her doctorate, in practice becomes a process of activism, an endeavour to understand the effect of Forest Schools on children, in the face of contemporary constructs of childhood with all the various 'agendas' that children are faced with, whilst also considering the impact of providing a 'free-range' childhood upon the environment. Suzanna's position was extremely interesting, I have read about the challenges mothers who work in conservation leadership face and how there is a gendered dichotomy in caring for nature and caring for humanity, with mothers wedged in the middle, responsible for nurturing human life and also wanting to protect life on Earth (Jones et al, 2020).

Mel describes her experiences of being a mother in a mixed-race family being a motivating force for her doctoral topic, whilst also bringing some challenge, as it brings the personal into a public space.

I guess like, in terms of like my topic for my PhD, like I guess it is, talking about race and we're like an inter-racial family is very connected to like my everyday life and again that idea of it being selfish, like the work that I'm doing, I guess my end aim is for maybe teachers in schools to just be more aware of like the power imbalances between people in different races and how we address that in a classroom and so I guess I see part of that as potentially supporting kids like Jayden and like his friends and stuff and so it's, that can motivate me, but it can also be really challenging, because you're digging really deep on some stuff and then it's also talking about that with Anja and then reflecting on stuff, so it's a bit of a double edged knife

Lucy: Its very personal

Mel: Yeah

Lucy: Its very personal

Mel: Yeah

Lucy: Is Jayden mixed race?

Mel: Yeah he is

Lucy: My children are mixed-race as well

Mel: Yeah, yeah. So I guess that's like a bit different and sometimes like, where I've been talking about it with other people and people are like, mm, we don't really need to talk about race do we? And stuff like that, **there probably is a bit of a risk,** of like I'm having to learn to navigate that space differently….

Mel is seen to orientate herself as the mother of a mixed-race child within an inter-racial family. Her doctorate, which is described as 'connected to my everyday life' is positioned as a bridge between the experiences of non-white children in education 'kids like Jayden' and 'teachers in schools' being more aware of the power imbalances between children of different races. This facilitates the practice of activism, Mel is able to use her doctorate as a means to effect change, for 'kids like Jayden' but also on a more universal level, as evidenced by a future comment whereby Mel describes how her view has changed and she has started to challenge the all-white authors used in the reading lists on her courses, '***we're looking at things and changing things and yeah its interesting.*** Mel is therefore using her maternal agency as a site for activism, in using her own experiences of mothering as a site for power, for change and for social justice (O'Reilly, 2019).

Jen, after describing her students as her 'centre' goes on to describe how she has utilised a collaborative approach 'with' and 'for' her students to support their learning in end-of-life care. Concern for her students is clearly evident there, but the language of 'crossing boundaries' and 'opening doors' is very much the language of an activist.

Jen: Yeah, yeah, although I've ended up in end-of-life care and it's all been a bit crazy and my, my focus of my doctorate is on end of life teaching in end of life care

Lucy: Is that what you're gonna do?

*Jen: Creativity**, using a creative approach for students**, yeah…*

*…Jen: So I used to run a module in it and **we** had amazing outcomes and it **just crossed boundaries and opened doors***

Lucy: What kind of stuff did you used to do?

> *Jen: I **basically gave it to the students and let them run with it and they just did amazing things, we had poetry and plays and music and posters absolutely amazing things, amazing, amazing things***

Jen is orientating herself as an advocate for her students, a person who allows them to take control of their own learning and will 'push boundaries' and 'open doors' through using creative approaches to teaching end of life care. Jen is positioning herself as a crusader, someone who will take risks on behalf of her students to enable 'amazing things' to happen for people experiencing end of life care. Jen's doctorate, in looking at creative approaches to end-of-life care therefore becomes a continuation of her crusade and as such, aligns her as an activist, on behalf of her students and for people receiving end of life care.

Clare describes how she is using her doctorate to advocate on behalf of the learning disability nursing workforce, in the face of a potential closure of the learning disability nursing course. Note that Clare does not describe her doctorate as a way to keep herself employed, rather it is about championing the need for learning disability nurses.

> *I suppose that's the other thing, its, it's just, I mean my sort of journey through **this past year and a half was just in a way, traumatic, not because of the course itself but because I was doing the first year, they considered withdrawing the course I teach on, going through redundancy***
>
> *Lucy: OK the course you teach on, I'm imagining the learning disabilities course, because that's been so affected by bursaries*
>
> *Clare: **Yep, exactly, so there was talk of withdrawing the course and we had this big fight to save it which we did***
>
> *Lucy: Good….*

*….Clare: Yeah when everything happened with the course and with **the whole thing with all these LD courses closing or potentially closing and that sort of thing, I wanted to do something about that** and when I talked to my….*

I'm looking at, sort of, career pathways for learning disability nurses, so particularly ones that will work in areas that aren't LD specific

Lucy: OK

Clare: So for example at Great Ormond Street, they employ learning disability nurses because they've got so many kids with complex needs

Lucy: That's where I had my clinical career, at Great Ormond Street

*Claire: **Yep, so that brings up whether actually LD nurses are going off and doing those roles, or in children's hospices, very similar***

Lucy: And I heard at my university which is UEA one of our recent LD graduates has gone to work as a practice nurse and they were absolutely, apparently they absolutely snapped her up because of the skill she had as a learning disability nurse was so applicable in general practice

*Clare: **And another Trust in North-East London they're doing the same to take them for dementia, elderly care units the same thing, so probably it's the transferable skills, partly it's that you've got, although we're not normally working with LD, although places where you've got lots of kids with LD like Great Ormond Street, or sometimes, I have another Trust ringing me up they've got me to, they're going to be doing a task and finish group on this because they've got, they've had somebody just go and apply for an adult rotation and they just want to show where they allowed?** So it's just like an ad-hoc thing like that, I know with UEA I think the guidelines say that about half of their cohort ended up going into non LD kind of settings*

Lucy: Which puts a really good business case forward for continuing with LD training

Clare: **Absolutely so that was part of my motivation there at the beginning but also as I've been looking at it more and thinking, but it also means, cos actually even before that, LD nursing is actually got the highest percentage of vacancy in NHS services in London**

…. Exactly, so it's a bit of a double edged sword I guess, so that's kind of what I'm wanting to pick out as well and no one's actually really evaluated the impact of its, so it's part of a steps thing, you know what is this actually bringing you as well*, so it's quite complicated, similarly, interestingly, what you were saying about the Practice Nurse, I heard from one of the community Trusts in North-East London, they were doing interviewing for Health Visitor training and one of my former students had applied for that and she absolutely aced it for exactly the same reason and it's about the, it's the holistic view, she, I say, even those, was saying after the interview, I really messed up that question, but it's about having the holistic sort of viewpoint, which LD nurses are really good at, but others aren't necessarily as good at, so, naturally for her, so there's all these things that potentially mean that you can work anywhere, but there's also this, a lot of my theoretical framework would be around stigma and parallel stigma, because there's also this idea at the same time, this is where I got this phone call, the idea that LD nurses aren't proper nurses …..*

….. if I took you into a group of LD nurses right now they would all tell you , that they've been told there's no jobs

Lucy: By who?

> *Clare: By mentors, by all sorts of people, even, even the, when they were interviewing for new students, the people who were coming in to do interviews say from mental health nursing, they will say, so they'll come in for their interview and they'll say, oh yeah, I want to do mental health nursing, I've been working in LD services as a support worker for the past ten years, and **I'm why are you doing mental health nursing not LD? And they'll either say, oh, that a thing?** They don't know about it, or they'll say, well I thought about it but my manager, careers adviser, whoever said there are no jobs in that, don't do it*
>
> *Lucy: Cos services aren't shutting are they? Services are growing*
>
> *Clare: They're growing but they're more, lots of them are more social care, so they don't necessarily need nurses, so there's not necessarily a lot of motivation for a social care agency to send somebody off to do their nurse training that probably won't come back*
>
> *Lucy: Yeah, yeah, I find it very sad, **So you're very motivated it sounds by your subject?***
>
> *Clare: **Yes, definitely***

Clare is orientating herself here as someone who wants to do the right thing by learning disability nurses and also by people with learning disabilities and will be affected by the 'highest percentage of vacancy' in nursing posts. As such, Clare is firmly positioning her doctorate as a means to review why learning disability nursing is an under-recognised branch of nursing for potential applicants, *'oh, that a thing?'* or that learning disability nurses are told that *'there are no jobs,'* and the effects of learning disability nurses working in non-exclusive learning disability settings, *'no-one has really evaluated he impact.'*

In practice, whilst Clare recognises that she wants to *'do'* the doctorate and has wanted to *'do the doctorate study for so long,'* Clare also draws upon being motivated by her topic. The topic itself is therefore in practice, activism, born from potential course closures for learning disability nursing and wanting to recognise the contribution that learning disability nurses make in both learning disability services and the wider health and social care community. Clare is motivated to continue, as an advocate and champion for learning disability care.

Ellen describes how her familial experiences of caring for her mother-in law who had dementia, alongside her professional ones motivated her to 'champion the champions' in her doctoral research.

Ellen: **one of my other passions is dementia and I'm a dementia friend, I'm a dementia champion**, *I'm on the Alzheimer's research, Alzheimer's London regional committee and I was also, my previous job before I came into full time education was head****, mental health older people* **and I was also a carer for my mother-in-law and was still a carer for a long period of time up until the last few years, had mixed Alzheimer's and vascular dementia** *and so I was sort of exploring the arts based research and thinking about topics, again cos I was on the committee, again cos I was on the committee and delivering sessions here, dementia friend, delivering that side of it*, **it just naturally went into that direction I think, so I decided that would be looking at the lived experience of dementia friends champions, cos from being on the committee and being a champion myself and delivering sessions and looking at the very limited research in the area and so it felt like there was a real gap in knowledge and there's a lot of research around dementia friends, there's research around people living with dementia and their experiences but there really wasn't much about being a**

> *champion, all these champions, including me are out there delivering sessions and there's about the content about the **topics but not about what it really means to be a champion or what it feels or how its changed your beliefs, or values, or thoughts, or perspectives so that sort of led me on to that as the topic***

Ellen orientates herself as someone who 'knows dementia.' As such, Ellen is able to position herself as a 'champion of the champions.' Ellen's doctorate becomes a work of advocacy and in practice, is seen as activism on behalf of dementia champions. This practice is demonstrated below, as Ellen outlines how interviewing dementia champions motivated her.

> *Ellen: So what have I enjoyed? I'd say I enjoyed all of it, **I think what I've enjoyed most were the interviews and meeting the champions and hearing the stories** cos I love that sort of narrative style, hearing stories, they're the things I remember, they're the things, I love that oral history and that side of things as well, **so I really enjoyed the interviews and I just felt that after the interviews, the listening to the interviews, the reading the transcripts and feeling like I was part of their life for that period of time… being part of that life story and in that life story for that period of time and so I think that was probably one of the most, the early stages were meaningful…..***
>
> *…. I could start getting the participants and once **I had the participants to see and meet with and interview**, I just found there was a lot coming from it and it was a sort of relief as well as an enjoyment, **one they gave so much of themselves, which I really appreciated and so that was really enjoyable***

The enjoyment of interviewing participants is contrasted with the participants having 'given so much of themselves.' As with family members contributions to the doctorate, doing it for the participants again orientates Ellen as a 'good person' who is invested in having dementia champions stories told and positions her as doing a public good, as an activist for the dementia community.

Ellen again displays activism as a practice through her description of her additional work in producing a book, not being purely for an academic audience but *for* the dementia champions.

> *Ellen:…both and then **I'm writing a separate book which will be the poetry with a commentary, but not with the words of the interviews that will be in the thesis but the book will just have a little commentary with a poem and the next one'll do the same working through and the idea being that that'll all be freely available, it'll just be for people to use and to reflect on experiences of the champions, it can be used in teaching, it can be used by different groups, it can be used by individuals, it can just be downloaded by anybody who wants to read it, it's an alternative way of presenting a thesis basically***
>
> *Lucy: I've never heard of anything like it, it sounds wonderful*
>
> *Ellen: So that's, that's all work in progress, so in some ways it feels **like I've given myself more work, but I definitely don't regret it, because, you know, if we're looking at dementia friendly communities, if we're looking at a deeper understanding of what it means to be a champion and that experience, I don't want it to be just in the academic arena, I want it to be out there, I want to make sure it gets all the, the Alzheimer's Society have it, the champions can read about those experiences and during that time***

Ellen shows activism as a practice in her approach to supporting dementia champions managing their own emotions and in ensuring that the sessions do ultimately benefit people.

Ellen:…so then I made up these postcards that could be used as well as an alternative to the book and these are all sort of reflected in the thesis and this one, **'in her eyes I see what you were to me, I check myself, stand tall, I wasn't expecting you'**

…., she said about when you're doing these sessions, 'do you share your own experiences?' And people are taught we're not meant to anyway and we're supposed to use only the resources and this participant was talking about how you know, **we don't use our own stories, but how when people that are attending the sessions share their experiences, how it can bring things back and how suddenly she was confronted with, from hearing someone talking to her about their experiences, suddenly it brought back her own experiences and she had to check herself because suddenly she was aware of her own emotions and how she felt about what that person and that empathy that she had with the person** *and so talking about this and this one was,* **'remembering you, the stranger who stops to ask will lighten the load'** *and that again was about being a friend* **and how you know the benefits of delivering the sessions and being a champion, because even if it's just that someone, just sees you wearing a badge, or just suddenly thinks, they see someone struggling and they reflect on that dementia friend session and they think let me go and ask if someone needs some help**

Further enactment of activism as a practice in Ellen's actions to make sure that her sessions are effective, to 'convey a message' that has an impact on service users, that was not a 'great big book.'

> *I was teaching a session on person centred care and so obviously the idea of doing this is that there is a pedagogy to it and teaching and learning of different aspects and so I took a couple with me and I only used one of them and we were looking at, how do we? What does person centred care mean? How do we promote person centred care?*
>
> *How do we get information across not in a great big, twenty page document of person centred care but how can we convey that message in practice in a health care, health and social care setting?* And the students were coming back from placement, placement one and they're BSc Occupational Therapy students and so I gave them a card, one of the poems which looks at person centred care and asked them to look at the poem and think about what does it mean in terms of person centred care and so they talked in small groups about that, using an arts based approach, they could use poetry, they could use art, they could use symbols and to create something and they had pencils or pens or whatever they wanted, a few different resources and they came up with some really, really interesting stuff, symbols and colours poems and different things and then they shared and they stood up and shared what they'd used with the group and then we discussed how *we could use arts based approaches to convey a message that doesn't need great big books and publications, but we can get that message across in a user friendly way,* in an arts based way of doing it and I told them, this is the first time I've used this with you, as a group this particular, cards, with postcards and they called them poem cards, which I thought was a really good way of doing it, you

> *know call them poem cards and I got really, really positive feedback, so that's going in the viva, in terms of I've used it in education already*

Ellen again discussed how the focus of her work is not on academic success or advancement, but to better serve the needs of service users and in the second extract whilst she loves studying for her doctorate and the 'buzz', ultimately the purpose is to serve her students. A doctorate is something to be *used*, rather than something to *own*, again showing activism as a practice.

> *I wanted it to give me a deeper understanding of what the meaning of being a champion was, that would* **inform the Alzheimer's Society in the support and development of champions and the future development of dementia friends and dementia communities.** *I was hoping that it would also lead to a better understanding of and the* **benefits of arts based research…**
>
> *…Personal desire to progress* **academically but not to become, I'm not looking to be, this is not a big career path to a researcher**, *I want to be doing things I love supporting the students I really love seeing their progression, I do love the credibility of having the doctorate,….*
>
> *…..I've got lots of things I want to do and I feel I need it, but* **I also enjoy it and I like the buzz** *of it and how* **I've been able to use it with the students and I like how I've been able to use it in my work**

Activism is again evident, in Ellen's mission to 'get through her viva' so that she can then share her work with the Alzheimer's Society and to encourage more arts-based research in health and social care.

> *Ellen:…so I worry about the viva, but* **to get through it, then to be able to start, to go back to the Alzheimer's Society,** *I see them regularly every few months on the committee***, I want to share it with them, I want to get this poetry book out I want to start, I want to start sharing the research, I want to write the papers, I've got some things written already partly, what I'd love to do is start to find some way to get health and social care to start recognising that we could have more arts based research, its gone the other way in terms of predominance of systematic reviews and things,** *partly for practical reasons, because if ethics and the rest***, start encouraging them to think more broadly, to be able to teach research methodology and incorporate more arts based research into it, to have some people doing art and drama, I'd love to do, what I'd love to be a, to develop my skills enough to be a poet in residence, so that's what I would really like to be…**

Lindsey is also found to be adopting an activist position, in wanting to involve young people in children's nursing education.

> *Lindsey:* **I'm going to be, hopefully, looking at the phenomena of young service user involvement in children's nursing education,** *it's a very long title which I think a lot of phenomenological studies tend to be don't they? But it is young people,*

*I was hoping originally, **to look at it from the perspective of them, of the young people involved**, but I just think it's fraught with such big, ethical issues and I'm also not sure about how much there is out there really, **how many young people really are contributing to children's nurse education in universities…..***

*….. Lindsey: So we've used a lot of parents, **but I want to look at children and young people, so actually just recently managed to pull it off, so I've been really trying to improve things over a number of years and I got my first young person in the class but that's very low level involvement, but I think we could move there, I could move towards co-production***

Lucy: What about doing digital stuff? So they don't have to come in, facetime or skype in or

*Lindsey: **Well there is one study, that has been suggested believe it or not by a patient in one of my link areas, so I go on the ward one day and one of the Practice Educators said oh, Lindsey, I've got this young man wants to have a word with you, so I get dragged on to the ward and I get introduced and he tells me he wants to have something to do with the recruitment and the nurses education and he says anyway that I can get to be involved and we did talk about skyping from the hospital to the university, the set-up is enormous you know then to actually facilitate all that and I can see why people are not doing it, but if I could make a little beginning***

Lindsey is orientating herself as some who wishes to give a voice to children and young people with experience of healthcare in children's nursing education, she speaks from the position of someone who has wanted to do this for years but recognises the challenges it brings. In recognises the challenges, but also the *'low level of involvement'* of children and young people in children's nurse education currently, in wanting to *'make a little beginning'* Lindsey is seen to practice as an activist, a person who sees the difficulty but also the value and therefore will carry on with her doctorate for the betterment of children's nurse education and children and young people's participatory practice.

4.4 Subjectivity: Doctoral-Student-Motherhood as Activism

Activism as a feature of being a student is a longstanding concept, with a significant history of 'campus activism' amongst students in higher education (Rhoads, 2016) and many activist movements having been birthed on campus (McClure, 2021) with activism amongst students on the rise (Linder, 2019). Students in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies engage in activist activities that champion for a variety of causes, addressing different and intersecting causes of oppression, such as police brutality, economic and social exclusion, free speech, sexual harassment, gun violence, immigration and fair conditions of employment (Wheatle and Commodore, 2019). Students engaging in leadership activities can be considered activism (Martin et al, 2019). I feel that this leads student activism to be considered as something that runs separately to a student's studies, rather than as a process interwoven into a holistic experience of being a student. With a recognised lack of coherence as to which student activities 'count' as activism (Martin et al, 2019). I consider activism to be the process by which actions or commitments are made to transform systems for social change (Linder, 2019) and thereby the doctoral-student-mothers are found to have activism as an interwoven and subjective feature of their doctoral study. Activism is embedded within their doctoral experience, as opposed to engaging in separate activist activity as a doctoral student. Activism is often regarded as 'high profile, in your face actions' (Ryan and Tuters, 2017) resulting in women undertaking doctoral studies finding it difficult to identify as activists (Leigh et al, 2020). I prefer, as do other female doctoral students (Leigh et al, 2020) definitions of activism that include recognition and endeavour to change, on a small scale, organisational practices that are disadvantageous to social justice (Ryan, 2016) and challenge the status-quo of conditions that propagate inequality (Martin et al, 2019).

