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Mothering from the inside: narratives of
motherhood and imprisonment

Kelly Lockwood

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

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Dedication

'When I hear that you were doing this I'm thinking 'God it's amazing we've got someone to talk to', you know? There's someone who, there's a voice somewhere, someone want to listen to us, someone want to know' (Anita).

This thesis is dedicated to all of the women who told their stories.

Abstract

Two thirds of the 4,000 women who are in prison in England and Wales are mothers of dependent children. Imprisonment can severely alter, disrupt or even terminate mothering. However, there is a relative absence of empirical research within this area. Therefore, we know little of the meaning of mothering and motherhood for women in prison. The main aim of this research was to explore the way in which women in prison make sense of motherhood and construct their mothering identity.

To achieve this, the analytical framework of biographical disruption was adopted and adapted; replacing chronic illness as the critical event with imprisonment. The study was underpinned by a narrative methodology to focus upon the ways in which the narratives of mothers in prison are constructed/ reconstructed and presented.

In depth narrative interviews were conducted with 16 women. The interviews lasted between forty five minutes and three hours. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed using the Listening Guide. On the basis of those interviews, three different narratives were constructed, the Wounded Mother, the Unbecoming Mother and the Suspended Mother.

The findings of this research illustrate that the relationship between imprisonment and biographical disruption is multi-faceted. Mothering identities can be fundamentally threatened, yet can also be reinforced. This research has also highlighted that it is often the compounding impact of repeated disruptions, culminating in prison that represents the most profound disruption to the mothering identities of women in prison. The implications of the research for policy and practice are also considered.

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Chapter One

Introduction

'We know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood' (Rich, 1976:11)

Rich's (1976) seminal work has contributed greatly to understandings of mothering and motherhood. However, we still know little of motherhood and imprisonment. Although steady over the last few years, the women's prison population has witnessed a massive rise since the 1990s. This study aims to explore the meaning of motherhood for women in prison.

The subject of mothering has long been a central concern of feminist scholarship (O'Reilly, 2008:2004; D'Arcy et al, 2011). Feminist writers have aimed to deconstruct the meaning of motherhood and mothering, whilst illuminating and legitimising the diversity of mothering (O'Reilly, 2008). Progressive feminist theorising has served to 'debunk' dominant ideologies of motherhood in order to incorporate understandings of 'marginalised' mothering (D'Arcy, 2011; Bemiller, 2012:170) and the way in which mothering ideologies are negotiated and accommodated into the reality of women's everyday lives. However, there remains a relative absence of literature exploring what mothering means to women when the reality of their everyday lives becomes disrupted and their capacity to mother is at odds with their ideologies. Hills-Collins (1994:49) has argued that by placing the knowledge of motherhood and mothering from subordinated groups at the centre of feminist theorising, 'new themes and angles of vision' are created.

The purpose of this research is to provide a contribution to on-going feminist criminological prison research concerning women, and particularly mothers, in prison. It also aims to contribute to an understanding of the construction and negotiation of mothering identities for not only marginalised women but women mothering in extreme conditions.

In this introductory chapter I explain the need for the study. I also offer a reflexive account of my route into academic research and my reasons for exploring this subject area. My reflexive approach aims to make transparent my subjective position in the research and in the construction of knowledge (Finlay, 1998). This introductory chapter focuses upon 'personal reflexivity', considering the way in which my own values, experiences, interests, beliefs and social identities have shaped the research conception (Willig, 2008:10). This will be developed further in Chapter Five when I combine personal reflexivity with methodological reflexivity to consider the assumptions I bring to the research, the approach I adopt and my responses throughout to the research process (Finlay, 1998). Within Chapter Six I go on to explore reflexivity in greater depth, considering some of the wider debates around reflexivity and how it has been used in this research and some of the challenges presented. This process has involved constant evaluation and reflection manifesting in many ways including a research journal. The development of a study group dedicated to exploring the 'The Listening Guide' method of analysis was also a central element of my reflexive process as was supervision. I acknowledge that my subjective position may have impacted on the research processes and outcomes. I also recognise that a different study would undoubtedly have transpired, with its own unique strengths and weaknesses, from a different researcher with their own assumptions and relationships. I believe that this reflexivity brings a richer

understanding to the research (Finley, 1998). Within this introductory chapter I also go on to discuss the development of the theoretical framework before presenting the organisation of the thesis.

The need for the study

Although witnessing a marginal decline since 2005, the women's prison population of England and Wales, echoing a global trend, has risen dramatically since the 1990s. As a consequence, the number of families disrupted through maternal imprisonment has also risen. Estimates indicate that around 66% of the women's prison population are mothers of dependent children, affecting more than 17,000 children a year (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Brooks-Gordon and Bainham, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2005; Prison Reform Trust, 2006; Murray, 2007; Sheehan and Flynn, 2007). While both imprisoned women and men may be parents, research suggests that women are more likely to have been the primary carer of their child[ren] before prison (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Enos, 2001). Research also indicates that only 9% of children with a mother in prison are cared for by their father in comparison to 90% of children with a father in prison being cared for by their mother (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). Prison can therefore be a particularly disruptive time for mothers.

Research emphasises the centrality of the maternal role to women's mothering identities (Vallido et al, 2010) and the significance of this role during imprisonment (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Enos, 2001; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003), in the adjustment to prison life and upon rehabilitation, release and reunification (Enos, 2001; Loper, 2006; Shami and Kochal, 2008). Yet, the nature of imprisonment and the enforced separation means mothering is disrupted for many women. Much of the available literature focuses upon the maintenance of contact between mother and child during

maternal imprisonment (Enos, 2001; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). Many researchers agree that domestic visits, extended family visits, phone calls and postal mail, protect the maternal bond during imprisonment and facilitate mothers' adjustment to prison life (Enos, 2001; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003; Loper, 2006). However, some researchers have concluded that many of the available contact opportunities presented in prison are inadequate, restricting privacy, intimacy and women's confidence to 'mother', therefore offering a constrained experience of motherhood (Raikes and Lockwood, 2011).

Considering 'imprisonment' as a biographical disruption (Bury, 1982: see also Chapter Two) this thesis aims to explore the impact of imprisonment upon the mothering identity of women in prison. Biographical disruption ruptures individuals' everyday lives and the forms of knowledge underpinning them, which in turn threatens identities (Bury, 1982). Drawing on research with mothers with chronic illness, Wilson (2007) argues that a woman's identity as a mother may be threatened morally and existentially when her ability to care for her children is disrupted. For mothers in prison this threat is reinforced by societal attitudes towards women and in particular mothers in prison, raising questions over not only their 'ability' to be good mothers but also their right to be mothers (Schram, 1999). The concept of 'disrupted mothering' remains largely unexplored in available literature and has not previously been adopted to explore mothering and imprisonment.

Biographical disruption: motherhood, academia and me

My identities as a mother and as a researcher are inextricably linked. As noted by Rich (1976) in her seminal book on the institution of motherhood and the experience of mothering, it can be difficult to write about this subject without being biographical.

Although, my route to this study was paved by my criminological undergraduate degree, it is my role and identity as a mother that inspired me to pursue the subject area.

I gave birth to my first child at the age of 18; however, to a certain extent I had always been engaged in mothering. The eldest sibling of five children, with three younger sisters and a younger brother, I had long been involved in 'mother work'. Born within a close family network, to a mother with 13 siblings, and a father with 8 siblings, both having 5 sisters each, I was surrounded by women, all of whom were mothers. Growing up, women's roles as mothers were highly celebrated within my family, with women rarely pursuing careers or personal interests outside of the home. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, research has indicated that this is not uncommon for working class women with limited opportunities to forge their adult identities as women outside of motherhood. Despite the limited roles for women in my family outside of mothering, I never understood motherhood as a site of oppression. As noted by Hills-Collins (1994) in relation to Black motherhood, mothering within a lower-working class environment, particularly in large families, was a social role, providing women with a sense of power and a collective identity.