I also recognise that demographic characteristics along with professional socialisation effect activist activity amongst graduate level students (Dodd and Mizrahi, 2017) and therefore it may be that the professional roles of the doctoral-student-mothers along with other features of them as individuals such as their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliations impacted on their activism (Boehm and Cohen, 2013). I note that whilst activists may often be influenced by the cultural identities that shape them, these identities are not often acknowledged as specific mediators (Stewart and Quaye, 2019). Accordingly, Danielle recognised that her study was influenced through being the parent of a son with autism and Mel, wanted to improve the classroom experience for non-white children, such as her son, the majority of doctoral-student-mothers in my study did not explicitly make links to their children or to professional socialisation. I feel that this may be about the doctoral-student-mothers not recognising themselves as leaders or as activists, with both said to develop as doctoral students, but the identity of becoming a leader and activist conflicted by other intersectional identities, particularly race and predominantly for this study, gender (Leigh et al, 2021). Professional doctoral programmes are designed to produce graduates who are able to challenge and change the environments in which they practice (Becton et al, 2020).

Attempting to combine scholarship and activism, as seen by the doctoral-student-mothers, should be a natural fit, as research is typically born out of a desire to change or improve a situation experienced within society (McClure, 2021). Indeed, the term 'scholactivism' has been created to describe the point at which scholarship and activism combine to create social change (Farnum, 2016). The 'scholactivist' seeks to create new knowledge but also to work as practitioners of said knowledge within the communities they serve.

This definition could be in-fitting with the doctoral-student-mothers, as professional doctorates seek to develop researching professionals, who 'solve problems' within their area of professional practice (Simpson and Sommer, 2016). I argue that as their knowledge has been demonstrated to reside *not only* within their professional spheres but also within their own maternal experiences, they are functioning both within and outside of the 'scholactivist' definition and found to use *maternal* activism, in concurrence.

Maternal activism is understood to mean the organising of civil society whereby women draw upon their roles as mothers to engage politically (Whetstone, 2021). Maternal activism is generally considered to be activism by women who have a common identity as mothers and can be linked to injustices that mothers feel their children have experienced (Lawson, 2018). Maternal activism does not reside only within a personal sphere however, maternal activism is said to conceptualise caring as a civic responsibility that extends beyond a domestic boundary, with care extended to those who are either disempowered or neglected and as such, motherhood is seen to adopt a socio-political role (Sood, 2021). I believe that the doctoral-student-mothers in my study have operated both within and beyond their own domestic boundaries.

Examples of contemporary maternal activism can be found with mothers unification against war and state violence (Goksel, 2018; Strelynk, 2019), uprising against racialised killings through the Black Lives Matter movement (Al'Uqdah and Adomako, 2018; Lawson, 2018), against femicide (Orozco Mendoza, 2019; Savarese, 2019), supporting autism acceptance (Goldsmith, 2021) promoting workplace equity for mothers (Bromwich et al, 2021) speaking against climate change (Duffy et al, 2019), promoting culturally sensitive education practices (Manzo and Deeb-Sossa, 2018) and advocating for environmental justice (Thomas, 2018).

Maternal activism, also known as maternal politics of care, can be considered a collective politics of care, whereby equity and social justice is sought (Mendoza, 2019). I argue that all of the doctoral-student-mothers within my study had equity and social justice as core components of their doctoral studies and by this definition in isolation, are exhibiting maternal politics of care. That said, to regard maternal activism as one collective phenomenon I feel is naïve, in ignoring the complexities of intersectionality associated with maternal activism, namely location, class, race, gender, sexuality (Whetstone, 2021). Maternal activism is a contradictory term, with maternalism generally considered a conservative function, apolitical and even adverse to women's interests, at odds with politics or democracy through participation in society rather than the domestic acts of care, typically attributed to mothering (Mendoza, 2019). This contradiction may explain why maternal activism is seen as collateral to other feminist activity. Whilst women are increasingly engaged in activism, particularly feminist activism, as a means to make sense of their lives (Charles and Wadia, 2018) it is argued that feminism has been somewhat ambivalent to the ideology of motherhood and having a maternal identity as a female activist (Strelynk, 2019).

Feminism and academia, that is the recognition of feminism as both an academic practice with a distinct function of activism is found lacking in recognising motherhood having a place within feminist academia or doctoral study (David, 2016). Matricentric feminism seeks to re-dress this, in utilising a mother- centred feminist theory and politics and addressing motherhood as the 'unfinished business' of feminism (O'Reilly, 2019). Matricentric feminism seeks to recognise that the position of mothers is distinct from the position of woman, that for women who are mothers, their mothering is a significant dimension of their lives, arguably more so than their gender (O'Reilly, 2019).

Whilst it may be a functional dimension of their roles as a student to utilise their studies for activism, it is clear that for many of the doctoral student mothers in my study, their doctorates were also being utilised to affect change in practices related to their children. Matricentric feminism seeks to position mothers' needs and concerns as the starting point for theory and politics on women's empowerment (O'Reilly, 2019). Recognising that not all studies have direct links to the doctoral-student-mothers' children and in celebration of the doctoral-student-mothers as professional women with professionally aligned research interests, acting to engage in practices of social justice and equity, as befitting with broader definitions of maternal activism (Mendoza, 2019) was evident throughout.

Through doctoral-student-motherhood, as activists, the women in my study are seen to engage in a process of empowerment. Power and indeed empowerment, is said to occur when change involves the building of critical consciousness, that is changing the way people see and experience their worlds that raises an awareness of inequality, that generates an impetus to act and to change society (Cornwall, 2016). Activism is associated with a positive identity and sense of psychological well-being (Strauss Swanson and Szymanski, 2020).

Activism has been found to reduce stress and increase personal growth amongst several groups, namely parents of disabled children (Geva and Werner, 2021), female victims of sexual assault (Strauss Swanson and Szymanski, 2020) amongst transgender and sexual minority women (Hagen et al, 2017). I understand growth to be a renewed appreciation for life with an increase in purpose and meaning, an increased sense of power, a shift in priorities, improved interpersonal relationships and spiritual growth (Tedeschi et al, 2018).

Empowerment is understood to be the interaction between people and their environment, with an alteration in the sense of self from victim or experiencing helplessness to that of being a leader or highly capable person (Weiss et al, 2014). I argue that as doctoral-student-mothers the women in my study are functioning as activists, for them and their families and for the groups in society that they serve as professional women. Doctoral study is therefore a vehicle for maternal emancipation, allowing women to venture outside of the 'MotherSpace' (Marotta, 2010) the MotherSpace being the boundaries that are placed upon mothers to 'package' them within the dominant discourses of motherhood as 'working mums,' or 'bad mums,' that present 'choices' to mothers as to what kind of parent they may 'choose' to be and in doing so, keep mothers from functioning within a political space (Marotta, 2010).

Doctoral study can therefore be viewed as a conduit to activism and as activism is itself a source of empowerment (Cornwall, 2016) so too is being a doctoral-student-mother. Activism as a feature of doctoral-student-motherhood also has links to the previously discussed concept of servant leadership. Whilst leadership activities have already been highlighted as a form of activism for students (Martin et al, 2019) activism is the enactment of the third and final principle of servant leadership as defined by (Eva et al, 2019) as an outward reorientation of concern for self towards concern for others and the larger community. Doctoral-student-motherhood is therefore found subjectively, to be the enactment of leadership, activism and empowerment, with motherhood regarded as a site of power, a site of social engagement and as a site of social change, which is brought about through activism (O'Reilly, 2019).

With this in consideration, it cannot be ignored that activists do experience feelings of hopelessness, burnout and depression (Chen and Gorski, 2015) particularly for those who already feel they have a marginalised identity, already experience oppression or discrimination, have a heavy workload or lack social support (Hagen et al, 2018). It is with this in consideration that the third discourse utilised by the doctoral-student-mothers is presented, 'belonging and becoming,' which is a stark contrast in which the doctoral-student-mothers outline not belonging as an academic, or in their professional sphere and the process of becoming who they want or feel entitled to be. This discourse is focussed on the mothers' position as academics, or not, within their own family and also how being a doctoral-student-mother allows them to 'fit in' or not as professionals and as academics and as such speaks very much to the doctoral-student-mothers sense of belonging and the role that they take at home and at work. 'Becoming' is a strong discourse as the doctoral-student-mothers describe how their doctoral studies allow them to become the person they want to be. This discourse is a juxtaposition to notions of leadership and empowered activists and shows how the doctoral-student-mothers sense of fitting in is impacted by their family members, colleagues and by previous opportunities that have been afforded to them as women, professional women and professional women with children.

4.5 Discourse Three: Belonging and Becoming

Note the change in the meaning of 'collaboration' for Augusta, whereby her son's GCSEs are more critical than her professional doctorate and how her role as a mother necessitates her taking a break in her studies.

> *Yeah, where we're **helping each other** and **motivating each other**, because last year was quite a difficult year because it was GCSE year and I did, **I had to put my doctorate on the back burner** in , probably from April through 'til June because **he needed me**, I couldn't, that's such a critical time, **I couldn't, you know be thinking of what I needed to do when he needed me to test him and you know as a mum**, I thought you know **what he's doing is much more important than what I'm trying** , you know it can wait, so I did, there have been times **when it's been really important for him, where I have put him first, definitely, yeah**.*

Augusta is orientating herself as a 'good mum' putting her son's needs before her own, positioning herself as the 'less important' academic out of the two, with her doctorate considered to be unessential, a folly. In practice, doctoral study is dependent upon Augusta's son not needing her to support him with his own study and her doctorate is something which can be left, as it is unimportant in comparison to mothering responsibilities.

Augusta positions herself on a 'lower rung' to her son, with him able to 'teach her classics' in spite of her claiming that she doesn't 'need it at the level he's doing it (A-level) in spite of her being a doctoral student. Augusta is clearly orientating herself as less academic than her son, which positions him as more knowledgeable in comparison to her, a practice which cements Augusta as the lesser academic.

> Augusta:*…..thing is and this is so lovely, is that my Doctorate is around technology but it's going to be written with mythology interwoven in it so what has been lovely for us is that because he's into classics and he's studying classics, he's been really helpful to me, because I've never studied classics I've been reading it new and fresh but because he's been taught it by obviously someone who knows what they're talking about, **he's been able to sort of, almost teach me classics, erm and I don't need it at the level he's doing it at but it does help me***

Augusta's position of being the 'lesser academic' within her family is not exclusive to her, Sue, in describing her son, studying for a master's degree, alongside his girlfriend also studying for a master's degree, whilst Sue was studying for her doctorate, are quickly disregarded as not the 'clever people' of the household, this status is reserved for Sue's partner, who is 'not academic' but 'very well read' which seems to downplay Sue's academic status within the household.

> *Sue: but you know **the most interesting time in the house when things aren't so bad**, there was a point when, **I was doing my doctorate part of it, my son's girlfriend was doing an MA in Education and Brad was doing his work and was working through the first lots of his essays and that went well for Brad***
>
> *Lucy: So what did it look like in your house then if you know what I mean?*
>
> *Sue: It was bonkers, it was bonkers, **because my partner is, he's the cleverest person in the whole house***
>
> *Lucy: Is he Brad's dad?*
>
> *Sue: Yeah he is Brad's dad, but he is the cleverest person but has no academic qualifications at all, he is by far, by God what his IQ is God only knows**, he is so, such a very clever man but not academic so he doesn't understand anything, so he didn't do A-levels, he didn't do anything but you know he's very well***

> *read and that sort of thing, anyway so that poor man's out working while the rest of us….*

Sue orientates herself her as 'less clever' in comparison to her partner which in turn positions her as on a low rung within the household 'brains ladder' and as such, in practice, renders any of Sue's academic achievements redundant, as they will never match her partners, who has no academic qualifications but is 'the cleverest person in the whole house.'

The 'togetherness' of the group study and Sue's ability to celebrate her doctorate completion is impacted when her son has to take a break in studies. As with Augusta, the son is positioned as 'the academic' by comparison, resulting in the shock of doctoral success experienced by Sue and in turn, her son. Sue has positioned her partner as the 'most clever' and her son the 'most academic' resulting in her being the lowest rung in this academic household.

> *Sue: So he's at ***, he's very muddled up and then **he's very academic, very, very academic**, so he should, **so unfortunately I hoped we'd all pass together do you know like he would finish and I would have, I would finish and we'd have done it together**. I mean it might, it was very, **it certainly took the shine off me getting my doctorate…***
>
> *…. **so it never ever occurred to me at any point that I would go into my viva and I would come out a doctor**, it never, ever occurred to me that there wouldn't be no corrections and that would be it, the next day I would be finished you know. So**, my son, oh I think he was equally shocked, because out of us, I'm the dippy one, he's the very academic one, so he was very cut, I mean he's very,***

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> *but you know what can you go, so poor somebody else is floating around in a hell with their MA you know it's not something that you can kind of go, sort of brag about really when they're in a living hell of their own trying to write an essay and anyway, to be really honest, my son just doesn't think I'm bright at all (laughing) or can do, maybe it's because he's got Asperger's, but he thinks, I'm dippy, but he is, he is very academic*

Sue explains how her son does not regard her as academic and therefore how she may not have influenced his work positively, in the way that she did have a positive impact on his girlfriend's work, owing to her son being a historian and also a person with autism, but note this is maintained in practice, as Sue does not defend her academic ability in light of her son's position which demonstrates that within this discourse she does enact the role of lesser academic.

> *Lucy: And what about you and Brad?*
>
> *Sue: I don't know that I had much effect on Brad, I really do think Brad thinks I don't know if he said this or can keep up this persona but he just thinks I'm dippy, but also I don't think he really, you know historians, its fact, it's cold, social sciences, people, feelings, its, you know the two things*
>
> *Lucy: He doesn't respect your discipline in a way?*
>
> *Sue: I think so, I just think in a way, you know the thing he, it's to do with Asperger's and it's to do with the subject, history, its cold facts that you're putting down its completely different and you're finding that evidence and you know, ours is completely different*
>
> *Lucy: Interpretive*

> *Sue:* **Yeah, and I don't think for Brad that has any, well you know, why? Its autism your world is very different, so I'm not sure I actually, it's interesting kind of thinking about it, whereas Judy and I quite clearly egged each other on an went, 'oh yeah but you could do and oh wow look at this', you know and there were elements and I'd go, 'oh look I found this for you, read that' or she'd go, 'there was this I got this out the library*.'

Jen adopts a slightly different take on 'not being academic' with a self-conscious stance taken. Jen orientates herself as 'self-serving' in sharing academic work with her family adopts an embarrassed position that it is 'not right' to ask your son's thoughts upon her academic work, describing how it's 'egotistical' to ask for her son's opinion of her work beyond proof reading, suggesting that if she felt her work was good that it would be 'showing off.' Jen's academic status is not seen as 'academic enough' to be of universal help to her son who in part, 'won't listen' to her advice in regard to his academic work.

> *Jen: like because* **I can help him with his proof reading and things like that and can help him with other things, but then equally there's things he won't accept help on, he won't listen to me at all, so I actually I'd be, I don't think I'd even say to him what do you think, cos it seems almost self-serving, it's a bit egotistical isn't it, to ask your own family?**
>
> *Lucy: Has, you talked about you proofreading his work and stuff, has he ever influenced your work?*
>
> *Jen:* **He does he proofreads my stuff as well, I do ask him to run stuff through**

Jen not being academic is highlighted again, where she describes herself as a 'moron' in comparison to her husband and son.

*I mean he brings, there's lots of**, I mean my husband and he are very political, they love talking politics, I always feel like a moron in comparison cos they just have a huge knowledge base,** so I will listen in on the debates that they have back and forth **and Brad, from history, his background is history, he's really very smart**, which makes me sound like I'm surprised but you're always surprised at the intelligence of your child aren't you? They can't be doing that, but so I listen to the two of them having banter back and forth and its lovely to hear and interesting how they connect so, so, we will talk, cos he's doing his teacher training, we will talk about education inequalities, we'll talk particularly around **** area and that where impoverished and it is much harder to access the resources isn't it, than it is elsewhere? So again, social justice would be a big thing in Brad's mind, but we do bounce ideas back and forth now, more, that we are able to its much more of an adult relationship, yep*

Lucy: Who would you say is the academic out of the two of you?

*Jen: **Him***

Lucy: Would you?

Jen: Yes, yes

Lucy: What makes you say that?

*Jen: **Well he concentrates on his, he's not got a job when he's doing and the job that he did have was in a museum as a curator, so he's always been studying yeah so, whereas I've always had a job and then an academic career***

> *Lucy: That's really interesting, that's really interesting, so you've been a professional and then your academic studies which have been long standing, it doesn't sound like you've had any particularly long gaps have been alongside, alongside work*
>
> *Jen:* **Yeah, cos your profession gives you your finances and your home and your academics gives you additions to it, but they aren't what started it out**

Jen's position of being of an academically lower status than her son and husband allows her to consider herself 'a moron' in practice and as such, irrespective of her doctorate she will never be the academic within her family. Jen bases this upon being a professional who has had a professional training, followed by further academic study such as a masters or doctorate, by Jen's description, can never be considered 'an academic.' Considering the professions that most commonly undertake professional doctorates are healthcare, education, social work and counselling (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2016) and said professions are heavily populated by women and therefore 'academia' by this rule is 'out of bounds' to many professional women. Jen expands upon how her professional identity and in particular her professional training, impacts upon her ability to regard herself as 'academic' and the capacity to 'wear a floppy hat' is at present beyond her.

> *Jen: Yeah,* **imposter syndrome I have written consistently since I started my EdD, I have written consistently in all of my portfolio, it's about every single time I write its imposter, I am constantly feeling, there is no way that I know enough, have enough background, have any ability to get to the end of this and wear a floppy hat, no, no, I never feel**
>
> *Lucy: Has that been a feature throughout all your*

Jane: ***My career, absolutely but I suppose like most nurses, feel that they are not academically inclined, I don't dwell on it particularly, it's not something that I spend a lot of time thinking oh poor me, I don't think I'm up to this, I'm up to whatever I make myself be up to, I think that's***

Lucy: Do you think it's a nurse thing then?

*Jen**: I think there are parts of that, I think you get knocked so often as you go along that you gradually begin to feel that you don't have that acumen, you don't have those added skills, you don't have that baseline knowledge, which I suppose seven years of training as opposed to two, three***

Lucy: So medic versus nurse you mean?

*Jen: Well I've always worked in the medic department, I've worked closely with them, I did my, a lot of my PGDip and my advanced practitioner was done with anaesthetists so I've spent a lot of time learning with them and maybe, **they never knocked me, I do it to myself, it's a self-destruct button, no one's ever said, you're an idiot Jane you can't do it, or you're not up to this, I've never been undermined and if I have I've certainly retaliated and made sure that it never happened again but I dunno, but yeah I'm my own worst critic***

Jen's sense of imposter syndrome as an academic and her resultant lack of confidence in her ability are described metaphorically below, as Jen positions herself as not being responsible for her own work, this orientates Jen towards truly being an imposter, someone who does not and cannot have the capacity for academic writing and in practice Jen is therefore getting by on magic, or by fraud, true characteristics of imposter syndrome (Taylor and Breeze, 2020) with the sense of being 'found out' manifesting by Jen's use of 'not having much to hold you up' as in her knowledge base is either superficial, or not there at all.

*Jen: Actually **the Elves and the Shoemaker**, do you remember that book from childhood? **That's what it feels like, somebody comes in and writes it for me** because I have no, I read it back and I think wow, that's really nicely written I have no recollection of it at all, I don't even remember what I've read to put in there and that's scary*

Lucy: Would you, you must do some reading before the two days though, or do you read and write simultaneously?