Despite this recognition I often felt that my biographical script was already written, I was to be a mum. As I entered my teens I felt a desire to disrupt my anticipated biography and become the first woman in 'our' family to go on to college and university. However, not straying too far from my socialised gendered role as carer and nurturer, it was a career in primary school teaching that I pursued. My plans for university were suspended when I became pregnant in my final year of Sixth Form College; I remained determined to return to education at some point in my future.

As a pregnant, unmarried teenager, I quickly began to experience discrimination when outside of my own family and social environment. At seven months pregnant, I was asked to sit my final college exams in isolation from the other students. I was verbally abused by a woman in a supermarket who chose to express her disdain at my visibly pregnant unmarried state. On reflection I recognise that I then went on to work hard to manage what I now understand to be a stigmatised identity and to reconstruct my biography. Rather than pursuing education, I immersed myself in motherhood and shaped a positive identity as a woman by being a 'good mother'. I went on to marry at the age of 21 and have a further two children, creating a 'real' family environment. During this time I experienced varying states of employment; however, throughout all of these differing circumstances I was able to negotiate my mothering ideology to accommodate my circumstances. When I was in paid employment my 'good mothering' narrative was centred on financial provision and the social benefits of childcare for my children. Outside of paid employment my narrative shifted to one focused upon financial sacrifice and the benefits for my children in having me at home full time.

As my youngest child reached 18 months I had a strong desire to return to education and discover what I could achieve. I enrolled on an Applied Criminology degree at the University of Huddersfield. Remaining heavily invested in my role and identity as a mother, I was immediately drawn to the subject of mothering and imprisonment. I was interested to understand how mothers in prison understood mothering and their identities as mothers when their roles and responsibilities were restricted. From my own experience I believed mothering to be a primary identity for women especially that of working class, marginalised women. On a personal level I also felt that what was constituted as 'good mothering' was shaped by dominant narratives that many

women do not have access to but that 'good mothering' was negotiable within women's lives.

Following an initial interest in women in prison and an empathic recognition of the likely anxieties and stresses faced by imprisoned women separated from their children, I went on to explore this subject further in an extended literature review for my undergraduate dissertation. Motivated by the lack of research in, and a growing fascination with, the subject area and with the encouragement of my personal tutor and dissertation supervisor, I presented this idea as the basis for my PhD proposal. I went on to secure a doctoral position with an ESRC scholarship.

Ironically, the biggest disruption to my own biography has occurred throughout my doctoral journey, bringing disorder to my maternal life. Throughout this journey my ability to care for my children in the way in which I had previously valued has been massively disrupted. I have been increasingly absent from home and, when at home, I became progressively physically and emotionally unavailable to my children. I experienced a great deal of guilt accompanied with moments of immense pride and determination. I was torn between feeling overwhelmingly proud of my achievements and feeling selfish for pursuing my ambitions. I tried to reconcile these emotions by telling myself that I was providing a better future for my children, being a positive role model and, for my daughter, in particular, providing a different script. Yet, I always struggled to reconcile the benefits to myself with the sacrifices of my family. Despite such anxieties I always remained mindful that I was and remain in a privileged position, being able to come home to my children every day, in the knowledge that they are safe and well, whilst pursuing an academic career that I have chosen that I am immensely proud of and committed to.

Disrupted mothering: developing the theoretical framework

Rafter and Heidensohn (2002) highlight the historical and cultural diversity of the discipline of criminology. Historically, the discipline has largely been concerned with the measurement and assessment of crime and determining the 'causes' and 'cures' for primarily 'male' criminal behaviour (Garland, 2002; Rafter and Heidensohn, 2002; Smart, 1995). During the 1970s a feminist criminology emerged that brought women to the centre stage of criminology. The impact of feminism on the discipline of criminology is often contested by those within the field (see Carlen, 1990; Chesney-Lind, 2012). However, scholars maintain that feminism has challenged the positivistic roots of criminology, highlighting epistemological issues and emphasising reflexivity within the discipline (Carlen, 1990; Rafter and Heidensohn, 2002). Equally, feminist criminology has facilitated greater recognition of the gendered nature of crime and punishment (Carlen, 1990) and the transformation of criminal justice policy and practices (Rafter and Heidensohn, 2002).

Bosworth (1999:90) notes 'how the criminologist identifies herself will have great impact upon her research'. Despite my criminological degree, I struggled to identify with the traditional aims of criminology and have been largely influenced by feminist scholarship within the discipline. Bosworth (1990:90) goes on to argue that 'feminist research must continue to be on, by and for women' and committed to 'uncovering the gendered nature of social life'. With a specific interest in mothering identity and the significance of the mothering role my theoretical approach has also been guided and influenced by the exploration and understandings of mothering ideologies (see O'Reilly, 2004:2008; Miller, 2005; Glenn et al, 1996; Silva, 1996) and the way in which they are accommodated and negotiated into the reality of women's everyday lives. It is an understanding of the meaning of motherhood when the reality of

women's everyday lives becomes disrupted through imprisonment that is a central concern of this study.

Biographical disruption provided the framework within which to consider the negotiation of these ideologies. This theory was explored, adopted and adapted. Biographical disruption and the consequent developments emphasise the importance of timing and context in which disruption occurs and the available dominant discourses that may serve to shape responses to disruption. The dominant mothering ideologies were central to this exploration. To consider the institutional discourses surrounding women in prison, it was also essential to maintain a criminological perspective.

Remaining focused upon 'mothering' my primary criminological influences are drawn from feminist criminologists who constitute women offenders as 'woman' first and 'offender' second (Snider, 2003:370). This encouraged consideration and exploration of the multiplicity of women's narratives and identities. The differing perspectives, epistemological positions and methodologies within feminist criminology have highlighted the structural oppression and disproportionate discrimination and victimisation of women in prison. They have also drawn attention to the dominant discourses of normative femininity and victimisation that shape both institutional responses to women offenders and women's responses to imprisonment. More recently, feminist criminology has aimed to incorporate the concept of agency, resilience and resistance in the exploration of women's imprisonment (Bosworth, 1999; Rowe, 2011). My own approach has aimed to incorporate a focus upon the manifestation of human agency and its interaction with dominant narratives in shaping the identities of mothers in prison.

The incorporation of feminist understandings of motherhood within a disrupted life course accompanied with feminist criminology provides the framework in which to explore the mothering narratives of women in prison. The development of this framework aims to contribute to on-going feminist criminological prison research concerning women and imprisonment. It also aims to contribute to an understanding of the negotiation of mothering for not only marginalised women but also women mothering in extreme conditions.

Research aims and objectives

To recapitulate, the aims of this study are threefold;

1. To explore critically how women construct understandings of mothering and imprisonment.
2. To develop a narrative framework for understanding 'disrupted' mothering among women prisoners.
3. To explore critically the utility of biographical disruption as an analytical framework for criminological research.

The aims of this research are met by adopting and adapting the analytical framework of biographical disruption within a narrative methodology in order to explore the constructed meaning of motherhood and imprisonment for women in prison.

Organisation of the thesis

Having provided a rationale for the research and introduced the theoretical approach and research aims, this chapter will continue by presenting the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature. It begins by contextualising the subject area and exploring what is already known about women and mothers in prison. This allows for a claim to be made that this study makes an additional and original contribution to the knowledge that currently exists. This chapter also introduces Foucault's concept of panopticism (Foucault, 1976) and the way in which disciplinary regimes inform individual subjectivity and identity. The chapter continues with a critical examination of what is currently known about motherhood, dominant mothering ideologies and motherhood and imprisonment. The analysis contextualises the debates surrounding motherhood, disrupted motherhood and imprisonment. Appendix One offers a summary of how the literature review was conducted.

In Chapter Three I present the epistemological assumptions and feminist underpinnings of the research and develop the theoretical framework of biographical disruption. I outline Bury's (1982) original concept and draw on the work of Carricaburu and Pierret (1995) to consider consequent developments of Bury's original work. I highlight and consider the theory of 'disrupted mothering', primarily embedded within literature around illness and discuss how this has been incorporated into this study to explore the narratives of mothers in prison.