Jen: I read and write, I read and write

*Lucy: **Would you admit that you're very brainy and that's why you can do it like that?***

*Jane**: I don't, I obviously am able to do something, I can pull, I've never been good, if I can't see the in front of my face, I can't, I can't work fast, I doodle and dawdle and I write and bin and I think it's rubbish, whereas when I've got the whites of my eyes are bleeding, I sit down and write it and then later go back and think, oh my goodness me***

Lucy: Its really interesting, if only I'd have read about it

> *Jen: **Where did I find that information or how did I even make those connections and I get feedback like this is beautifully written, poetic style, I don't even know what poetic style looks like so how could I write that way? So I feel like the Elves and the Shoemaker have taken over my world and when I'm writing stuff but I'm not, I'm surface skimming all the time and I know that whatever I do, I always feel as surface skimmed, because I can't recite it again, I don't know where to find it, I don't know where I found the information, I don't even know how I made the connection, therefore how am I learning?** Cos every time I do it again I've got to start from zero cos I don't know where I've started from before, and then there's this constant thing of oh, you're doing really, really well therefore you can carry on doing really, really well can't you? But I'm knackered, I'm absolutely knackered and there's that constant feeling in the back of your head, I'm gonna fail again, I failed my first masters, I didn't get it, am I gonna do the same. I got my second masters I hasten to add*
>
> *…. Jen: Yeah, but yeah, **there's that constant eating away at the back of your head, its, you know, it won't take much for you to fall cos you haven't got much to hold you up, does that make sense Lucy?***

Mel, draws upon similar discourse to Jen in regard to her use of a professional doctorate to gain an academic identity, again supporting the notion of 'becoming' through professional doctoral study. Mel, a schoolteacher by background presently working as a Senior Lecturer, describes 'imposter syndrome' in discussing how she does not consider herself to 'fit in.'

> *Mel: To just kind of yeah, experiment and go down different paths**, to be honest when I started it I was like, not really into it, and like I've got this real, like, kind of imposter syndrome about like, well, it just being in academia anyway, even***

> *though it is coming up to four years I'm still struggling with any sort of academic identity, think I'm just starting to get into it now, where as I still very much identify as like a teacher and this whole, kind of like, professor idea and I'm not, like I've always said I'm not one for like status, so when I've done things it's for the learning and the experience and I kind of said that from the start, I'm not really interested in being Dr *****, it's about learning and going on that kind of journey, yeah so I was about like, oh, why am I even doing it?*

Mel expands on why she is doing 'it.'

> *Mel: And then yeah, **I guess like doing my doctorate is making me feel more like having an academic identity cos there's definitely this set like,** the first day we did here was this training thing about you know that HEA?*
>
> *Lucy: Yeah*
>
> *Mel: Yeah and it was like oh, what's your pedagogic experience and all this, **so we, there were three of us from schools, so we were there sitting talking about all of our leadership stuff in school and this woman went, well none of that counts it's not in HE, so we kind of were made to feel like schools don't matter here, it's only HE** and obviously like, I'm teaching undergraduates like education studies, but it's about practice in schools and we've got a bit of PGCE and when I've spoken about how we support learners here, **I've got a bit of push back from people, as in like, well this is university, like, we don't do that in university**, so it was that kind of, we see ourselves as quite good educators, because we're always talking about education and pedagogy and all of **that but in HE we're not necessarily viewed as having any status, because we don't have doctorates and most of***

> *our division, doesn't have doctorates, we all come in from practice and they*
> *bring us for our practice experience, so its felt like we're having to like prove*
> *ourselves to other people and we've definitely had people say, 'from an*
> *academic perspective' repeatedly in meetings and I'm there as an academic*
> *in the meeting, so yeah it's been a little bit of a point of tension, not just with*
> *me but with other people and getting my doctorate is a little bit like, like it has*
> *become a bit like proving to people I can do this too, not because I feel I need*
> *to do that, but just like, well you're kind of looking down on me but actually, I*
> *do know my stuff and it could be useful to people basically and I've definitely*
> *been moving in more academic circles, so going to like SRHE conferences*

Leading to the point where Mel feels she can do 'it.'

> *Mel: And yeah I was like, oh, like **I can do this thing, it's not like, above me** or*
> *whatever*

Mel is seen to orientate herself as someone who sits 'outside' of academia with a sense of imposter syndrome adding to this. Her doctorate becomes positioned as the pathway to fitting in, or 'becoming' an academic and 'belonging' in an academic setting. In practice, for both Jen and Mel, a doctorate becomes the key to having an academic identity, which neither of them currently perceives themselves to have, in spite of both having a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, working as Senior Lecturers and being doctoral students, with the subjective experience of imposter syndrome superseding all past and current achievements.

'Fitting in' is drawn upon by Augusta but with different connotations to those used by Jen or Mel. Augusta orientates herself as something of a 'mis-fit' amongst her colleagues, positioning herself as different and indeed in conflict with her peers at work, through being a doctoral student and resenting her colleagues.

Augusta also has a sense of being a 'fraud' but this is a form of 'reverse imposter syndrome' whereby Augusta describes a feeling of being in the wrong profession, as her current profession does not meet her academic desires, with doctoral study used as a means to become her true self. Augusta is orientated as a 'mis-fit,' with her doctorate positioned as a 'bridge to becoming true self' and in practice, professional doctoral study takes on a magical, escapist function, allowing Augusta to 'step through the wardrobe and into Narnia.'

> *….work drives me nuts, because work, I resent it, because it scuppers me and I resent it so much and lately I've resented it all the more*

It appears that Augusta's resentment comes from a lack of support from her colleagues in relation to her being a mature doctoral student who is close to retirement age.

> *Augusta:… you know I have had a lot of negativity around my, you know I remember having to and I don't know how I got myself into this situation, where the team would decide whether I could have my study leave, so I'd have to be in a meeting with them all, tell them what I wanted and it was down to them whether I could have it, that's ludicrous*
>
> *Lucy: Do you think they see it, so you think they see it as like a day off, like a holiday?*
>
> *Augusta: Yeah they think I'm having a holiday, they've got no concept, well they don't seem to have to me of what that, what it actually entails,*

> *Lucy: And what it means to you?*
>
> *Augusta: No, no they have no idea, because they think it's pointless, **because I'm doing the doctorate close to my retirement, so they see it as pointless, but it goes beyond, it goes beyond my career, it's much bigger than that….***
>
> *….**I'm not doing it for my profession***
>
> *Lucy: Yeah that's what I wondered*
>
> *Augusta: No and maybe that's what gets their back up*

Augusta positions herself and her professional doctorate as distinct from her colleagues and indeed from her profession. Augusta's doctorate is something that she is doing for herself.

> *Lucy: I was interested that you'd said, that you want to write and I'm wondering whether you're saying you want to write because you find it really, really enjoyable or you want to write because you have to meet one of the deadlines?*
>
> *Augusta: …..because I wanted to and I, and **it was something that I really wanted to achieve just for myself………***

Augusta describing achieving her doctorate 'just for herself' is expanded upon below as she describes how she undertook a vocation, health sciences based professional degree rather than having the opportunity to study a topic that she feels would have enriched her more. Augusta positions herself as a frustrated academic, as a person who has not been able to self-actualise academically and her doctorate, is the action by which Augusta can arrive at herself, to feel and act like the person she believes herself to be. Augusta described herself as a 'fraud' who has pretended to be interested in her professional role, but through doctoral study, Augusta can be her true self.

*in my Doctorate I'm getting all those things that **I feel I missed out** because I did the vocation rather than the sort of, **desire and dream**…*

*…So, a bit of me has always been very frustrated and often felt, that **wasn't in the right space** and intellectually I've never felt particularly stimulated by ** but I have done by my Doctorate.*

Lucy: Well that, I was gonna, hopefully draw you round…. but I'm really interested to hear, but then you also said, you do the doctorate for you and I'm interested what is it, what's in it for you?

*Augusta: …..practice I find very routine and quite prescriptive and I've always been a very analytic person…..so in a way **I was never very fulfilled and quite bored** so I think what the Doctorate's given me is one the arts, because, its re-engaged me with literature and actually, it's made me realise that, actually quite gifted at writing which I knew I was, when I was err, at school because my best subjects were art and English and I was quite talented at both of them, neither of those subjects ended up, I never went anywhere with them, so it's been very nice to get back to things that of sort of, fed my soul really, because **I felt quite dead**, you know, do you know that feeling?*

Lucy: Yeah I do

*Augusta: I did not feel alive and I still don't feel very alive when I erm, when I, I can't get very excited about…..and I mean my colleagues do, **I feel a bit of a fraud sometimes**, but if you asked me about, I don't know, I could get excited about what people's activities mean to them because that's more analytic and its more interpretive, but you know the bog standard ** oh my God, you know if I did that all day, I would just go insane so erm, I think really, I mean even my methodology because its interpretive, is tapping into all that, you know that ability to sort of read*

> *between the lines? Which I don't really get, never had much opportunity to do when I was in practice, because it was **beyond my remit**, it's not the thing the ** does they only go to that point, **so I felt quite restricted** when I was a practitioner.*

Augusta in describing herself as 'dead' is using her doctorate as a means to 'come alive' and no longer be a 'fraud,' as a means to become herself and belong to an academic community. The use of doctoral study as a means to companionship, previously described in familial terms switches in focus to her peers.

> *Lucy: If, a lot of the stuff that I've been reading, I'm kind of getting a sense from you and you can tell me frankly if I'm wrong, that you kind of had a bit of a hole almost that the Doctorate was filling a bit of a longing to really stretch your brain to the, is that right?*
>
> *Augusta: Yes, **I was intellectually, I was under-stimulated, I was bored and I was unstimulated and I, you know there was a bit in me, it may sound a bit arrogant but I thought, I can do better than this, what am I doing?** What am I doing? I'm so bored and err, it all became very formulaic and I needed, and also **I think I needed new companions, you know, this is going to sound awful but you know if you're with the same type of people day in, day out, particularly if you don't really feel that you fit in, it can be quite draining, do you know? I just didn't, I just didn't feel it***

The ultimate subjective experience of doing a doctorate, for Augusta, is that it makes her feel happy.

> *it has got something to do with it in the sense **I've grown I've learnt so much** more about research methodology and as an academic **I feel so much more competent***

> *helping undergrads understand research methods and I, and **that I've really enjoyed, because that is the sort of knowledge that inspires me** rather than the ** knowledge of which is quite debatable, most of its borrowed, do you know, do you know what I mean? **So that makes me feel happy**, and I do think, this is probably going to sound horrible but because I think I've become more well read, I feel I articulate better, you know when we are having discussions, **I feel more able to talk in a more intelligent way**, I can't explain it*
>
> *Lucy: You are explaining it*
>
> *Augusta: I just feel that more, I can take things a bit deeper, or maybe make them think more critically and **I'm quite happy to be very spontaneous**, you know I don't mind going off into a different dimension with them, I think I've sort of, **I feel more confident about what's in my head***

The joy of doctoral study for August is summarised beautifully with her use of metaphor, as below.

> *Yeah, you see my doctorate is nothing to do with my profession really, you could vaguely make some connections, but **it's been a delight to step into a different, you know go, a bit like that Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, I go through the wardrobe into a different place***

Augusta has outlined doing her doctorate close to her retirement age for her own enrichment, it is worthy to note some other factors that contributed to the timing of Augusta's doctorate are in fitting with notions of a synergistic approach to doctoral-student-motherhood.

Lucy: Interesting so when did you realise that you wanted to do a doctorate?

*Augusta: I wanted to do a Doctorate, I did my Masters very early cos you know I don't know was nursing was like but ** only became a degree in '94 and so the culture changed quite slowly but people weren't really doing masters particularly, but I had, had done masters and so it was quite unusual to have done one and I think, I probably, **about five years after that really wanted to do it, but then erm, I had Adam and I couldn't do it when he was really**, I was too traumatised to be quite honest, I mean it is, it was quite a traumatic experience, cos we moved house and moved into a house that was quite derelict because my husband was obviously putting it together, money was very tight, **I couldn't have coped with study at that point and also I had my mum was quite poorly, you know there were lots of other demands on me and so it got put on the back burner** and put on the back burner and **so it wasn't until Adam got to age ten** and we'd just gone through another very difficult phase where my mother died quite tragically*

Augusta is positioning herself as a mother who had the desire to do a doctorate, but the responsibilities of caring for a young child and her mother were too much to allow her to do it. Augusta orientates herself as a thoughtful and considerate person, who won't realise her dreams until the needs of her family are taken care of. Likewise, the experiences of mothering were too overwhelming for doctoral study to be a consideration.

> *Lucy: What about outside of work, so you've talked about your colleagues and I'm interested in that period with Adam kind of not ten, the time when he was young and you were parenting a young child, did you have that sense of boredom then? Or did you find parenting a young child so…*
>
> *Augusta: **Parenting filled the gap, yeah it did definitely**, I think because, for me as an older mum, I think it was such as shock and you don't have the same energy, that really, **studying became irrelevant** at that, you know it wasn't until he got more able err, and I, **you know cos when they're little, when they're very little everything's about them***

This statement is showing the hegemonic power (Donoghue, 2018) of intensive mothering ideology. The notion that small children take up every bit of a female parent's time, allowing no time for any other self-affirming activities, no notion that any other form of familial or extra-familial childcare could be used other than the mother herself being presented as the 'common sense' view shows the institution of intensive mothering and the power it has over women's views of themselves and their lives through the pervasive dogma that to raise your children, you have to lose yourself (O'Reilly, 2010).

Augusta further outlines how there was a shift in her caring responsibilities below.

> *Yeah that had all got sorted and, and I just thought, and actually all the sort of, all the constellations sort of came together, I don't know what you'd, the stars all came together, because the house was done, Adam's new school was sorted, I no longer had mum to worry about all of that had been sorted…*

By waiting until everything was 'sorted' Augusta is showing consideration of her family through waiting for the process of self-actualisation to begin. Waiting until motherhood and caring responsibilities are 'less intense' however, results in women studying for a doctorate close to retirement age and therefore the premise of doing a professional doctorate and contributing to professional practice through research (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2016) and complementing their professions through the addition of their 'doctorateness' (Poole, 2015) becomes limited to the time from doctoral study to retirement.

Maria, like Augusta, is completing her doctorate close to her retirement age owing to a lack of opportunity provided to her by her profession and her position as a mother that she didn't want anybody but her to care for her children, both of which will be explored below.

> *OK, I haven't got the doctorate yet and **it will be my retirement present to myself**, but the other things I've achieved have been OK and have kept me going*

Maria, like Augusta, describes how her career choices and career pathway have left her 'wanting more' and how she is meeting unfulfilled needs, or as 'a present to myself'. Maria outlines how she needed a paying job at the end of her undergraduate degree and did not then pursue further study.

> *Lucy: So maybe you can just kind of tell me anything about yourself that comes to mind*
>
> *Maria: OK, I'm fifty-seven, I have two children, one a daughter of twenty-three and a son of twenty-five. I'm a primary school teacher by trade, I got my qualified teacher status in 1984 and taught in primary schools for about twelve years. When I was at university doing my BEd degree and I got to university, actually it was a college of higher education, I got there by the skin of my teeth and as I was doing it **I knew I wanted to be an academic, but because of my personal situation I had to have a job at the end of my BEd, so I had to take a teaching job, I had to finance myself and I had to find somewhere to live**, erm and also, I think, I didn't know and nobody explained to me, how you had an academic career I think looking back on it, it was more about, erm, so we are talking about kind of late seventies when I went to, when I got my degree, all of which was paid for, I got my fees paid for by **** County Council, or City Council and I got my grant, I think it was the point where, still where women were beginning to have careers, so I didn't have the life experience, possibly coming from ****, err, to know what questions to ask, or even that I could go to a tutor and say, I want to do this sort of thing, so I took a teaching job in North **** knowing at that point that I was going to do a master's degree at some point and I was going to try and get into university work, that, so I got my first, I got my masters, I got that in '91, I got it with the Institute here, erm and I got my first academic lecturing job in 1995*

Maria is seen here to orientate herself as a woman who took up teaching out of financial necessity with a goal of 'becoming an academic' in the future.

Maria positions herself within the sexist cultural framework of the time, with women 'only just beginning to have careers' and as such Maria can be regarded as something of a trailblazer of her time.

Maria does not describe her lack of academic progression at this time because she found academic study difficult, did not consider herself worthy, her position is one where she was constrained by her financial circumstances and the opportunities available to women. Within this framework, Maria is seen as a woman 'held back but raring to go.'

I know I can write, 'cos the other thing I thought, I've realised, if things had been different in the 1970s for girls, in ****, I'd have been a journalist, 'cos writing's actually quite straightforward….

This position of self-belief is beautifully exemplified and demonstrates how Maria felt that *she* was ready for higher study but her expectations when she was employed at a university were not met.

> *I'm dyslexic and probably dyspraxic as well, and so when I was at school I couldn't spell, I can't spell now but it doesn't matter now, so, I could read and I read very quickly, and the school, you know it still happens with kids, erm, because I could read, then I couldn't possibly be dyslexic, but of course we know a lot more things about neurodiversity and all that stuff now, so,* **I always wanted to write, and I used to fantasise about writing and sometimes I would just scribble over pages because I wanted to be writing books and I would tell myself stories and I knew that I could be a writer**, *didn't necessarily want to write fiction but I just wanted to write, to go through that physical process and sometimes I can, it's like, thank God for the invention of computers,* **I can imagine myself typing on a computer keyboard and like it's a piano, and I suppose what is coming out, its hopefully words but it's that kind of, I can feel or, or sometimes it feels like a waterfall and the writing is like water falling, so I always knew I was going to write….. It's a physical thing, so I kind of thought, I think both my, I kind of thought when I got to **** (University) that magically, I think I thought it would have been magic now, a bit like the Harry Potter letter, erm, that somehow, somebody would say write this and I would write it and I'd have an academic career, but of course I realise that didn't happen.. you know I thought, like Harry Potter he gets the letter, because he knows something about himself, he gets the letter, invites him to Hogwarts and suddenly he finds out he's a wizard and then, it takes off ….and that never happened, but that was me**

Maria describes how her desire to undertake a doctorate began many years before starting it. Having moved from teaching in schools to higher education, Maria felt that she 'was now an academic' and would therefore start her doctorate.

Maria, like Augusta, also draws on the 'demands' of caring for young children in spite of her 'reasonably supportive husband' and shows the cultural ideology of western mothering as a backdrop to her response, but also describes how a lack of support from her manager left her without an 'avenue' through which to pursue her doctorate. Maria is orientating herself as someone frustrated by a lack of support to undertake her doctorate. From this position, non-completion of a doctorate until now was owing to a lack of professional support.

> *so I was in my early thirties then and I had this notion that, so I was now an academic, which I was in name and then I was going to start research, I was going to do research and I was going to do writing and I was going to start my doctorate, erm and that didn't happen for all sorts of reasons, one of them was because of the demands of having two children although I had a reasonably supportive, or have a reasonably supportive husband, erm but the other was erm, no clear guidance from, I guess what would have been a line manager, as to how that might happen, I mean it was kind of, as there is in academia this sort of notion that, oh yeah, one will do research and if you want to do a doctorate you'll do a doctorate, we'll pay for it and that's not a problem, but there was no structure, there was no guidance, there was no anything really and….*

This lack of professional support is exemplified below, as is Maria's position of waiting until her children were old enough for her to consider doctoral study appropriate. In Maria's choice of the word 'support' in regard to her husband. Maria is orientating herself as someone for whom responsibility for childcare is hers to own and her husband 'helps out' as needed.

When orientated towards full responsibility for childcare, pursuing a doctorate whilst working full time becomes seemingly impossible and 'waiting until the children are old enough to be *abandoned*' becomes the only sensible action available. Having full responsibility for childcare beyond whatever 'support' is available from a husband, coupled with a complete lack of support within the workplace, who have seemingly written Maria off based upon her age. Support for Maria seemingly meant more than just encouragement, which she didn't get, it meant a negotiation of her workload to allow 'time and space' for doctoral study, to prevent her having to work over the weekends and 'park up' her children. With full responsibility for childcare and no support from her workplace, it is no surprise that Maria did not have the 'stamina and resources' for doctoral study in her thirties.

*so what kind of then happened was **as they got older and needed less of my input, yeah my husband he kind of did his whack as well, it's not like I was, didn't have support, I did have support, so as they got older and more independent and wanted less of my time, I mean they wanted to be with their mates and stuff**, I approached somebody at **** and **** had then become a university college and now it's obviously the University of ****, moving in the right directions, **so there was one professor in the education department so I approached him and said I want to do a doctorate and he said, you are too old, it will make no difference to your career, don't bother***

Lucy: Wowzers and is this still in the '90s?