In Chapter Four I document the methodological approach adopted within this research. I demonstrate how and why a narrative methodology was taken as a means to understand the nature of motherhood and imprisonment. In doing so, I make evident how this philosophical approach underpinned the development of the methods employed in the study.

Within Chapter Five I provide a detailed discussion of the methods employed within the study. The reader is guided through the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced during all stages of the process. I discuss the difficulties encountered in gaining access to collaborating organisations; the problematic nature of a self-selecting sample; the emotionality of qualitative research; and explore the features of 'The Listening Guide' method of data analysis. All of these discussions are embedded within feminist understandings of ethics. This chapter documents the process of gaining ethical approval; however, it also stresses the contextual and situational nature of ethics rather than viewing them as abstract principles (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002). Therefore, ethical considerations are interwoven throughout this chapter. Within this chapter I also introduce the women who took part in the study providing short narrative biographies for each of them.

Chapter Six is a reflexive commentary. This chapter explores some of the current wider debates around reflexivity and defines the way in which reflexivity is used within this research. The chapter goes on to explore some of the challenges to my assumptions that reflexivity has generated. Within this chapter I consider reflexivity within a narrative framework and the opportunities and challenges of this approach.

Within Chapter Seven I present the first of three narrative findings, 'The wounded mother'. Constructing imprisonment as a major biographical disruption (Bury, 1982), this narrative is characterised by stories of pain, separation, mothers' perception of the injustice of their imprisonment and their fight to maintain mothering identity and autonomy.

Constructing imprisonment as biographical validation, Chapter Eight tells the story of 'The unbecoming mother'. Within this narrative imprisonment is constructed as an opportunity for repair and is characterised by stories of chaotic pre-prison lives and fractured relationships with their children. This narrative functions to demonstrate transformation. It constructs imprisonment as a site for personal growth and the rebuilding of their relationships with their children.

Chapter Nine introduces the narrative of 'The suspended mother'. The suspended mother constructs imprisonment as biographical fracture. Unlike the wounded and the unbecoming mother, the suspended mother talks of the mothering role and identity being completely overwhelmed by the impact of imprisonment. For the suspended mother imprisonment and mothering are completely irreconcilable. Overwhelmed by guilt, the meanings of 'good mothering' are subtly re-negotiated and the mothering role is temporarily suspended.

In Chapter Ten I summarise the conclusions of this research and the contributions to knowledge claimed. I discuss how analysis and interpretation of the women's narrative accounts facilitates further understanding of disruption as an analytical framework, narrative as a methodology and of the meaning of motherhood for women in prison. This chapter also considers the implications for practice and further research, concluding with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Summary

Within this chapter I have introduced the need for the study and set out the aims and purpose of the research; I have introduced the concept of biographical disruption and discussed how this research has replaced chronic illness with imprisonment as the critical event in the context of exploring the mothering identities of women in prison;

and I have outlined the structure of the thesis. The following chapter, Chapter Two, discusses existing literature in relation to motherhood and imprisonment.

Chapter Two

Literature review

Introduction

When the anticipated life course is interrupted individuals may experience a profound assault on their sense of self (Bury, 1982). Life course trajectories are gendered and highly bound by cultural expectations (Jewkes, 2005). In most western cultures the bearing and rearing of children is assumed for women (Letherby, 1994). Motherhood is 'central to the ways in which [women] are defined by others and themselves' (Phoenix and Woollett, 1991:12). The mothering role is considered to be central to women's identities as mothers (Breakwell, 1998; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003; Crocker and Quinn, 2004; Schofield et al, 2011). When this role is disrupted a woman's mothering identity may be threatened existentially and morally (Wilson, 2007; Vallido et al, 2010). Theoretically, mothering may be severely disrupted or even terminated by imprisonment (Jewkes, 2005). Yet, we know little about the negotiation and construction of mothering identities of women in prison. Much of the available research relating to disrupted mothering is primarily situated within the context of chronic illness (Vallido et al, 2010). This research aims to replace 'illness' with 'imprisonment' as the disruptive experience (Bury, 1982) or to use Giddens' (1979) term of 'critical situation', in order to explore the impact of imprisonment on the role and identity of 'mother'.