*Maria: I'm just thinking, I'm trying to think of the date, this was, been, might have been the early 2000s, yeah, it might have been the early 2000s, I kind of, kind of thought he was a wanker actually, he has actually tragically, kind of **** since then, but it was, what really kind of annoyed me was that, oh what surprised me, I wasn't annoyed I was shocked actually, what shocked me was, **his field was equality, (laughing), so you've got this white guy, who is the only professor in the department, saying you are too old to do this now….***

…. And then whilst at **** College you wanted to do your doctorate but a professor told you, you're too old and it won't take you anywhere and you carried on working there for another?

*Maria: I was there seventeen years, **which was until the, until my youngest child was old enough for me to abandon her***

Lucy: Abandon her, so that, the reasons for you not doing your doctorate at that point, would you say it was purely based on the culture and attitude of the professor and other people within your institution or was it because of those attitudes and culture, plus your commitments as a parent? Would you have gone full steam ahead if you'd been given the go- ahead by that professor, or would there have been a bit of you that thought, actually my children are still fairly young, I'll hold back?

> *Maria: Erm, **if I'd been in a supportive environment, I would have gone for it, but for me part of that support would have been, erm, making space and time for me to be able to do it,** and any kind of down time I had, which, I mean I was working, yeah I was working five days a week, more of less kind of nine to five with all the school stuff in the evening doing the planning and the marking and stuff, erm so then, I was just quite tired at weekends, **I just wanted to be with the children, I didn't, I kind of, these were children we had chosen to have, these were human beings we had kind of purposefully brought you into this world and apart from I like being with them, I wasn't going to you know, then say, park them up and say, oh no, mummy's doing this,** and also because I did kind of realise, by then, that to be, to be a sort of fully fledged academic and go down that road of getting the doctorate, writing the research papers, getting peer reviewed through journals, going to conferences, if, to go for a professorship, on top of the teaching load I had, and other commitments, was not something I was going to be physically able to do, **I just physically didn't have the stamina and resources to do that…***

Maria's position of 'not wanting her children to have a childhood constantly spent being looked after by other people' speaks to the absolutist position of intensive mothering, that for a child to be cared for by anyone other than its mother is an exemplar of 'bad mothering.' From this position, undertaking a doctorate prior to children having independence would be impossible.

> *So the tension then is also, apart from the fact I actually like spending time with my kids, they are quite, you know I like being a mother and I like spending time with my children**, I didn't want them to have a childhood that was constantly spent, in, erm, being looked after by other people***

Danielle, like Maria speaks of having held desires for doctoral study for some time.

> *When, err actually I've always wanted to do a PhD or a doctorate of some sort and I decided that when I did my first degree, because I so enjoyed studying, that I didn't want to stop, really*

Like Augusta and Maria, Danielle sees having younger children as being incompatible with doctoral study. Danielle had an additional responsibility as a mother of a disabled child.

> *No, it didn't, I needed, I needed to have, I wanted to be a teacher, I didn't, **I'd kind of parked that idea, the idea of the PhD was like, in the future, but my kids were young** I don't think I had the, **I don't think I had the time and also because my son was diagnosed autistic as well and ADHD, having a child with special needs, fighting the council for support, you know all these battles you have when you have a disabled child, there was just no room for me doing a PhD and investing time in it, really, there wasn't, erm yeah no, it was just always** an idea, in the future*

Danielle is exhibiting a different use of intensive mothering ideology in describing how doctoral study was not available to her as a parent of a young child with autism and ADHD owing to the 'battles' that she was required to have as his mother.

Danielle is using an intersectional discourse whereby cultural narratives of motherhood, disability and neoliberalism are seen to interplay (Tabatabai, 2020). It is considered that for children with autistic spectrum disorder, within heterosexual parenting dyads that women shoulder the majority of care work (Silverman, 2012). Mothers of children with disabilities are at risk of being homogenised as a group of mothers with unique characteristics (Tabatabai, 2020) without recognising the intersectional and co-constructing features of being a disabled person (Goethals et al, 2015) and likewise, the intersectional experiences of being the mother of a disabled child. Owing to the care work and the public advocacy of children with disabilities, as described by Danielle, mothers of disabled children are reported to developing a strong standpoint, based on their personal experiences (Stace, 2013). Dissatisfaction with professional services is reported (Hogan, 2012) as was outlined by Danielle. Also with a neoliberal background to parenting and contemporary society which relies on parents to provide both income and care to disabled children, whilst absolving the state of any responsibility (Luxton, 2015) combined with advocacy forming a very strong focus of identity for parents of children with a disability (Tabatabai, 2020) it is not surprise that Danielle felt that she had 'no room' for doctoral study, with her time spent '*fighting the council for support,*' resulting in her doctorate being seen at that time as *'just an idea, in the future.'* Speaking of the present time, Danielle cements her position that her children are now *'old enough'* to allow her to pursue doctoral study.

*Danielle: **My children are grown children now, they are adults,** I have a twenty-five year old daughter who works **** actually, in the **** and I have a nearly twenty year old Autistic son. **So I guess in terms of mothering, you know, its, they don't***

> *need as much support from me as they would have needed when I first studied*
>
> *for example, 'cos I came quite late to academic studies*

Danielle is seen to orientate herself as a 'good mother' through waiting until her children were independent of her prior to commencing doctoral study and as such, positions a doctorate as something that is incompatible with a young family. This manifests in practice, as it did with both Augusta and Maria, as waiting until children are older prior to commencing doctoral study, with Danielle describing how she could study for her PGCert when her children were younger, whilst doctoral study has been rendered 'out of bounds' for mothers of young children.

> *My son was two then, my daughter was about eight, so obviously the balancing act of studying and motherhood was **a lot more difficult than it is for me now doing a professional doctorate because, well, they don't live with me anymore**,*

Danielle expands upon how her children now being older and not living with her, gives her the free time to work on her doctorate, that she would not have had when they were younger and her mothering 'duties' were heavier. Motherhood of younger children is orientated as a much more labour-intensive task, positioning Danielle, now, as freed from the responsibilities of caring for young children. Her doctoral study can therefore, in practice, be completed at her leisure as she now has the 'good bits' of mothering, as opposed to the hard work of caring for young, dependent children. Doctoral study is firmly placed as only achievable when children are older and less dependent.

> *Lucy: It's your thing, so taking into consideration that your children are adults, how does doing a doctorate affect your parenting of them?*

*Danielle: Well not as much as it would have had when they were younger, **I don't think, I don't think it has any impact on my being there for them when they need me, 'cos they don't need me as much, anyway,** I mean I meet Amy for coffee twice a week here you know anyway*

Lucy: That's nice

*Danielle: So not, yeah they don't need me as much, you know **they are independent, I don't need to feed them, I don't need to prepare their school bags, I don't need to check their homework, I don't need to, you know cook for them,** I cook for them when they come and see me do you know what I mean, we don't have that aspect, I mean I'm there**, I actually have the good bit of mothering really, 'cos I don't have to do all these chores, I just do the nice bits now…. does it impact on my doctorate? No because I've got a lot of free time now, it's not like something I have to do constantly every day, so no I don't think it does impact on that***

*Danielle: **Well I don't know if it's done so I want to make sure so I can, sometimes I see him coming in and I say, you wore that top when you came last week, I can see that hasn't been washed, you know, so I have to remind him of these things, yeah, have you had a shower today? These are, you know, basic things, I've been telling him for, well decades really***

Lucy: And probably will for the next

*Danielle: **Yeah well I, that could be because of his disability, because of the autism, he needs to be reminded, he's not going to think about, I need to do that, he is the one that will need mothering for a good long time, I reckon***

Lucy: I can see that,

> *Danielle: He does call me if he needs something to do with school, paperwork, we had this, not argument, this friends tell him, ah you should apply for Universal Credit and he went ahead and did it and then he didn't have a British passport he had a French passport and it was just like, oh my God, Max, just you need to, you need, you can't do that, one, you don't have any entitlement to it, so you need to cancel that straight away, so he is, yeah, vulnerable, I expect, so you have to keep track, I have to keep track of what he is up to, basically*
>
> *Lucy: And does that responsibility impact on your doctorate ever?*
>
> *Danielle: Does it impact on my doctorate?* ***No because I've got a lot of free time now, it's not like something I have to do constantly every day, so no I don't think it does impact on that***

Jane presents an example of 'waiting' until her children were the right age for her to study, when her youngest child went to university. Jane gives an entirely different perspective on waiting, as she describes how she 're-invented herself' following the end of her marriage, prior to which she had not been a professional woman and considered her family as her career. Doctoral-student-motherhood for Jane forms an entirely different process of 'becoming' to that described by previous doctoral-student-mothers.

> *Also, whether it's important or not it doesn't matter, but eighteen years ago I divorced from a husband after thirty years of marriage and* ***I decided to re-invent myself*** *at that time and* ***that's when I went into academia,*** *before that I had not been in academia at all, I'd done my A-levels, I had a position, a place at university when I met my husband and I didn't got to university at that time, I got married and moved*

> *around and da-di-da-di-da, and had family, and so my career, I did not have a career in terms of modern day women and careers, **my career was my family** and other things besides, which I always fitted in with what was going on within the family. **Once we'd divorced, my youngest child was I university, I thought, I'm now going to totally re-invent myself and that's when I started on the academic path,** I started with a bachelor's degree at *****as a mature student with the eighteen-year-olds full time*

Jane's children being older and no longer living at home, which, combined with the end of her marriage allowed her to have a change of 'career' and 'totally reinvent' herself. It is clear that Jane has not left mothering behind in order to focus on higher education, as highlighted by the description below, whereby Jane describes herself as a doctoral-student-mother who is also a grandmother to five children, a daughter to an unwell mother and a woman for whom 'my family are my priority.'

> *Right OK, well I came into this quite later on in life, and I don't have young children so I didn't combine work with young children or family at home, my position is that my children are older, but they themselves have children, so I'm a grandmother and **whilst I was doing my doctorate, three of my five grandchildren were born, to one of my daughters, and also I have, had, I had an elderly mother, who, in the last three years of doing this research became really poorly and in the last year, I'd got a new grandchild and I'd got my mother who was dying and I had the call, or we all did but I was local to her, three times, she's not going to make the night you should come, so three times I had that call, and all the while that this was going on, I was also trying to complete the last two years***

> *of my of my doctorate, having started it four years previously that was quite the priority in my life, but equally, my family are my priority as well so there was that conflict, so that was my position.*

Jane, orientating herself as a woman who is liberated to reinvent herself through a significant change in personal circumstances, positions her doctorate within large familial, caring responsibilities, which allows Jane, in practice to still consider her family as her priority and as such, denounce any suggestion that she has been selfish, callous, or 'turned her back' on her mothering responsibilities through doctoral study. Indeed, whilst admitting that doctoral study was interesting, Jane is able to position doctoral-student-motherhood as a 'natural progression,' growing *with* her as her family grew, with a 'circle of life' narrative being used, which again positions Jane as not having stepped away from her family but orientating Jane and her doctorate within the growth and change occurring in her family, making her doctoral study, in practice, embedded within the familial growth and change.

> *Well it became and interesting**, it became, really interesting** because my world, I didn't, I wasn't at home with the children any more, I could and I was very lucky to have the where with all to be able to do this, I didn't have to get a full time job so I was very lucky in that respect, and **all the while this is going on my family are growing up, my family started to have children and my parents, are getting older, my father died then my mother got, my mother became very poorly, so when I started the doctorate, it, it was like a natural progression…***

In amongst doctoral study and the changing dynamics of Jane's family, Jane does recognise that to be a doctoral student and a mother with caring responsibilities does bring with it conflict, in her case as what she describes as the 'sandwich person' between the younger and older generations.

*And so embarked on that, it's a long haul as you know, it is a long haul, and with other things in your life whether its young kids, a career, that you are working while you are doing it, or whether it's just your other life, **I think a woman does have that conflict between what you want to do which is basically for yourself,** or it's a career move, my position was not a career move, **you have that conflict between your, your role as a mother and whether you're the sandwich person I was, in the middle between the elderly and the young,** you know and my outside life, it's all these conflicting things.*

To be the 'sandwich person' as a doctoral-student-mother, as Jane describes brought with it stress and challenge.

but there were moments, a lot of moments where I just thought, I can't do this and I don't want to do it, because, I have other things to do at home that I need to do. *I also had an aunt, my last remaining aunt, very heavily demented, and her husband, my uncle, he was not coping with this at all, they didn't, they don't have children, so I found myself having to keep going and visiting, wanting to , **but all the time its time out of your, what you want to do**, it's a day, because they don't live in this area, it a day out to visit, then it's my mother, **then it's something going on with my children, and they were very good, they weren't ringing me and***

> *saying, oh can you be Granny on Wednesdays, it wasn't like that, but I wanted to be there because I knew that this was only going to be once*

Jane used managerial skills in order to deal with her multiple responsibilities. Jane, in the following section, whilst using an 'everybody wants a piece of me' narrative to describe the complexities of being a doctoral-student-mother and indeed grandmother, defines success as making 'sure everybody gets a piece of the cake, the cake being you.' This orientates Jane as a woman who believes that she should be giving to others and positions her doctorate as one of the competing demands of her life, which in practice allows Jane to 'have the smallest piece of cake' in spite of her denouncing this as 'not always good.' Within this discourse it would be impossible for Jane to talk of 'me time' or say 'I told them all to look after themselves, I'm working on my doctorate' as all sections or 'slices' of Jane's life as a doctoral-student-mother are seen to be 'plated up' to different areas of responsibility, with doctoral study being one of them. In this sense, motherhood and caring responsibilities, whilst managed and organised in a way that may not have been possible with children living at home, are seen to take a different dynamic, but are none the less, there.

Jane is therefore 'permitted' to undertake doctoral study because her children are older and her time can be managed in a way that was not available, or indeed visible to her when her family were younger and regarded as her 'career.'

> *Jane: Absolutely, absolutely and I perhaps, could not have done that, I could not have given as much time, equally I could have more time, but **there's only so many hours in a day and you've got to take time out for yourself as well, and I think sometimes that's what women do, they tend to have the smallest piece of***

> *cake, they give everybody else and then they get the smallest bit, and sometimes that's not always good you have to perhaps think of yourself*
>
> *Lucy: And did you do that enough or not enough?*
>
> *Jane: I actually think I balanced it quite well, I do, **I'm quite good at time management, and I think that's key for anybody in this situation like you are, kids and what have you, its time management, and trying to juggle all the balls and trying to make sure that everybody does get a piece of that cake, the cake being you***

Suzanna is the only doctoral-student-mother who currently has young children, with one child of pre-school age and one child at primary school. Suzanna shows consideration to the needs of her family, through having waited until here children 'didn't need her so much' before embarking on doctoral study, in spite of it having been something that she had wanted to do for some time.

> *So they're only just, kind of, the youngest one's still in nursery, they kind of still haven't gone into the, **they don't need me so much**, so I'm only really just getting myself back on track, if you see what I mean, in terms of my own academic career and like you were talking about earlier, I think it took me, **I mean I've been thinking about doing a PhD for a long time, probably since I did my masters cos I enjoyed it***

Suzanna, like the previous-doctoral-student-mothers is found to be operating within an intensive mothering ideology, where mothers are seen as the best and sole care providers to their children with 'they don't need *me* so much' showing the essentialism of maternal care. Suzanna, although on a shorter time frame than the other doctoral-student-mothers, has still waited until an appropriate point in time prior to 'allowing' herself to undertake doctoral study. With this in consideration, Suzanna is found to place limits on what is acceptable for her to do as a doctoral-student-mother to younger children, with 'writing papers and attending conferences' described as a step too far.

> *I don't kind of do conferences and write papers, that's not what I do cos I, you know work part time and my kids are four and seven*

In alignment with the other doctoral-student-mothers who have described waiting until their children were 'old enough' for them to undertake doctoral study. Suzanna positions herself as 'struggling to fit in' with her group owing to having young children and that her home life, of giving her young children their tea whilst concurrently attending an online taught session, is embarrassing, or inappropriate for an 'academic' peer network.

> *I've sort of gone, done, what I want to do, what I feel strongly about, so, **in terms of my experience of the course as a parent, I find it challenging just fitting it in** and so, I have a long day, but it's on a Wednesday which is generally when I'm in and then the course is in the evening, but sometimes I feel like, oh I just want to go and see my kids, I want to get home for their bed time, I don't want to have to sit here 'til 7pm and then, I live outside London and then get a train and get home at*

*like, 9pm and then they'll be asleep you know and then **so I tried a few times Skypeing in, when I was at home and that was a bit weird!***

Lucy: Did it not work?

*Suzanna: No it worked **but I felt really self-conscious but like, you know, it's from, the seminar is like from five 'til seven so that's always the kids, you know when they're having their tea***

Lucy: Teatime and winding down time, yeah

*Suzanna: **And I was like, you know, they were having their dinner, and I you know, everyone in the seminar room was like going, oh what are they having, fishfingers?! And they were!** And it was just really odd, they were going, show us round your kitchen then! And **I was like, this is feeling a bit inappropriate, I'm not sure I'm comfortable with this** and my kids were really good, they knew I was doing a work thing and so they were quiet and I gave them, you know, something to watch on headphones so it was quiet, but I just found it slightly weird and there was a boundary, that it was going into, that I wasn't quite, felt like, I wasn't like…..*

*……. Yeah, yeah, it just didn't feel right and also I didn't kind of want them to, obviously I have this sound and then I had it muted so I could hear what they were saying, but they couldn't hear what I was saying, **because obviously they were there saying, mum I want a drink and you know, stuff, it was just a bit weird!***

Lucy: I've done a wee!

Suzanna: Yeah (both laughing) just a bit odd, so then I could still listen and I kind of thought that was OK cos if I wanted to say something I could then un-mute it and kind of put up, wave, so it did kind of work, but I think it would, it would have been better, like the visual thing wasn't good, cos that was just a bit weird it was

Lucy: Intrusive?

> *Suzanna: **Yeah, like seeing into my, into my world….***
>
> *Lucy: Could you concentrate? Could you concentrate on what was being said?*
>
> *Suzanna: In a half way, it would have, it would have been fine if it just wasn't from five 'til seven pm, if it had just been obviously like, when they were in school I could of, obviously wouldn't have been a problem, even if I couldn't have been there I could have been listening in you know doing it, so the idea of, the idea of Skypeing into a seminar I think can be good and that's not really a problem…..but it was fine, so I think that, that can be, I think it can work, it just slightly strange if they can see into your kitchen, **because everybody's intrigued by somebody's other life, it just wasn't, it just felt a bit uncomfortable**. But I kind of, on the positive, I think it's really good that it's a part-time course and it is really good that I feel supported I would say and I feel like, you know letting me do the course again for, you know is good and you know, I think those things are good, I don't know in another place, if I wasn't working there, they might not be so flexible*

This position of being 'different' and how this resulted in a lack of 'camaraderie' and Suzanna being 'left behind' is further exemplified below.

> *I mean another**, nobody else, was a parent with young children, in the course, you know**, they either had old children or their children were completely grown up, you know like finished university, so, **you know I didn't feel any kind of, you know, comradery in that sense, so I felt a bit like, oh well, I'm the one that got left behind but not because I'm not capable, or because I'm a rubbish, disorganised student, but just because I'm the only person that's part-time, I'm also the only person with young children and so, you know and that it, you***

> *know, that's tricky, and everybody else is working full time and doing a part-time course which is hard as well, but it's kind of, a differently hard because you can be in control of those things and you know it's hard, you can't organise your time in that way with small kids because you just can't, you can't do loads of parenting intensively and then just not do it and do your essay for a week*

Suzanna is seen to orientate herself as different, through being the only mother to young children within her doctoral study group. This positions her as an outsider and in practice, results in Suzanna not having a sense of being connected to her peers on the course. Suzanna, however, is found to align with the other doctoral-student-mothers, who in spite of studying with young children, rather than waiting until the children where older for her to do her doctorate, still prioritises her parenting over her doctorate and finds ways to continue with her doctorate, without allowing it to impact upon her young children. Suzanna is found to clearly also feel that 'academic' and parenting young children, isn't a good fit.

> *Suzanna: So, I kind of, just, I think I probably prioritise my, mental health and general, you know, **ability to be a functional person over whether or not I've written a good, read another paper or not, I would say, so, in terms of priority, I wouldn't put my, I would put my parenting first, so I'd say, that's how it, that's how my doctorate has affected my parenting, but I have other academic friends who definitely put their children second, definitely***
>
> *Lucy: And how does that manifest?*
>
> *Suzanna: Oh, well they are very successful, I have to say, they are like, you know, getting all these endowment things and all this expensive research and going all*

> *over the world doing interesting things and **their kids are quite badly behaved and a bit hectic and a bit frazzled because they have au pairs and different things and loads of different childcare and loads of TV and computer games, because the mum and dad are both academics and they're both off in a book and that is what drives them and I'm definitely not that way round, but you know that's OK and we talk about that, you know she's a really old and good friend and she says oh, look at your kids they're so good and I say, well look at your career it's good! (laughing)** Its funny, we laugh about it in that kind of way, so there is, there obviously has to be some kind of balance because it's not really possibly to be amazing at both things, well, maybe it is for some people, but quite tricky unless you have some amazing mum or nanny that can be there with you all the time but if you're having different people and you know*

In the extract above Suzanna clearly orientates herself within an intensive mothering ideology, that the 'best' parenting is done by mothers and therefore adopts the position that for children to have 'loads of different childcare' or au pairs is a bad choice, which in practice manifests as badly behaved or 'frazzled children.' Success is academia or 'success' in parenting is presented as a binary choice. For Suzanna to continue as a doctoral student, study must not take place when she should be mothering.

> *Suzanna: Yeah, no, **I would have to do it when they were asleep or I'd have to have some arrangement with my husband and he did something, you know I could, we do something**, if I really had to do something, I'd say well you can do the bedtime because we do swap around like that and he might have to do something and **I'd definitely kind of be there, their priority would be first***

This notion of prioritising children over doctoral study, speaks also to Suzanna maintaining her own wellbeing, by not staying up late to study, to allow her to be a better parent.

*Suzanna: but I probably might feel a bit kind of stressed and tired as well, if I, but I, I know, I think sleep is such an important thing that now, I read this book recently about why we need sleep and now **I think that actually I'm not gonna read lots of papers or go up to sleep at two in the morning and wake up at six in the morning and be knackered because I'll be a rubbish parent and I notice that and I've noticed that I'm much more cross***

This is a contrasting position to Suzanna's 'emergency' of having to stay up all night to submit an essay on time, a situation that she clearly does not wish to repeat, based upon her difficulty in completing the designated work from her first year in combination to being a parent to young children and competing professional demands.

*I mean I, I was able to do the readings, I found that good getting, you know getting, having everything on moodle was really good, I found that really fine and you know I did attend all of the sessions even though I did some of them on that weird Skype – in thing, I did for the first module I attended all of the sessions so which was the September to kind of April and that was fine, and then I got in the first parts of the assignment that were due in April and then I kind of, then it went on to module two and I kind of, **I still hadn't done the assignment for module one because I just hadn't had time, because in that time you know when you have marking and all the other things, my teaching and I just couldn't and also because I hadn't been writing for so long I just had this whole block with thinking well how, I***

can't, I don't know how to even approach this assignment so then I didn't kind of, do it and then I felt like one of those really rubbish students, you know, I am one of those ones who just doesn't hand anything in and doesn't really have an excuse, so, that was kind of funny for me because I, you know, I was turning into these students that I'm always trying to get them not to be, so I, anyway I didn't, so I, so then the next module then started after Easter so then the first module I got in half of the assignment for the first module and it was fine I got you know sixty-five and I was pleased about that, so then the next module came and then, I just, because I hadn't finished the assignment for the first one, I kind of didn't really want to go to any of the sessions and then I was doing lots of supervision in school and then I couldn't, so I decided, I'd kind of decided I think by that stage that I hadn't, I didn't want to, you know, I wanted to re-do it again and then was the summer holidays and I thought, look I've got to try to write something, I've got to try to do the first assignment for that module that I was supposed to hand in, in April, so I started reading and you know*

Lucy: So what was your childcare during the summer holidays for your own children?

Suzanna: **You know, my husband and me, my husband you know, he's self-employed so he can be flexible**, *so I, you know I did lots of reading and you know, I made lots of notes, but, you know, I was finding it really hard to start writing, this assignment that was like a big assignment, so I just thought well, I'm just not sure how to do this and then I still, I was still like procrastinating and I wasn't even getting, I didn't go to anybody for any help but I just kept trying to write things and I couldn't write them and then I just thought, oh no, what's going on? I then I decided I just had, I had to do it so literally did, this is really funny cos* **I did this thing that I used**

to do when I myself was a student, back in like 1993, I just did like an all-nighter….

*…. I did it and I couldn't believe it, it was the weirdest thing, I stayed like in my room, in my office in my house with all of my stuff and I was like, right I'm gonna do it and **I just went into this mode and I was, I didn't move for like eight hours I just stayed and my husband was like what are you doing? I was like (makes groaning noises) its three in the morning, what are you doing? I was like, don't speak to me, but I literally just went into this mode and I finally found my voice and I was able to write it***

*…. when everybody else, when the new people are doing module one, just so, I don't get behind again, **because it just doesn't seem to be realistic I can't, there's no way I could have done it all in that time scale***

It appears that Suzanna, in spite of the challenges she faces in her doctoral-student-mothership to young children, feels that her position in immovable, accepting it as 'the way it is,' yet she appreciates the flexibility that is provided by the university.

*Suzanna: Erm, not especially, only that I kind of, **I think there's nothing you can really do about the problems of mixing up being a parent and being a student, it just, that's just the way it is**, and I don't think there's anything that's difficult about this particular institution or anywhere else and certainly where I work as an external examiner I see all these different people who are interrupting and doing things and I think it's always for these kind of reasons that it's hard to do these things, **I think it's good this, it's good this, enabling, you know to do it and to have part-time programmes that allow flexibility and I think that that's the best***

> *way to support people who are in like, our positions, I think you've got to have those kind of things, those kind of possibilities that you can repeat without being penalised and things like that, because that's just real life, what if your child was ill for a long time, or, I don't know, had to change schools or different stuff, I think, otherwise I think if you fit in with a really prescribed, organised programme, that you couldn't do that, then I think you would carry a lot fewer people managing to achieve it*

Suzanna has shown herself to orientate with an essentialist view of mothering, with mothers seen as the best source of childcare, at all times possible, this positions motherhood and maternal care of children as a priority over doctoral study and as such doctoral study must be 'placed' in spaces where mothering isn't, such as the evenings.

Mel, by contrast, describes how her doctorate will ultimately make her a batter parent, through being a 'means of escape' from her current work situation.

> *Mel:…my plan is to have one foot in the uni and have one foot as like education consultant so that I can chose some of my own projects and this is kind of part of it because it's like people want to see doctor, they want that kind of status, I need to have some stuff published for certain people to kind of invite me to things and that kind of stuff, so if anything its potentially gonna give me more flexibility in what I do later down the line and enable me to do some stuff that I enjoy and not just stuff that I have to do which will make me happier and make me a better parent and wife*

Mel is orientating herself as someone doing her doctorate, because 'people want to see doctor,' and her position is that she will get her doctorate, she will 'have some stuff published' in order to 'give me more flexibility to do some stuff that I enjoy, not just stuff that I have to do.' This positions Mel's current workplace as a means to an end, a place to work whilst she obtains her doctorate but a place of 'stuff that she has to do' rather than her dream, flexible working pattern of things that she enjoys upon doctoral completion. In practice, a professional doctorate, for Mel, is a route to professional freedom which will manifest in a better family life. A professional doctorate is described as a 'means of escape' and a route to professional freedom.

Freedom is referenced below by Jen, in describing how she 'would be an academic' if she 'had the time.' Jen is a senior lecturer and has been for many years, so would be described by many as currently an academic, but this is clearly not Jen's perception, when asked why she is doing a doctorate.

Lucy: Do you see studying as an indulgence?

*Jen: No, no I don't, **I see education as a necessity and as a pleasure, if given the time, I would be an academic**, I always wanted to be an archaeologist, that's really what I wanted to be, I love grubbing in the dirt, so that would actually be if I were it, then archaeology was actually my big love and I've done lots of digs and stuff like that*

Lucy: Have you, so why didn't you do archaeology then?

*Jen: **Well my family couldn't afford for three of us to be at university** at the, remember the piano?*

Lucy: Yeah I remember it distinctly, I'll never forget it, I feel like I've seen it!

*Jen: I will if I ever see you Lucy I will send you photos, I will send you a picture of the piano, **so I won a scholarship and I was doing a degree in chemistry before***

> *I took up nursing, but actually I just couldn't, the rest of my life in a lab coat with me and a test tube, did nothing for me, I need people, so I chucked it in and decided to do nursing instead, I wanted to leave Ireland and nursing was the best way to get out*

Jen is orientating herself as someone who is 'not yet' an academic but has always wanted to be one. Nursing it appears, was a means to an end but actually other topics of study are closer to Jen's heart. Education is referred to as a 'necessity and a pleasure' but through Jen's description of herself as not being an academic, in spite of her job title and role it seems that Jen has not yet reached a point of self-actualisation as an 'academic.' Jen's doctorate therefore as a 'necessity and a pleasure' would seem to be part of this process, rather than 'having to do it for her career' as initially proposed.

Lindsey, like Jen, talks of nursing as being a career option available to her as a young woman and orientates herself as a 'woman of her time' in her career choices. Academia is positioned as a choice made when Lindsey became a mother, to fit around her childcare requirements. A doctorate may, in practice, be an 'offspring' of 'the motherhood plan.'

> *Lindsey:* **because of my age and my era, there were not a lot of opportunities for girls, so nursing I think was highly promoted by my parents you know and encouraged, my daughter's a civil engineer, that would have never, I don't know anybody my age that is a civil engineer, it certainly wasn't you know, in my circle, so nursing was, had status, you know that this could provide a girl with a career….**

> *…. I recognised towards the end of my twenties that **having children and a nursing career, did not look very compatible,** but given that even thirty years ago with my own daughter the childcare and the ethos was very different to what it is now, you know so when I was a bit younger and looking at it, it wasn't very logical, you know this isn't going to work, **so how can I combine my nursing career with children and I did see teaching as the best option.** I did have a little spell in management and I didn't like management at all and I don't think that is really compatible, or it wasn't then, it might be now but there's a lot changed in thirty years, **so yeah going into education was part of the motherhood plan as well.***

Like Jen, Ellen talks about an 'expectation' to have a doctorate in her professional role, but this is later denounced as something that she didn't have to do, rather that the doctorate, like Jen, is a process of personal fulfilment. Ellen orientates herself and her doctorate as something she 'should do' but this is actually weak in comparison to her actual position of her doctorate being something that she wants to do, both for credibility, ultimately for her to work with people other than her employer and for personal enjoyment. This in practice manifests as the professional doctorate being talked about as an activity that Ellen does in her free time, by choice, compared to singing in a choir or playing guitar. The professional doctorate is firmly rooted within Ellen, her desires for her future self, which sit outside of her workplace. This is demonstrated by Ellen, when she states that she could 'retire right now if I wanted to…I've not been pushed to do it…it's been my own motivation to do it' In spite of the weak orientation to the workplace initially, Ellen's professional doctorate, in practice, is a project of her own making and not aligned to her workplace, at all.

> *Ellen:* **I think as an academic, there's sort of an expectation that you will go on to do a doctorate** and I left it for a little while **but it was something that I always wanted to do**….
>
> **I felt as an academic it's something I should do, but also wanted to do**, I decided, I never really thought to do the straight PhD because I liked the idea of doing the two years taught to explore things…
>
> …so why do I do it? Why do I do it? **Cos I wanted to do something in more depth, it's changed the job I'm doing, it's given me credibility, I feel I won't have that credibility until I've got a doctorate, if I'm involved with poetic enquiry or anything else, if you haven't got a doctorate, you haven't got the credibility, but also because I picked a topic I enjoy and I wanted to study it and, so, it hasn't been just because I have to do it, I could just say, I could retire now if I wanted to, I could just finish now and not do the doctorate, I'm not I've been pushed to do it, other than pushing myself and it's been my own motivation to do it, cos I could do all sorts of other things I could just spend much more of my time singing in my choir and playing my guitar and doing my other things, writing my….**
>
> **…… but I want to work collaboratively with lots of different people of research projects, but I won't be seen as credible until I have the doctorate, with other universities and I do like joint projects as well**

Support from the workplace seems to be missing from the narrative of the doctoral-student mothers, support from other mothers, is a strong feature. Sue describes being in collaboration with her peer group as a motivating factor, how they 'pulled each other along,'

> *Sue: **but the thing I loved the most about it was that I was part of a group** and I think that being part of a group, cos you know quite often you're on your own and I think that must be very hard but where **we were a group of older women and we stayed together and we pulled each other along you know? And, you therefore couldn't let it go, you couldn't just go, you know it's easy isn't it, just where we were a group and we kept reporting to each other, it made a lot of difference and it pulled us all along and you know all those people in that group…***

Sue orientates herself amongst a 'group of older women,' the position she adopts is one of mutual reliance and duty to one and other, an action that 'pulled us all along.' The shared interest of the group was mutual success. This resulted in the practice of not giving up, to do so would break the chain of support. As such, the practice of being a community of women with a common interest is enacted. Sue describes the relationship that she had with her son's girlfriend and its role in encouraging them both.

> *but we would all be, like Judy and I would both be teaching, cos she was teaching when she did hers, she did the PGCE and it changed into the research, **so Judy and I do summink, well obviously education, they're really similar**, so she and I would be going 'ch ch ch ch', so she would be doing, I mean we, it's strange isn't it, my son's really different, Judy and me we'd be going, we'd be doing really similar things cos it's kind of action research, though she does small children, I do big children, **so we were quite lucky because we would be able to talk about what it was we were doing and we'd be able to swap ideas, what I was saying made sense to Judy**,*
>
> *I think she's about, she's on her third year of teaching, of course, promoted, in those respects, **it's funny isn't it? Not my own child but you know, my son's***

> *girlfriend, so she's gone back to live in *****, but she and I were, **we probably**
> **egged each other on***

Sue orientates herself as being in a dyad with Judy, both of them studying education, this positions them as 'together' in the sense that they were separate from the rest of the family, in their understanding and support of each other. The unifying force between them was that they could 'talk' and 'swap ideas' which Sue considers to be 'lucky' for the pair of them. This resulted in the practice that they 'egged each other on.'

The support of the group is referenced by Suzanna, when describing repeating her first year and 'losing' the group that she has started with.

> *Suzanna: which my work let me do and they were supportive of that and I found that helpful, **but I was also sad because I'd kind of bonded with the people I'd started the course with and I really liked them and now the new people I kind of feel a bit out of it with and I don't really**, I'm not really going for the sessions, because I've attended them already*

The value of 'the group' is outlined here by Mel, who references more than moral support, but how critique from a female peer advanced her thinking to the point of developing her doctoral thesis.

> *Mel: But I think it's great and a lot of **people doing PhDs tend to feel really isolated whereas we don't, because we've got a little support group***
> *Lucy: Do you get on with, do you like being part of the group?*
> *Mel: Yeah, yeah*
> *Lucy: What does it give you?*

> *Mel:* ***I'm just, I'm like a collaborative type of person, like I learn best with other people, I mean it's literally given me my topic for my EdD***
>
> *Lucy: Which is what?*
>
> *Mel: Well, I'm still working on it (laughing) it, so, its leaning down the line of, like how do we address whiteness in the classroom?.....*
>
> *….. **But that came up from a challenge in like our first EdD session** when we were reading Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed which I read in my MA and was like, oh I'm a massive fan, so I'm in there like fan-girling over him and the health colleagues were like, 'it's really patronising, like oh, I need to empower students, like we're equal' and I was like, 'oh', and I first I was like, 'no, that's not what he means, how can anyone criticise this', but I kind of made myself sit with it and went back and looked at it and was like, **'OK, yeah I can see maybe where you're coming from' and then actively sort out like criticisms of it and then there were things coming out of that around race as criticisms and then I just started looking down that route, so for me, I wouldn't necessarily been where I'm at now and my whole first assignment***
>
> *Lucy: If you hadn't been challenged by somebody in your group? Yeah that's the whole point isn't it?*
>
> *Mel:* ***Yeah, and my whole first assignment was literally a reflection on them challenging me and how that set me off on that kind of a route***

Mel, like Sue, is orientating herself as within a 'support group' and her position is one of being 'pulled up' by a peer, as her thinking was elevated by the critique of her stance. In practice, this has manifested as Mel's doctoral thesis topic as the challenge 'set me off on that kind of route' and 'it's literally given me the topic for my EdD.'

This same interaction is described as powerful by Jen.

Lucy: What does it give you, what does doing a doctorate give you, or what do you hope its gonna give you? You said you need it for your career

Jen: I do but actually

Lucy: There's plenty of people getting by without one

Jen: Absolutely and do I need it? **But what it's given me so far, I mean it's given me the group that we're in which is simply stunning, there's one girl in it and she on our first day**, *should I wrap this up, am I rattling?*

Lucy: You can keep going for me, its whatever you've got to do

Jen: **There's one girl in there and on our first day**, *myself and another colleague we've been together for years, we were practice educators together and then came to **** within a year of each other so ten years we've been together, very close friends and we were reading an article that Nicki had provided us as pre-reading*

Lucy: On the day probably?

Jen: We had actually read it before

Lucy: Oh well done

Jen: Cos we were trying to be good, we knew how bad it was going to get so we were trying to be good and it was Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed but in our naivety, well, in nursing pedagogy, or as we were calling it pedagoGy was about children, cos Knowles has always been andragogy and that would be what we were used to and it was driven into us, so we walk in to class with pedagogy and understanding from a totally different angle and reading this and not really having an understanding of education as freedom, we've read it and both of us just went, **'this is crap, this is non-sensical of course, this is just rubbish'**, *not really* **understanding the theoretically written or the background it had come from,**

*cos we didn't actually go and look at anything we just took it at face value**, so this other person who was an educator to her fingertips went, 'oh my God you can't say that about that it's a really uneducated thing to say that about Freire' and our view was very much, 'stick it where the sun don't shine***,' you really are going to have to edit this*

Lucy: That's fine, I've heard much worse

*Jen: Much worse**, but our view was like, no actually, that's our view, that's your view, we aren't uneducated, we all have master's in education, so actually its ours, there was this certain and I said to my colleague, oh my God this is going to be great fun isn't it? When she's going to be an absolute nightmare for the rest of our career, but in actual fact, we all went away and came back after that and had had a think but she's actually one of the people I would respect the most in class and have learnt the most from and equally she says the same about me, so we've actually come to this place where we're both thinking similar things, but coming at it from different angles*

Lucy: Fantastic

*Jen: **And learning from each other so, so much, so I'm in her assignments and she's in my assignments and without her in class I simply would not have learnt a third of what I've learnt, she's absolutely amazing, with this flexible mind, but because she's coming from a purely educational point, because she's so flexible, she's able to help me and I help her and it's just this amazing symbiotic relationship we seem to have developed***

Jen at first orientates herself as an outsider, as a nurse educator on an educational course who feels that the taught content is rubbish but based on her relationship with a classmate, she is re-orientated as someone who appreciates challenge and enjoys leaning from someone of a different speciality, this then allows the position of being part of an 'amazing symbiotic relationship.' In practice this results in them each producing their assignments with reference to the other woman.

Jen also describes the value of an academic role model.