Research specific to mothers in prison remains limited (Weiss and Sekula, 2008); however, it is helpful to explore what is already known. It is also important to consider that the negotiation of the mothering identity does not occur in isolation and

that the timing and context in which disruption occurs is also an area in need of further exploration. Therefore, within this chapter I provide an illustration of the political context of women's imprisonment in England and Wales. I continue by introducing Foucault's concept of the Panopticon and explore how this concept has influenced the social regulation of mothering both within and beyond imprisonment. Within this chapter I also explore dominant mothering ideologies and how these interact with women's mothering identities. I then go on to explore what is known of disrupted mothering in the context of imprisonment.

Mothers and imprisonment

Mothers in prison: a growing concern?

Although witnessing a marginal decline since 2005, the population of women in prison in England and Wales has risen dramatically over the last three decades (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Although this incline follows a general increase in the overall prison population, the number of women remanded in custody or receiving custodial sentences has increased at a substantially higher rate than that of male prisoners (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 2002; Deakin and Spencer, 2003; Black, 2004; Carlen and Worrall, 2004; Carless, 2006). In the ten years between 1992 and 2002 the prison population of women escalated by 173% in comparison to a rise of 50% of the male population (Moloney et al, 2009). The population peaked at 4,672 in May 2004 (Truliuc et al, 2012). There has since been a general yet marginal annual decline (Turliuc et al, 2012).

Although women tend to serve short prison sentences of less than six months, the length of women's prison sentences has also increased disproportionately (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Between 1997 and 2006 the number of women serving a

sentence of four years or more increased by over 100 per cent from 700 to 1,500. This was in comparison to a much lower increase of 50 per cent in the male population (Truliuc et al, 2012).

These statistics serve to offer some context of the scale of women's imprisonment. However, these figures are one-dimensional; they present an uncritical view of the increasing population of women in prison in England and Wales. Caution must be given to these figures as prison populations within any society often do not reflect the level of crime within that society, instead they generally reflect the society itself and their responses to punishment. As suggested by Svensson (1995:72)

‘the reason for retaining [such systems] is [their] effects on morals in society. Even most governments know that crime is not diminished by putting people into prison. The political strength, however, in punishing those who do wrong is enormous’.

The disproportionate rise in the prison population of women is often attributed to the significant increase in sentencing severity. The Prison Reform Trust (2012:2) reports that ‘in 1996, 10% of women convicted of an indictable offence were sent to prison’, compared to 14% in 2010. Many commentators have also cited key legislative changes included within the ‘war against drugs’¹ as one of the main causes for the rise in women prisoners (Bush-Baskette, 2000 and 2004). The ‘war against drugs’, both in the UK and in America has since been labelled by feminist criminologists as the war against women, particularly poor women and women from Black and ethnic minorities (Bush-Baskette, 2000 and 2004). Whilst these statistics undoubtedly reflect a growing number of women in prison, they do not necessarily reflect a growing number of offences committed by women. However, situated within ‘political

¹ The ‘war on drugs’ is a term used to refer to a series of drug policies and preventative measures in the UK and USA intended to reduce the production, distribution, and consumption of illegal drugs.

dimensions of punishment' these readily documented statistics serve to facilitate moral panic, often negating the wider ramifications for society, families and individuals (Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013:34).

As a consequence of the rising prison population of women in prison the number of families disrupted through maternal imprisonment has also risen. Despite this, reliable information and statistics relating to imprisoned mothers and their children are not routinely recorded (Brooks-Gordon and Bainham, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2005; Prison Reform Trust, 2006; Murray, 2007; Sheehan and Flynn, 2007; Jones and Wainaina-Woźna, 2013). The exact numbers within these growing populations therefore remain unknown. Research and governmental publication statistics based upon estimates are inconsistent. Discrepancies in the definition of 'mother' and small sample sizes may have significantly contributed to these anomalies. The 1991 National Prison survey suggested that 47% of the women in prison were mothers (Home Office, 1991). A later Home Office census, conducted in 1994 and published in 1997, indicated that this figure was 61% (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). This statistic was confirmed by the 1998 Women's Prisoners Survey (Home Office, 2000). However, various smaller studies have indicated that this figure could be as high as 80-90% (Morgan, 1997). The 1997 Home Office census remains the most up to date, reliable and therefore most commonly cited information available. The census was a comprehensive study of women and mothers in prison, utilising a 98% sample, incorporating sentenced, remand and civil prisoners, from all existing establishments (Caddle and Crisp, 1997).