*I needed to do something in that, I had met **** elsewhere and at out and just, **she's just inspirational***

*Lucy: She's my *****, or *****

Jen: Is she? Oh she's just

Lucy: I've just had lunch with her now, she's fab

*Jen: **And she makes you feel like you can do anything, you can take on the world when ***** beside you can't you?***

*…. Jen: ***** **has super-powers and she should have a cape and she's just awesome***

Lucy: Yeah she is, so you met her?

*Jen: **She inspired, she kept saying you can do this, you can do this, you can do this, so yeah I signed up and I took the leap.***

Jen is orientating herself as a woman who needs a nudge from another woman, whom she respects in order to 'take the leap' with the metaphor of leaping conjuring up images of 'hand holding,' 'safety nets' or 'faith,' which positions Jen as not quite able to 'make the leap' on her own but with a cape-wearing superhero female academic to show you the way, the leap becomes possible. In practice Jen becomes a woman who is being led by another woman into territory that is scary or unfamiliar, but where she will be able to 'take on the world' with her guide by her side. As such Jen has become a doctoral student based on her exchanges with a woman for whom she has huge admiration.

4.6 Subjectivity: Belonging - Imposter Phenomenon:

Imposter syndrome took many forms but one of the most blatant was their denial of themselves as 'academics'. When experiencing imposter syndrome, it is difficult for an individual to internalise their achievements and they may experience a sense of fear at being found out as a fraud (Feenstra et al, 2020). Imposter syndrome has been proven to be detrimental not only to individual wellbeing (Gallagher, 2019), but also to career advancement (Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Imposter syndrome has an effect on the sense of professional identity (Gallagher, 2019) with the development of a professional identity found to be impacted by a sense of not belonging, or not deserving to be there, which in turn increases feelings of self-doubt and unhappiness (Houseknecht et al, 2019). Professional identity as a concept is a challenge to my study, as the doctoral-student-mothers have differing professional backgrounds. The commonality in the theme of identity is the doctoral-student-mothers sense of themselves as an 'academic.'

Self-doubt and a troubling sense of the legitimacy of one's position is considered a normalising feature of academia (Bothello and Roulet, 2018) with imposter syndrome in academia described as 'ubiquitous,' with a sense of inadequacy and a fear of being 'found out' key features (Taylor and Breeze, 2020). With imposter syndrome considered the norm, particularly for those new to academia, it is postured as a 'rite of passage' which must be overcome on an individual level and as such academic imposter syndrome becomes both individualistic and apolitical (Taylor and Breeze, 2020).

From a feminist viewpoint however, to regard academic imposter syndrome as an individual phenomenon, is to ignore educational inequalities, that is, the ways that class, race and gender affect academic progression and in doing so, construct academic competence in accordance to white, male, middle class norms (Gabriel and Tate, 2017). It is recognised that imposter syndrome is felt more acutely by women and also by people from ethnic minorities (Peteet et al, 2015). With motherhood already well described as a bad fit with academia, the doctoral-student-mothers are regarded by me as 'outsiders' in academia and as such, I regard their imposter syndrome through the 'outsider on the inside' positionality described by Taylor and Breeze (2020).

The term 'post-feminist' is used by some to imagine that we are living in an era where issues of discrimination against women are a historical matter (Rivers, 2017). With feminist concerns considered a feature of the past, it is easy to see how those considered as 'other' within academia, such as mothers, can feel like imposters, not through fear of being found out, but through having a sense of *already having been found out* (Lumsden, 2019). In spite of this, feminist scholarship highlights an abundance of evidence of inequality and exclusion within higher education (Taylor and Breeze, 2020) and it is recognised that imposter syndrome is felt most strongly by marginalised groups (Feenstra et al, 2020).

It is my position that the doctoral-student-mothers are a marginalised group within academia, as evidenced by Suzanna's embarrassment to be attending a lecture whilst giving her children their tea, Maria's lack of encouragement from her manager as a woman with small children and all of the women with Suzanna as the only exception, 'waiting' until their children were old enough for them to pursue their ambitions of doctoral study.

I do not consider this to be an individualised feature of imposter syndrome, rather I recognise that both the pervasive nature of intensive mothering and also the environment, specifically the women's places of work, plays a role in fostering feeling of imposter syndrome, that is I recognise that outside forces and social structure *create* imposter feelings (Feenstra et al, 2020). From this position, I content that the doctoral-student-mothers are not experiencing an individualised sense of being an imposter, but rather that they are experiencing the effects of the outside world upon them (Cohen and McConnell, 2019) through the impact of social context, namely the intensive mothering phenomenon and social interactions, which will be impacted by intensive mothering hegemonic ideals has affected imposter feelings (Feenstra et al, 2020). With this in consideration, I have chosen to desist from using the term 'imposter syndrome' and instead use the term 'imposter phenomenon.'

When describing imposter syndrome, it is to utilise language that ascribes to a problem within the individual, namely that it is a 'trait' rather than a 'state' (Mak et al, 2019). When considering imposter phenomenon as a trait, individual attributes are considered to be contributory, such as perfectionism tendencies (Dudau, 2014) and personality (Vergauwe et al, 2014). When viewing imposter phenomenon in this way, the individual is responsible for seeking help to fix themselves, without consideration to the social context that has enabled the individual to feel like an imposter (Feenstra et al, 2020). I argue, as a critical realist, that it is an individual's position in society and in particular their sense of where they are within a social hierarchy that will affect their experience of imposter phenomenon.

That as women and as mothers attempting to gain credibility as an academic, in a society which does not consider motherhood and academic study to be in fitting with intensive mothering, the doctoral-student-mothers find themselves in a socially disadvantaged position and as such experience challenges and stresses that make them feel like imposters (Chrousos and Mentis, 2020). Both societal and institutional factors interplay, as an example, 'good leaders' are often portrayed as having masculine traits, so when a woman takes a leadership position the awareness of said stereotypes can impact on imposter feelings (Cokley et al, 2013) but said feelings are only able to manifest in contexts that support them (Feenstra et al, 2020). I feel that this is an important distinction, as whilst the societal expectations of mothers do not support academic advancement at doctoral level, but, at an institutional level, if motherhood and academic progression was promoted and indeed celebrated, the context for imposter phenomenon would be significantly hindered. It has been shown that institutional context is significant in shaping imposter phenomenon (Feenstra et al, 2020) whereby in areas where women are over and underrepresented such as women in professorial positions versus junior lecturer, a lack of role models and increased feelings of being an imposter for those in or trying to access under-represented roles develops (Catalyst, 2018).

I think it is also worth exploring the 'maturity' of the doctoral-student-mothers in my study. A mature student is considered to be someone who is over twenty-one years old at the commencement of their studies (Chapman, 2017). I did not ask the age of the doctoral-student-mothers, some volunteered it and I am confident in saying that all participants were over twenty-one. Suzanna was the only participant with school-age children and many of the participants voiced that they were approaching retirement, or had indeed retired, namely Augusta, Maria, Jane, Sue, Jen, Ellen and Linsey.

It is recognised that mature students often experience imposter syndrome (Chapman, 2017) and for students who are also parents (Brooks, 2012) it is reported that a lack of socialisation to 'student life' can impact on a sense of belonging and increase imposter feelings (Chapman, 2017) with a particular manifestation of this found amongst doctoral students (Coryell et al, 2013). To overcome imposter feelings, students need to experience a sense of entitlement (Chapman, 2017), for doctoral students, this means being considered to be a 'real' researcher (Coryell et al, 2013). The experience of 'entitlement' or belonging is created in part by academic staff such as lecturers and course leaders helping to build a sense of identity or 'realness' amongst students but is also influenced by and upon other members of the taught group (Chapman, 2017). The sense of collective identity and support from peers on the course was a feature in this study.

In support of developing an identity as a doctoral-student-mother and therefore reducing feelings of imposter syndrome I support notions that doctoral study is in part, about the ability to argue, write and research to the requisite academic standard but is also about a process of identity work and this process takes place as part of a community with friendships and peer support a key tenet of this (Miles et al, 2019). When considering the doctoral-student-mothers sense of identity as an 'academic' and resultant experience of imposter phenomenon, I argue that their formation of identity is in fact dependent upon their relationships with others, indeed that other people are responsible for each other's identity formation through the triumvirate relations between a social identity, role identity and personal identity (Frick and Brodin, 2020).

A person's social identity is formed when they feel part of a particular group and therefore defines who a person feels they are in relation to others, their role identity is how much a person feels that they 'act' in accordance with their decided role, this being defined by the doctoral-student-mothers as an 'academic.' (Frick and Brodin, 2020). A personal identity is that which characterises a person's own interests with identity formation as a 'complete' concept understood to be how well an individual identifies with the group and how committed they are to their 'role' (Frick and Brodin, 2020). Identity formation as an 'academic' was the predominant feature of the doctoral-student-mothers group belonging, be that to their cohort, workplace or family is seen as essential, the 'role' of doctoral-student-mother must be one which they feel comfortable in and these factors in turn must align with the doctoral-student-mothers' personal interests. The doctoral-student-mothers' personal interests were varied and will be explored below, as many of the doctoral-student-mothers were completing their professional doctorate completely peripherally to their workplace.

4.7 Subjectivity: Becoming

Doctoral study completion is said to be owing to motivation on the part of the individual student (Amida et al, 2020). Motivation is said to be a critical ingredient for doctoral success, from the initiation of doctoral studies, through a lengthy process of completion until ultimate defence of a thesis, motivation is critical (Lynch et al, 2018). Doctoral students are said to enrol and ultimately complete their programme based on a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors (Hands, 2020). Personal motives and career development are shown to be the primary factors in the decision to pursue doctoral studies (Guerin at al, 2015; Kowalczuk-Waledziak et al, 2017) although male doctoral students are found to be more motivated by career aspirations than female doctoral students (Watts et al, 2014).

When considering the motivations of the doctoral-student-mothers to pursue doctoral study, I am assisted by Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2017). SDT proposed that motivation can be distinguished by a continuum of autonomy, with external forces of motivation, such as oppressive factors, fear of punishment or the hope of a reward at one end of the continuum and internal forces, such as choice, personal interest and perceived value at the other (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Internally mediated forces of motivation are said to result in greater enjoyment and wellbeing, a desire to be 'stretched' or challenged and persistence to continue (Ryan and Deci, 2017). SDT also finds that internal motivation can be supported when three psychological needs are met, namely, autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Autonomy is considered to be the ability to initiate choices, to make choices that feel morally rewarding, to self-govern, as opposed to heteronomy, the control of one person by another (Sneddon, 2013).

I propose that for the doctoral-student-mothers, the completion of doctoral studies is in of itself an act of autonomy, indeed an act of emancipation from restrictive practices that suffocated long held desires for doctoral completion. For Augusta, doctoral study felt like 'stepping through the wardrobe into Narnia,' following a career and academic malalignment that led to her feeling 'dead' whilst waiting until her perceived motherhood responsibilities were over, to allow her to pursue her doctorate. For Maria and Lindsey, who were held back by sexist, restrictive career opportunities for women in the 1970s upon leaving school and Jane who felt that she had to train as a nurse in order to leave home, rather than pursue a passion for archaeology. Maria who was overlooked by her managers owing to having young children, who had held desires for an academic career for decades. For all of the doctoral-student-mothers except Suzanna who have been affected by oppressive mothering ideology such that they felt they could not pursue doctoral studies with young children, in spite of their aspirations. Jane who wanted to 'totally re-invent' herself following a change in personal circumstances owing to a divorce. These women have sat back and waited, until they felt that it was *acceptable* to pursue doctoral study and to now be able to be doctoral students is in itself a process of self-actualisation, a time to 'become themselves.' Feminist pedagogies support the notion that education should be utilised to both highlight and dismantle systems of oppression and create a space for emancipation (hooks, 1994). Doctoral study, for the participants in my study, I feel is both maintaining and challenging historical systems of oppression, the doctoral-student-mothers are operating within a gendered narrative that positions mothers as outsiders within doctoral study, whilst simultaneously using their doctorate as an emancipatory practice, as a means with which they can become themselves.

This is in alignment with feminist pedagogy more broadly, which is concerned not only with recognising personal issues as political ones, egalitarianism, reflexivity and social action, challenging assumptions and giving voice to those who have been marginalised (Hahna, 2013). From a feminist lens, education becomes a place where oppression is addressed, with this in consideration, the second facet of self-determination theory, 'competence' is presented.

Competence refers to the ability to have an impact on the surrounding environment and for the impact to have a desired effect (Ryan and Deci, 2017) which is seemingly at odds with an oppressed person and again demonstrates, I feel how doctoral study is being utilised as a vehicle for emancipation. All of the doctoral-student-mothers expressed desires to 'be an academic.' For some this meant being accepted as a lecturer within a university, through possession of a doctorate, for some this meant being able to complete a doctoral thesis and for others, it was the desire to write, yet for all, there was a point of competence attainment that would denote the fact that they were now an academic, i.e., 'competent.' In spite of career advancement being considered a motivating factor for doctoral completion (Guerin at al, 2015) this was not the case for the doctoral-student-mothers. Some participants were completing a doctorate because they felt that they should, or as a means to be accepted, promotion or remuneration were not a consideration for any of the women in my study. What was actually a stronger narrative, was that the doctoral-student-mothers were completing their doctorates *in spite of* their employer. Maria described her doctorate as a retirement present to herself, Sue was in the process of retiring, Augusta was close to retirement, as was Lindsey.

What came across was that these women were gifting *themselves* with, *competence*, showing themselves what they were capable of and perhaps, showing their (soon to be past) employer what there were capable of too. Whilst I celebrate the women for this emancipatory process, it feels tragic that these women's talents were overlooked whilst in employment and indeed that the value of professional doctorates is being lost. The purpose of professional doctorates is to have impact upon professional practice (Hawkes and Yerrabati, 2018). If women are being overlooked as competent potential professional doctorate students owing to their maternal status by employers their contribution to the workplace through professional doctorate completion will be absent. If women are considering themselves as inappropriate candidates for professional doctoral study owing to the age of their children, then their contribution to the workplace will be minimised through this. Ultimately, if women are waiting until near retirement age to start doctoral study their contribution through being professional doctoral graduates will be lost.

Relatedness is understood to mean the meaningful connections that are made with other people (Ryan and Deci, 2017). The doctoral-student-mothers all spoke of the impact of a community of peers, the value of support from colleagues and the elevating effect that friendships and critical challenges had on their enjoyment of their doctoral studies and their sense of belonging. I feel that when juxtaposed against a societal backdrop that does not view doctoral-student-motherhood favourably, there is more to be done here to create an environment of normalcy, which will be discussed in my recommendations below.

Chapter Five: Recommendations for Change and Further Research

5.1 What This Study Adds

This study did not go the way I expected it to. I had expected to find the 'reasons' for the previous themes that had been presented in other studies, rather than finding something completely new. Keeping a reflective journal allowed me to ensure that I attended to the participants views whilst attending to my own positionality (Meyer and Willis, 2019) and I was surprised and delighted by what was discovered. I feel that this study has added to previous studies by stepping away from the 'struggling and juggling' narrative to expose a previously hidden interpretation of doctoral-student-motherhood. Doctoral-student-motherhood has been displayed as a site for leadership and a site for activism. I feel that if this narrative was publicised it could be motivational to the doctoral-student-mothers or potential doctoral-student mothers who may be put off or demoralised by the sometimes overwhelmingly negative interpretations of being a doctoral-student-mother which speak only of hardship, demands and endless negotiations. I feel that leadership and activism are sites of power and a recognition of this amongst academic staff could promote doctoral-student-motherhood as a celebratory event. I also feel that a recognition of the synergistic effects of doctoral-student-motherhood upon households, in particular relating to housework would raise consciousness of the guilt that women carry with them when not able to display their mothering through homemaking and rather celebrate that other household members are taking on more responsibility for homemaking, as an effect of doctoral study.

This study has exposed that professional doctorates are in majority not being undertaken by doctoral-student-mothers, for their profession. Whilst there will inevitably be some collateral gain, doctoral study is being undertaken as a process of belonging, or fitting in, or as a process of becoming, on a personal level and often towards the end of a career. It has been a sad realisation that professional doctorates are not being maximised to their intended effect, that is, to make a significant contribution to an area of professional practice, through the application of theory (Tucker et al, 2021) as they are being used for personal emancipation with women undertaking them for their own ends, rather than to enrich their profession. This is owing to professional-doctoral-mothers see themselves as imposters, rather than following a rite of passage. This study has unquestionably challenged the prevailing 'juggling and struggling' narratives available in previous studies and rather than showing doctoral-student mother-as beleaguered and fatigued has shown us as empowered leaders using our doctorates for activism and emancipation. Further studies will be able to build on my work as I have been able to produce original knowledge on doctoral-student-motherhood, showing alternative interpretations of the doctoral-student-mother experience as a site of power. Suggestions for future research that will build upon this study are outlined below.

5.2 An Evaluation of Doctoral-Student-Mother Mentoring

This study has identified a previously hidden aspect of doctoral-student-motherhood, beyond the fatiguing 'juggling and struggling' narratives are sites of celebration, leadership, activism and a desire to belong, which is re-enforced through positive interactions with peers. I do not feel that any of the doctoral-student-mothers in my study would consider themselves leaders or activists, nor do I feel that they would know that other doctoral-student mothers are drawing from those discourses. This, taken into consideration with the support that was gained from friendships and mentorships, I feel warrants a stronger utilisation of peer and academic mentorship. If academic staff who were mothers and current doctoral-student-mothers formed communities of practice and celebrated themselves as leaders and activists then I am hopeful that other, potential doctoral-student-mothers could be supported and encouraged to start doctoral programmes sooner and not wait until they felt their children were 'old enough' or until they felt they were at an acceptable stage in their lives to be accepted as an academic. Role modelling of doctoral-student-motherhood could lead to its normalcy and support mothers in their desire to undertake doctoral study, become who or what they wish to be in a supportive environment. Female mentorship has been shown to increase female academic productivity in other 'hard to reach' locations such as academic medicine (Taha et al, 2021) with women in these areas reporting a lack of mentorship as being a major feature, inhibiting academic career advancement (Abramson et al, 2019; Blood et al, 2012).

Group mentorship for women is proposed as a means to collectively draw upon a range of experiences and expertise (DeCastro et al, 2019) whilst also supporting the cultivation of friendships and potentially more accessible, in terms of the increased likelihood of finding people with common interests and also less hierarchical than a traditional mentorship dyad, where a 'senior' person mentors someone more junior (Kashiwagi et al, 2013). The value of a good supervisor who can provide mentorship to female doctoral students is not to be undervalued and finding such a relationship, whereby a women can support another woman through the complexities of academic life and in doing so, leave a positive lasting impact, is considered hard to find (Ali and Coate, 2013). The 'recipe' for effective mentorship includes availability and expertise, supportive relationships, mutuality and responsiveness (Cross et al, 2019).

Whilst it is recognised that further research is needed on how to effectively mentor women in a contemporary academic environment, mentors that appreciate the external demands placed on female academics through household duties and childcare are found to be the preference of female mentees (Seemann et al 2016, Strauss et al, 2009). New forms of mentoring such as collegiate or peer mentoring are emerging as an opponent to a traditional dyadic mentorship arrangement (Kashiwagi et al, 2013; Cross et al, 2019). When considering the doctoral-student-mothers affinity for collaborative relationships with their peers which led to both criticality of their thinking and friendship, aligned with the mutuality and expertise desired by academic mentees, it seems sensible to me that peer networks of doctoral-student-mothers are established by the universities running doctoral programmes.

Peer networks have been used in academia to support female academics navigating the intersectionality of race and gender (Esnard et al, 2015) and also to support the integration of early career academics, when traditional one-to-one mentorship models have been unsuccessful owing to availability (Bottoms et al, 2013). Bottoms et al (2013) advocate for peer mentorship networks to function as communities of practice (COP). Seminal work by Wenger (2000) outlines a COP as being defined by three factors, these being the *domain*, the *community* and the *practice*. The domain can be described as the reason the group was formed and under what conditions it functions (Wenger, 2000). It would be my assumption that a COP for doctoral-student-mothers could form to celebrate and normalise doctoral-student-mothers, with 'senior' or more experienced academics and professional women who have completed their professional doctorates invited, alongside current doctoral-student-mothers to share their experiences, triumphs and challenges. Potential doctoral-student-mothers could be invited to gain support and share their thoughts, aspirations and fears of undertaking a doctorate as a mother. The *community* consists of the group members, their interactions with each other and the learning that takes place in this context. The members of the community are responsible for establishing the norms and interactions of the group (Wenger, 2000). It could be therefore, that doctoral-student-mothers and the invited senior academics or professional women with doctorates, share their work, deliver presentations on their research ideas, or share diaries or experiences of their lives to enhance the sense of belonging and becoming that was wanted by the doctoral-student-mothers in my study. The *practice* then becomes what the community does, or creates together, this could be publications, presentations, or it could be friendship, or the development of a doctoral-student-mother identity.

The notion of a COP is very much befitting of the MotherScholar project (Cohen-Miller, 2014) where role models, in the form of other academic mothers helped doctoral students to envisage themselves as an academic and a mother but would be localised to peers either on the same course, within the same university or the same geographical region and therefore allows for both peer support and friendship, in a physical sense beyond an online community. I feel that a COP would be of benefit to doctoral-student-mothers however this benefit (or lack of) could also be evaluated as a future research project.

5.3 Future Research: Covid -19 Impact Evaluation on Doctoral-Student-Mothers

The impact of Covid-19 upon teaching methodology for academics delivering doctoral programmes has been reviewed (DeMartino, 2021, Tucker et al, 2021) as has providing supervision remotely (Palmer and Gillaspy, 2021). In considering next steps for research, my data collection phase ended before the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore I assume, will be a different data set than would be collected now, with the societal shifts caused by Covid-19 still present. 'Home production' was said to increase during the pandemic, with services that would usually be 'outsourced' such as childcare, schooling and cleaning services all conducted by household members (Hupkau and Petrongolo, 2020). Most families were found to spend a working week providing childcare during lockdown, with mothers bearing the brunt of this responsibility, irrespective of their employment status (Sevilla and Smith, 2020). I would be interested to interview doctoral-student-mothers who were attempting to study, work and provide childcare during the pandemic. My personal experience of this, as a nurse, was that I abandoned my doctorate through a break in studies to work in critical care on days that would have been my study day and my children remained in school under the keyworker scheme.

I would be interested to know the impact of the pandemic on other doctoral-student-mothers. The negative employment impact of the pandemic was worse for women than for men, owing to the increased likelihood of women working in leisure or retail (Hupkau and Petrongolo, 2020), however women are also heavily represented in industries that are considered essential to the Covid-19 response, or 'keyworkers' (Hupkau and Petrongolo, 2020) known by some as 'the female front line' (Abraham-Thomas and Vizcaychipi, 2020).

The women in my study worked in a mixture of 'keyworker' and non-keyworker roles, not in leisure or retail. I assume they kept their jobs, therefore may have been experiencing, as reported, that they were doing more childcare and home-schooling than their male counterparts (Adams-Prassl et al, 2020) and the impact on their doctoral studies in light of this would be a worthy study. It has also been reported that when women did lose paid hours at work owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, their housework and childcare responsibilities increased, but then when men lost paid work owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, their childcare hours increased, but their housework hours did not (Zamberlan et al, 2021). It would be fascinating to know how these divisions affected doctoral-student-mothers. Whilst female gender and the impact of Covid-19 on doctoral students has been studied (Brochu et al, 2021), this was with greater specificity to gender, intersected with race as opposed to motherhood specifically.

5.4 A Review of Activism as a Feature of Doctoral Study More Broadly

The doctoral-student-mothers in my study all worked in healthcare, teaching, higher education or charity work. In considering activism as a feature of their doctoral-student motherhood I recognise the impact of their professional socialisation and that they were either studying for doctorates in education, or health sciences, may have had on them, although do not discount the maternal effect on their activist activity. It would be interesting to look at different fields, to explore activism, or lack of amongst doctoral-student-mothers with a wider, or differing demographic. That said, the most frequently undertaken professional doctorate is the doctorate in education (Mellors-Bourne, 2016) although other professional doctorates are found in in health and social care, psychology and psychotherapy, business management, science and technology, medicine and dentistry, social sciences and law, humanities and theology and the creative arts (Robinson, 2018) so 'widening the net' to explore the phenomenon of doctoral-student-motherhood and activism would be achievable.

Limitations:

This study was conducted by both a novice and a loan researcher as part of a professional doctorate, albeit under expert supervision. A team of researchers and indeed more experienced researchers may have been able to add finesse to the study, through the benefit of experience. That said, the study has been conducted with rigorous attention to detail for fear of 'getting it wrong' and has been attended to with great care. Beyond being conducted by a novice researcher, the primary limitation of this study is that it is an exclusively white narrative, all participants of my study were white women.

As a discourse analyst, I do not seek for individual narratives to 'represent' for others with protected characteristics and therefore feel that separate studies, looking at differing characteristics, are merited. A study looking at non-white doctoral student motherhood and is therefore warranted as a future study. I also feel that a study looking exclusively at women in non-heterosexual dyads with men, specifically women who are single or who are in queer relationships would add breadth to the topic of doctoral-student-motherhood.

I was initially concerned that my study would not yield enough data, but in retrospect, feel that it almost yielded too much and, on some topics, particularly around childcare and housework, I would have liked to have delved deeper based on relationship status and this was not possible within this study. I did interview women in a range of differing relationships, these being single women, divorced women, women in relationships with women and women in relationships with men. I feel that a future study with a narrower focus on queer partnerships would have provided an alternative discourse.

I also acknowledge as a limitation that the women in my study had similar professional backgrounds, these being health sciences, teaching or charity work and as such the discourse of 'activism' may have been influenced by professional interests. I also acknowledge that the women in my study were doctoral students of either education or healthcare and again this may have influenced the findings, with particular reference to activism, hence my recommendation for a study of activism as a feature of doctoral study more broadly.

For future research, I would ask participants to not only member-check the transcripts, but I would like to also ask participants to consider the validity of the discourses, to ensure that it is not only my view that is being applied to the subject, but also the participants' own interpretation of the findings, which would be in-fitting with a participatory approach.

In summary, completing this doctorate has been a joy and a privilege. The women I interviewed provided me with such intimate insight into their lives, it was an honour to work with them and I feel that together, we have provided new insight into the experiences of doctoral-student-motherhood, thank you to all of you. Thank you for getting 'out there' an alternative view to the fatiguing and monotonous interpretation of doctoral-student-motherhood as a 'juggle and a struggle' and instead showing the world that we are *leaders*, we are *activists* and *we are free!*

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Application

London South Bank University
EST 1892

Ethics Application Form

When completing this form, please be aware that we want to process all ethics applications as quickly as possible.   Please ensure you provide full details and consider ethical implications of your research fully <u>before</u> applying. If insufficient detail is provided, your application will be delayed while we clarify issues with you.   **Doctoral students should seek feedback on a draft of their submission from their supervisor before it is submitted. Junior researchers or those new to LSBU may also wish to consult with their School Committee or experienced colleagues, as procedures and standards can differ between institutions.**

Project Title: Professional Doctorate Study and Motherhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis.   **School:** Law and Social Sciences

Lead Applicant	Supervisor (Doctoral students only)
Name: Lucy Arora **Address:** **Email:** aroral@lsbu.ac.uk **Phone number:**	**Name:** Andrew Ingram **Address:** School of Law and Social Sciences, Division of Education, K2 Building, London South Bank university **Email:** ingrama2@lsbu.ac.uk **Phone number:**
Co-Applicant **Name:** **Address:** **Email:** **Phone number:**	Co-Applicant **Name:** **Address:** **Email:** **Phone number:**

Theoretical rationale (~500 words)

Please outline the rationale for your study, identifying the theoretical and / or practical need for the research and how initial hypothesis have been reached.
THIS SECTION SHOULD NOT EXCEED 500 WORDS

There is increasing diversity in the type of doctorate offered by universities internationally (Wellington, 2013). In recent decades, methods of doctoral study have begun to include, alongside the traditional PhD, the taught doctorate and the professional doctorate (Poole, 2015). Doctoral education is considered internationally to be in a state of instability, with a shifting perception on the very nature of a doctorate, comes a shifting perception of 'doctorateness' (Poole, 2015). Doctorateness is itself a term of much contention but is considered to be the homogenous aspects of the process and outcome of all doctoral study (Murray, 2003). Doctorateness can be considered from two perspectives, either in the attributes of the final doctoral thesis (Trafford and Lesham, 2009), or the attributes of the doctoral student (Denicolo and Park, 2010). In considering doctorateness as a personal attribute, in relation to more recent forms of doctoral study, such as the professional doctorate, the debate to date has not considered the influence of motherhood upon the professional doctoral student.

Professional doctorates, an essential criterion for many senior professionals differ from a PhD by virtue of being a part-time method of study, conducted alongside paid employment (Bourner et al, 2001). Mothers undertaking professional doctorates, therefore, are likely to be employed in senior positions, whilst also studying and therefore found to be combining the threefold positions of mother, careerist and student. It is interesting to note therefore that motherhood is found to be detrimental to the career progression of women (Baker, 2010) and specifically amongst academics (Baker, 2012). The domestic responsibilities of mothers who participate in further and higher education are found to create tensions, with women reported to downplay their student identity when at home and retain their role as main caregiver, to be seen as good mothers. Conversely, when engaged in post-graduate education women conceal their maternal identity, to be seen as good students (Lynch, 2012). Undertaking a professional doctorate is simultaneous educational advancement and potential career progression, both of which are reported by Baker (2010) and Lynch (2008) to be conflicting roles in combination with motherhood.

Whilst the topics of motherhood and the careers of women, motherhood and female doctoral students, and motherhood and women in academia have been previously studied, the majority of studies originate from outside of the U.K. No studies are presently to be found looking specifically at mothers undertaking a professional doctorate. It is clear that the topic of professional doctorates and the experiences of mothers undertaking such study in the UK whilst also potentially working in paid employment has not to date been examined. This assertion can be supported by literature review. In considering the changing landscape of doctoral study and examining the concept of doctorateness, the omission of the perception of motherhood is significant. Knowing how women who are mothers and doctoral students construct their own identity, whilst also parenting and working is not currently fully understood. This study will fill the current void of knowledge on the subject of motherhood and academia within the U.K.

Ethical guidelines
Please list the professional or association guidelines that you have read and intend
See Appendix 4 of the Code of Practice for guidelines.

1) As a registered nurse, my research will be conducted under the professional guidance of the RCN, as per the document, Research Ethics: RCN Guidance for Nurses (2011).

2) As a nurse, registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) I must work at all times following my professional responsibilities as outlined in The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives (NMC, 2015)

3) As a doctoral student at London South Bank University, my research will follow the guidance outlined in the London South Bank University Code of Practice and Application Process for Research Involving Human Participants (2016).

4) As a Senior Lecturer undertaking a Doctorate in Education, my research will follow the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (British Educational Research Association, 2011).

5) As a researcher who believes in social justice and wishes to undertake a social enquiry amongst a research group that could be considered my peers, I will also adhere to The Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines (2003).

6) In addition to the above documents outlining the professional, research and ethical principles I need to follow, my research will also comply with the Human Rights Act (1998), the Data Protection Act (1998) the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Participants
Who will be recruited and how? Are there any gatekeepers (e.g. people whose permission must be sought to access the participant population)? Is choice to participate likely to be a sensitive issue, and if so, what safeguards are in place? Is the population under study vulnerable (and if so, what steps will be taken to ensure population is protected?). Please attach representative copies of emails and posters which will be used during recruitment if you intend to use these.

Women will be invited to join the study if they are mothers undertaking a professional doctorate. They may either work or study at LSBU, or both. I will therefore need to seek permission from the Heads of Department of employed staff, or the relevant Dean of the School for participants who study at LSBU. The participants are not considered vulnerable, but choosing to participate could be considered a sensitive issue.

As outlined in my theoretical rationale, mothers downplay their student identity when at home and their maternal identity when at work. Simultaneously raising the topics of motherhood, work and studentship to a participant who may work or study at LSBU may be emotive and there may also be hesitancy to reveal aspects of their private lives when at their place of work or study. It is imperative that the participants are aware of my commitment to protecting their privacy and the confidentiality of their sensitive information.

Recruitment
How will recruitment take place? Participants should usually receive an information sheet or similar prior to giving consent. Please use the following documents which are available from the Staff intranet Key Documents REI category and the PGR Moodle sites:
- ***Participant Information Sheet***
- ***Consent Sheet***

Please confirm whether this is the case, and append for information about information sheets, and to see a specimen information sheet.

Please see the attached participant information sheet and consent sheet.

Data types:
Which of the following data collection method(s) will you be using? (Please complete all applicable)

Interviews / focus groups
The interviews will be conducted between myself and one participant per interview. The interviews will last approximately one hour each. The interviews will be semi-structured and in such they will consider the themes of motherhood, professional doctoral study and paid employment and the women's experiences of each respectively and in relationship to each other. The interviews will be audio-recorded. Indicative interview questions will include questions such as:
- What is it like for you being a mother and a doctoral student?
- How do you prioritise your responsibilities?
- What helps you to be a working mother undertaking a doctorate?
- Tell me about what your life is like being a doctoral student and a mother.

Other forms of data / special procedures
Data will be collected through the audio-recording of the interviews. The interviews will be transcribed by myself and the transcripts stored on an encrypted memory stick and my personal computer, which is password protected. All data will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998) please also see the section on data and anonymity management below. The audio recordings will be deleted after transcription, the memory stick will be used exclusively for interviews and will be destroyed once all interviews have been transcribed.

Timespan
What is the likely timespan of the recruitment and data collection phases of the proposed research?

Permission from gatekeepers will be sought and recruitment of participants will get underway immediately on ethical approval. Data collection will commence following successful recruitment and should be concluded by the end of September 2018.

Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check)
Does the investigator or anyone else connected to the project require a DBS check? (If not, please indicate why) If a DBS check is required, UEP/School Ethics Coordinator will need to see a copy of the certificate before research commences.

I have a full DBS check as part of my employment with LSBU.

Informed consent

As a feminist researcher, the principle of informed consent and non-maleficence to female subjects is of particular concern. As such, McCorrmick's (2012) guidance on obtaining informed consent for feminist researchers had been followed. Informed consent will be obtained during the recruitment stage of the research. Participants will be e-mailed a participant information sheet upon contacting the lead researcher to express interest in the study. Participants will be encouraged to read through the information sheet and ask any questions via e-mail to the researcher. Should invitees wish to participate in the research, prior to conducting the first interview, participants will be encouraged to ask any further questions they have and discuss the study with the lead researcher. The lead researcher will talk through the consent form with the participant and if consent is obtained, this will be recorded through the participant signing the printed consent form. Participants will be made aware that they can withdraw from the research at any point. Once data has been analysed, however, it will not be possible to remove the participant's contribution to the research, and potential participants will be made aware of this during the consent process. The participant's will also be made aware that they will be shown a copy of the interview transcript to ensure that they agree that it is an accurate record of what was said at the interview and to offer the opportunity for them to remove any sections of the interview that they do not wish to be used for analysis.
To ensure that the participants are fully informed of the research process and all it entails, in alignment with feminist research principles and the protection of the female participants' wellbeing, Reamer's (2003) six-point "risk management protocol" (p. 130) will be followed.

Anonymity & data management

What steps will be taken to ensure that data collected is anonymous or made anonymous? How will data be stored and when will they be destroyed? If stored electronically, what steps will be taken to secure the data? For additional information and advice please consult the University's Information Compliance Officer

Electronic data will be required, in alignment with the LSBU data protection policy and the Data Protection Act (1998) all data must be stored in a data repository, such as the UK data archive, for ten years after the research has been completed.

Privacy and anonymity will be ensured as the real names of participants will not be used in any written or published work. The participants' place of work will not be used in any written or published work. The participants' professional role, job title and the title of the professional doctorate for which they are studying, may be used in written or published work. This will be made explicit to potential participants during the recruitment process to ensure informed consent.

Incentives

Will incentives beyond reasonable compensation for time and travel being used in the proposed research be offered to participants?

No incentives are being offered to participants.

Procedure

Please outline the procedure of your study step by step, beginning with the consent stage through to final debriefing. To expedite reviews it is important that the reviewers can understand exactly what your research involves so please be as clear as possible. If applicable, please make clear what the key independent and dependent variable(s) are and what the study design consists of.

1) Recruitment	To be completed by June 18
2) Consent	Alongside recruitment
3) Interviews	To be completed by September 18
4) Transcription of interviews	To be completed by September 18
5) Analysis of interviews	To be completed by December 18
6) Write up of thesis.	To be completed by September 19

Risk

All research carries some degree of risk to participants. Please indicate (by ticking the box) which of the following risks may be entailed by your research and explain how they have been mitigated. Please 'X' all relevant risks in the associated tick box. NOTE: Most research contains some potential risk (even if minor), and failure to complete this section is a frequent cause of applications being returned without approval.

Please tick 'X' where applicable	
	Use of environmentally toxic chemicals.
	Use of radioactive substances, ingestion of foods, fluids or drugs.
	Refraining from eating, drinking or usual medication.

X	**Contravention of legislation on any of: gender, race, human rights, data protection, obscenity.**
X	**Potential psychological intrusion from questionnaires, interview schedules, observation techniques.**
	Bodily contact.
	Sampling of human tissue or body fluids (including by venepuncture).
	Sensory deprivation.
	Defamation.
	Misunderstanding of social / cultural boundaries nudity; loss of dignity.
X	**Compromising professional boundaries with participants, students, or colleagues.**
	Involves the study of terrorism or radicalisation or use of any information associated with such study.
	Other risk (please indicate what these consist of):

How will these risks be mitigated?

Risks will be mitigated through attending to correct ethical code of practice **Contravention of legislation on any of: gender, race, human rights, data protection, obscenity.** Participants will be informed that this is an independent study conducted in accordance with the legislature on the above, the findings from which will not be used for any purposes that might infringe their statutory rights. **Potential psychological intrusion from questionnaires, interview schedules, observation techniques.** Prior to the interview, participants will be reappraised of the participant information sheet and reassured that they have the right to refuse to answer a question and the right to withdraw from the study at any time should they be unhappy about the way in which it is being conducted, or feel that any questions are in any way intrusive or injurious. **Compromising professional boundaries with participants, students, or colleagues.** I shall be following Reamer's risk management protocol (see above) and informing participants of potential conflicts of interest, identifying boundary issues and designing a plan of action that addresses those issues and protects participants.

Debriefing

When and how will participants be debriefed? If not, why is debriefing not required?

Debriefing will occur as a two-part process. At the end of the interview, with the audio-recording discontinued and it having been made clear to the participant that the interview has terminated, the participant will be asked how the experience of being interviewed was for them and if they have any questions or concerns. In the event of questions or concerns, the participant will be encouraged to talk through these prior to leaving. The second stage of debriefing will occur as the participant will be asked to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy and to ensure that they consent to all aspects of it being included. The participants will have the opportunity, at this stage, to remove any aspects of the transcript that they do not wish to be included, or correct any inaccuracies or misinterpretations of what was said.

Analysis

Although all forms of data analysis cannot be foreseen prior to data collection, please indicate what form of analysis is currently planned.

Discourse analysis focusses on the use of language to serve individuals in accomplishing personal, social and political processes, with the text seen as the materialisation of available discourses, which the author of the text draws upon to construct a version of events (Willig, 2001). The 'authors' here are the mothers undertaking doctoral studies and the texts they create will be the interview transcripts. The personal, social and political processes they contain, once analysed will reveal the subject positions adopted by the interviewees and as such provide enlightenment as to both their experience and subjectivity (Willig, 2001). Several approaches are available to discourse analysts. In alignment with my paradigmatic beliefs, this study will adopt a critical realist approach. This would be consistent with women's studies and as such proffer an analysis of the underlying historical, social and economic conditions which facilitate discourse, as opposed to purely studying language in isolation (Willig, 2001). More specifically, this study will attempt a Foucauldian discourse analysis, whereby in analysing the discourse one analyses the relationship between discourse and subjectivity (Willig, 2001). When analysing discourse from a Foucauldian perspective, discourses are seen to both facilitate and constrain what can be said and by whom, thereby discourse analysts focus on the availability of discourse within a culture, with regard to the implications for those who live within it. The 'culture' under analysis is mothers undertaking professional doctoral studies and reviewing the implications for those living in it will illuminate the institutional practices that legitimate power relations, which, in turn, validate the discourse (Willig, 2001).

Procedural guidelines have been proffered by several researchers to guide the researcher through the processes necessary to conduct a discourse analysis. This study will follow the six stage approach to discourse analysis outlined by Willig (2001).

Collaborations

Does this research involve other organisations? If so, do they have their own ethical oversight requirements, or does working alongside them raise any ethical issues?

This research does not involve a collaboration with any other organisation or institution.

Training

Is any special training of investigators needed to complete this research, and if so, how will this be delivered?

I believe that I need additional training in interview techniques and have highlighted this to my supervisors as an area of skill deficit. I will seek to undertake pilot interviews under the supervision of my supervisors and seek out any electronic learning on the subject.

Beneficiaries

Are there any beneficiaries of the proposed research, if so, who are they and how will they benefit?

There are no beneficiaries from this research.

Any other information

Is there any other information pertinent to this proposal which you feel the ethics panel should consider?

No

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Please paste a list of cited references here

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Appendix checklist (please X 'Yes' or 'Not applicable' for each item)

Document	Yes	Not applicable
Letters requesting / confirming permission to conduct the study	X	
Recruitment poster or other recruitment material	X	
Indicative letter / email of invitation to the participant	X	
Participant information sheet	X	
Consent form	X	
Debriefing form	X	
Questionnaire(s)	X	
Interview guide (questions)	X	
Observation guide		N/A
Light Touch Review Eligibility Assessment		N/A
Scan of application signature page	X	
Other(s) (Please list):		

Signatures

Send your application scanned copy to the School Ethics Panel OR University Ethics panel as appropriate (see Appendix 1 in the Code of Practice).

Lead Applicant
I confirm that this ethics proposal accurately details the research I intend to undertake. I also confirm that I understand ethical approval must be granted before research commences.
Name:
Lucy Arora
Signature:

Date: 09/01/18

Supervisor (Doctoral students only)
I confirm that I have given feedback on an initial draft of this proposal, and that this feedback has been taken into account in the submitted document.
Name: Andrew Ingram

Signature:

Date: 09 / 01 / 2018

Dean / School signatory (staff applications only)
I confirm that I have approved this research activity in principle.
Name:

Role (if not Dean):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: Participant Invitation Letter

Dear potential study participant,

My name is Lucy Arora, I am undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Education at London South Bank University (LSBU). I am also employed by LSBU as a Senior Lecturer in the School of Health and Social Care and am a Paediatric Advanced Nurse Practitioner by background.

I am contacting you as I would like to invite you to participate in a study, titled: "Professional Doctorate Study and Motherhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis." I am very interested in finding out how women who are mothers and undertaking a Professional Doctorate construct their identity as students and what factors legitimise this identity. I am keen to discuss this topic with mothers of all varieties, such as foster-mothers, mothers by adoption, step-mothers, single mothers, mothers in same-sex relationships, married mothers, mothers with children of all ages and everything else in-between. If you are a mother and undertaking a Professional Doctorate, then I would be delighted to welcome you onto this study.

Entering into the study would involve an interview taking place between you and I. The interview would happen in a private room and would be audio-recorded. During the interview I would be asking questions which could be considered personal, such as information about you and your family, your experiences of being a mother, working and being a student and what these combined identities feel like for you. After the interview I would check that you and I were both OK in the form of an interview de-brief. The reason I offer this is that taking about your personal experiences could potentially be emotional. I would transcribe what was said so that I could analyse the content, alongside the transcripts of the other women who took part in the study. If you didn't want me to use your data anymore, I would be able to delete it, so long as this is before I have analysed the data, after which time it will be so interwoven with the other data collected, it would be impossible for me to remove it. You may wish to think about this before agreeing to participate.

If you would like to participate in the study, then please contact me via my e mail aroral@lsbu.ac.uk and I would be happy to talk it through with you. You will also be given a full participant information sheet and asked to signed a consent form prior to participation.

I very much hope to hear from you,
Kind regards,
Lucy Arora

Appendix 3: Participant Information

Study Title: Professional Doctorate Study and Motherhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, 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

The purpose of the study:

Motherhood is known to have an effect on both academic study and the professional careers of women. To date, no studies have looked at the experience of mothers who are undertaking professional doctorates and therefore experience working, studying and parenting simultaneously. The purpose of this study is to look at how mothers who are undertaking a professional doctorate construct their identity as students and what factors legitimise their identity. Ultimately, this study seeks to make suggestions for change, if warranted, based on the experience and subject positions revealed by the participants in the study, combined with an analysis of the societal forces that enable the identities reported.

Why you have been asked to participate:

Over the next year, I wish to interview ten women who are mothers, undertaking a professional doctorate. As you fulfil the criteria, you have been invited to participate.

The voluntary nature of participation:

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. 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 and without giving a reason. You can withdraw by sending an e-mail to the lead researcher aroral@lsbu.ac.uk Upon receiving this e-mail your withdrawal from the study will be immediate, without any requirement to give an explanation. It is important to note however, that once the data from your interview has been analysed, it will not be able to be removed from the research. After your interview has been transcribed, you will be sent a copy of the transcript. You will then be asked to respond by e-mail to state that you are happy that the transcript reflects the conversation that took place and also to give you the opportunity, at that point, to remove any sections of the interview that you do not wish to be analysed.

If you are undertaking your professional doctorate at London South Bank University, it is important to note that by choosing to either take part or not take part will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen if you opt in:
If you decide to take part in the study, please contact me by e mail. The first thing that will need to happen is for you to read and sign a consent form. Following obtaining your consent, this I will conduct an interview with you. This interview should take no longer than an hour and will take place in a private area, such as an office or meeting room, with only us in the room. The will involve us discussing topics, which may be considered personal, as they will involve talking about you and your children, your role as a mother who is also a professional woman and a student. You do not have to talk about anything that you do not want to and can stop the interview at any time. After we have completed the interview, I will transcribe what we discussed, send a copy to you for approval and then use this information for analysis.

Possible disadvantages/risks to participation
If you decide to take part in the study, you will need to travel to London South Bank University (LSBU), at your own expense and spend about one hour being interviewed. You therefore need to consider it you can spend both the time and travel costs involved. Whilst the interview questions will not be purposefully upsetting, talking about motherhood, work and study may be emotive to you. We will spend some time 'debriefing' after the interview, to check that you are OK, we can also stop the interview at any point. You will also be sent a copy of the transcript, to check that you are happy for all, or some of it to be used for analysis. You therefore need to consider if discussing the proposed topics may be emotional for you and if so, if that they are topics that you are indeed happy to discuss.

Possible benefits to participation
The benefits to participating in this study are that together we will be contributing new knowledge in this subject, as women who are mothers and undertaking professional doctorates has not been studied before.

Outline data collection and confidentiality
All the information collected about you and other participants will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations).
Data generated by the study must be retained in accordance with the University's Code of Practice. All data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of 10 years after the completion of a research project.'
Your privacy and anonymity will be ensured, as your real name will not be used in any written or published work. I will not discuss your participation in the study with anyone, nor will I discuss what we talk about at interview.

What will happen to the results of the research study on completion
This research is part of a Professional Doctorate in Education and therefore will be written up and submitted for marking at London South Bank University. It also my expectation, that parts of my research will be written up periodically and submitted as journal articles and/or presented at conferences. If you would like a full copy of my doctoral thesis, please make me aware of this and I will happily e mail it to you, after submission and marking.

Who is organising and funding the research
This research is being conducted as I am a student at London South Bank University. It should be noted that I am a member of staff at London South Bank University also. I am conducting this research as a student of a Doctorate in Education and Social Justice, in the School of Law and Social Sciences. I am provided with a place on the Doctorate in Education and Social Justice through a fee waiver scheme, as I work as a Senior Lecturer in the department of Primary and Social Care.

Who has reviewed the study
This research has been approved by the School of Law and Social Sciences and through the University Ethics panel of London South Bank University.

Who to contact for further information
You should contact me, Lucy Arora for further information by e mail aroral@lsbu.ac.uk alternatively you could contact my research supervisor Andrew Ingram by email ingrama2@lsbu.ac.uk. We would both be happy to hear from you with any questions. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact Professor Nicola Martin tel: 0207 8155779 email martinn4@lsbu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information leaflet and do be in touch,
Lucy Arora, January 5th 2018

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

Research Project Consent Form
Full title of Project: Professional Doctorate Study and Motherhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Ethics approval registration Number:

Name:

Researcher Position: Lucy Arora, Senior Lecturer London South Bank University

Contact details of Researcher: aroral@lsbu.ac.uk

Taking part (please tick the box that applies)	Yes	No
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet/project brief and/or the student has explained the above study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without providing a reason.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the above study.	☐	☐

Use of my information (please tick the box that applies)	Yes	No
I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand that my data/words may be quoted in publications, reports, posters, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
I would like my real name to be used in the above.	☐	☐
I agree for the data I provide to be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and I understand it may be used for future research.	☐	☐
I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	☐	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	☐	☐
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Lucy Arora	☐	☐

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Date   Signature

_____
Name of Researcher

____   _____
Date   Signature

Project Supervisor
Andrew Ingram
Email address: ingrama2@ls

Appendix 5: 2000 Word Report

Now you see me. Reflexivity and reward; finding me and seeing me in my professional doctorate:

My ten-year-old daughter, always a literal thinker, came into the study where I was working a few weeks ago and said to me, "have you finished your doctorate mummy?" "Not quite, sausage," I replied.

"How many more *pages* mummy, how many more *pages* have you got to write?" She asked. Distracted and wanting to 'get on,' I replied, "I'm not sure, probably about ten."

"*Ten* more pages mummy, you've got to write *ten* more pages and *then* you're finished?"

"About that yes."

"How many *pages* will that be mummy?" She pressed. As a child with dyslexia, for whom writing a *page* is a gargantuan effort, the total expenditure of my doctorate it seems, can be measured in the number of *pages* I have to write.

"About two hundred and fifty."

"Two hundred and fifty pages?! And then you've finished your doctorate?"

"Yes."

"And what do they give you?"

"Well, if I pass my exam, I get given my doctorate."

"What does that mean?"

"I get to use the title, 'Doctor and I'll have a certificate to say that I have been awarded my doctorate.'"

"Is that it?! She replied, looking completely crestfallen and totally baffled. "All that, just for that? All those *pages* mummy? They don't give *you anything* for doing it? They must give you *something* mummy?"

"No."

A long pause followed. "I'm not sure it's worth it mummy." Came the reply, as she looked at me, perplexed and as though I should shut my laptop that second and do something more worthwhile, "you must get something for two hundred and fifty pages?"

> Me, struggling, wracking my brains for what I '*got*,' "I could get a better job maybe?" "You've *got* a good job mummy, *really*, I. Don't Think. It's. Worth. It!" Was her final say, delivered with a harrumph and ended with a one-hundred-and-eighty degree spin out of the room.

This conversation forced me to reconcile with what I 'got' from my doctorate. Clearly I wasn't getting a voucher to a trampoline park, party bag or some other swag that would make it worthwhile in the eyes of my ten-year-old. If anyone asked me about my doctorate, I would tell them, honestly, that I have loved every minute, that is has been life affirming, enriching, empowering and definitely 'worth it.' This reflection is me looking back at my journey through my doctorate and how it has allowed me to *find myself* as a researcher and in doing so, *place myself* within my research. I place myself unashamedly and hope that you can see me, sitting within the lines of text, conjugating, making up my mind, listening, watching, finding my point of view and sharing it. This is my interpretation of 'doctorateness' and what I have 'got' from undertaking my professional doctorate.

In 2010 I commenced a Doctorate in Health Care at Kings College. I was at the time working at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. My team were the lead nurse on site at any time, lead all clinical emergency calls and cardiac arrests, managed major incidents such as bombings, were lead for safeguarding, assumed responsibility for all staff management out of hours and were generally considered, 'head honcho.' Did I have a big ego? Yes, probably.

I had recently completed an MSc in Paediatric Advanced Nurse Practice and whilst I enjoyed the clinical aspects, many of the written assignment felt like going through the motions, repeating subjects I had studied previously or wasn't interested in. This changed when I wrote my final essay, 'politics of health care.' I wrote about the effects of marriage on the careers of female nurses, wowzers, I couldn't get enough. I had something to say! My research project followed, I undertook action research implementing a new handover tool. I loved studying the impact being a nurse had on communication and I loved leading a project through groups that I held with nurses and implementing change, together.

I had the bug, at the end of my MSc I wanted more, I wanted to do and understand research, I wanted to be able to make changes and be respected as a 'serious' clinician. From my first day as a doctoral student I was in love, my lectures excited me, the academic staff inspired me. I felt, energised, inspired, excited. I was loving learning. I passed my assignments and enjoyed the process of writing them. It felt like springtime.

I fell pregnant within my first academic year and continued to study, happily. I had my baby three months into my second year and continued without interruption to study. This was a mis-judged choice. Whilst at the time I was proud of my ability to 'push through' I was also in complete denial of my true state. My daughter was admitted to hospital when she was seven days old as I struggled to breast feed and she got so dehydrated that she had to be tube fed. I refused to give her a bottle, which would have meant, in my eyes, admitting to failure. The feeding difficulties, combined with my daughter not sleeping (she still doesn't) meant that I was a tired, neurotic mess, on the inside, but did everything in my power to demonstrate 'coping.' My nails were always polished, a fact that stuns me now. I had to show that cosmetically as well academically, professionally and maternally, I was 'on it.'

Throughout my second year I was exhausted. I returned to work from maternity leave at the end of the year and started my third year whereby I began the research phase of my doctorate. Working clinical shifts, often on only an hour or two of sleep was killing me. I found having a young baby really challenging. At the same time I had recently made some changes within my team that were unpopular and I was dealing with some challenging interactions when I was at work, a place that had always been a respite for me. My doctorate was also a place of sanctitude, somewhere that I felt like myself, free from the pressures of work and the fatiguing monotony of having a young baby. In my second year, whilst pregnant, I undertook a small research project for an assignment. I interviewed and analysed data from women who were wives or mothers undertaking a doctorate, using discourse analysis. I *hated* it, I struggled to understand the methodology and at the time was planning to undertake a RCT for my thesis.

I started to 'fail' at my doctorate. I wrote a proposal for my research and was assigned a supervisor. Something wasn't right, motivation started to wane. I had designed an RCT looking at the time to life saving interventions in paediatric cardiac arrest.

I now recognise that the 'something' was that doing an RCT was completely performative. I wanted to be taken 'seriously' as a clinician and that meant conducting an RCT, with statistics, p-values, scatter graphs and all the other paraphernalia that I had seen at conferences and read in other papers. The group I was judging myself by was medical staff. I wanted to show that nurses could do research too and that I was just of worthy of my position and level of authority as they were. Oppressed, much?

Everything ground to a halt, I couldn't do it. I was trying to get pregnant again and in doing so I experienced recurrent miscarriages, my daughter didn't sleep, I felt like a failure. My research was going nowhere, I couldn't carry a baby, the baby I had didn't sleep, my colleagues were unsympathetic to the point of being unkind. Working, studying, parenting all fell on top of me and I felt suffocated. I needed my job, I had to have a professional identity, I was proud of what I did and also, good at my job. I liked having an aspect of my life where I felt competent, so the doctorate got the axe. By getting the axe, I mean that I didn't show up to my supervision appointments, respond to e-mails or letters and I'm sure if I'm honest, they removed me from the programme. I've never known, as I threw away any letters and deleted any e-mails.

I became pregnant again with my second daughter, now aged seven, also slightly confused by my propensity for typing and doubly confused that having a doctorate won't mean that I become, 'daddy's boss.' This time, owing to exhaustion, being miserable, terrified by my previous miscarriages and feeling that my colleagues were not a 'safe place' I left my job when I was three months pregnant. For eighteen months I had no job and no doctorate. In that time, I never felt like myself, I longed for my old identity, I missed having an income, I missed using my brain, I missed saying that I was a doctoral student and I missed having a professional title that I felt proud of using. Saying 'I used to work at GOSH' when mums at groups asked me what I did, made me sad.

When my second daughter was eleven months old and my eldest was three, I took a job as a Senior Lecturer at London South Bank University. A few months into my post, I undertook a Post Graduate Certificate in Practice Education. I absolutely loved it and I'm not going to hold back here, I aced it. My love of studying re-energised me and learning a new subject was a treat. I could see possibilities opening up.

I really enjoyed working as an academic and wanted more, wanted to be better at it. I wanted my doctorate back! A near desperate sense of wanting my doctorate back grew stronger. I read more and more about discourse analysis and realised that philosophically, discourse analysis and I were a good match. In fact, finding discourse analysis felt like putting on a pair of spectacles that were made just for me. I could *see* the world, I could *understand* the world, I could *explain* the world. The PGCert and being away from a clinical environment helped me release my shackles binding me to the need to do an RCT. I gingerly arranged a meeting with Nicki Martin, to see if I could APEL my two taught years of a Doctorate in Health Care and without any hesitation she enrolled me onto the research phase of the Doctorate in Education. Voila! I was back! Thank you, Nicki. I was back as a doctoral student with two pre-school children, a job as an academic, back to everything that I had found so difficult and yet, so happy to be there. My study was born.

So, I found myself, but how did I see myself? Big ego still? No, I'm a bit battered by life to be honest. I want to learn, I'm a novice on a journey. Why? Because I am angry and frustrated. My previous doctorate was a joy and I threw it away, I have unfinished business. I am tired. I want to better myself but there seem to be obstacles in the way. Wouldn't I rather not bother and play with my kids? What I realised very early on, is that my doctorate is an *escape* from being a mother. Yes I love my children, yes I love playing with them, but, to a point. I love academic study, I love being inside my head, I love peace and quiet and I want this.

So I set off reading, everything about doctoral study and motherhood, women doing PhDs as lab scientists, counsellors, academics, librarians, social workers, educators and everyone was saying the same thing, it's hard, we are not respected, supported, encouraged, no dispensation is given to mothers. I started to design my study, expecting to hear fury from the mothers I interviewed, ready for women to tell me how terrible everything was, how the 'doctoral world' wasn't designed for them, together with them, I was going to lay bare the injustices of the world, their anger would match mine and I would redeem myself for throwing away my doctorate, and find out why along the way.

That is not what happened, I realised, my doctorate is not about me finding redemption. My doctorate is about me sharing the worlds of the women I interview. I recognised that I was sad and bitter about having to put a U-turn into my own doctoral journey.

I also recognised that I had been depressed after the birth of my first daughter and used nail varnish and an energetic air to cover that up. Yes, I am a mother undertaking a doctorate but this is not 'my' story, I am the story teller. A privileged and intimate position, an honour actually, as the women I interviewed opened up about the most private and personal aspects of their lives. My duty was to share their stories, not to compensate for my own. Two things helped me. The first was reading, extensively about intensive mothering. I had never heard of intensive mothering until starting my literature review and reading around it supported me to understand being a mother in 2022. The second was keeping a journal, seeing the similarities and differences between me and the women I interviewed, not jumping to conclusions, not 'using' their words to 'explain' any of my actions.

What I found in doing so, was not what I expected. Yes, the mothers drew from an intensive mothering ideology, but I did not find brow beaten, exhausted women, I found leaders and activists, women reaching goals that they had harboured for decades. The women did not believe in themselves, but through my study I hope to have given them cause to. So, I hope that I am there amongst the *pages.* I hope I have achieved my aim of doing the women in my study justice, holding me and my need for redemption back to show the wider discourses that are used by mothers undertaking doctoral study. I hope you can see that my head is held high, that I am proud of my work, proud of what I have achieved. That, is what I have 'got.'