The Home Office (1997) census also indicated that 50% of mothers in prison had a child under the age of five; 60% of mothers had a child or children between five and

ten years; and 40% had children aged between ten and eighteen years. However, the research relies on a narrow, biological definition of 'mother' that does not account for the differing ways in which women mother and consider themselves to be mothers. It is also unable to account for the children of women in prison who choose not to voluntarily disclose details of their children for fear of intervention which may lead to further disruption in their mothering and maternal relationships (Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). Equally, the study was conducted almost twenty years ago and therefore may not be representative of the current prison population. These statistics therefore could be significantly higher.

Children of mothers in prison

As with imprisoned mothers, reliable information and statistics relating to the children of prisoners are not collated and there is no statutory body specifically responsible for systematically co-ordinating and evaluating their needs (Brooks-Gordon and Bainham, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2005; Prison Reform Trust, 2006; Murray, 2007; Sheehan and Flynn, 2007; Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). Estimates indicate that between 125,000 and 200,000 children a year are affected by parental imprisonment (Ramsden, 1988; Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013) with over 17,000 of those affected by maternal imprisonment (PACT, 2011; Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Drawing on these estimates Jones and Wainaina-Wozna (2013:139) suggest that the number of children affected by having a parent in prison is higher than the number 'affected by family divorce, over three times the number of children in care, and over five times the number of children on the Child Protection Register'.

The Home Office (1997) census indicated that only 9% of the children with a mother in prison are cared for by their father and only 5% are able to remain in their own

homes (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). This figure is in comparison to 90% of the children of imprisoned fathers being cared for by their mothers (Home Office, 1991; Caddle and Crisp, 1997). The HM Prisons Inspectorate (1997) reported that 25% of children with a mother in prison were being cared for by their father or their mother's partner. The inclusion of the mother's partner in this statistic may account for the significant difference in statistics. Reports estimate that 4% of children experiencing maternal imprisonment will remain with their mothers in one of seven mother and baby units across the prison estate; 24% will be cared for by maternal grandparents; 29% will be cared for by other family members or friends, with a further 11-15% taken into local authority care (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 1997; SCIE, 2008). Caddle and Crisp (1997) indicate that the care of children with a mother in prison is 'unsettled', with a child experiencing an average of four carers throughout their mother's sentence. In a large scale pan European study exploring the impact of parental imprisonment Jones and Wainaina-Wozna (2013) acknowledge that both imprisoned mothers and fathers were missed equally by their children, particularly in England and Wales. However, with often less stable care arrangements, children may experience a greater disruption to their lives when a mother rather than a father is sent to prison.

In 2005 Murray (2005:442) argued that 'the effects of imprisonment on the children of prisoners are almost entirely neglected in academic research'. Exploration of the impact of parental imprisonment is minimal. However, there appears to be a growing interest in the subject area (Turliuc et al, 2012). Many existing studies exploring the impact of parental imprisonment tend to concentrate on the impact of a father in prison, with explorations of maternal imprisonment scarce (Myers et al, 1999). Equally, available research rarely incorporates interviews with the children

themselves (Murray and Farrington, 2005). Despite existing studies being methodologically weak (Turliuc et al, 2012), they consistently highlight the negative impact for a child of having a parent in prison. Research indicates that children can experience the separation as bereavement and may experience a range of difficulties including mental health and behavioural problems, anxiety, anger, confusion and depression (Murray and Farrington, 2005; Shami and Kockhal, 2008; Turliuc et al 2012; Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). The children of mothers in prison are considered to be one of the highest risk groups of children in our society. These children may be particularly susceptible to the negative impact of having a mother in prison as their mother may be their main and only parental figure (Myers et al, 1999).

Mothers in prison: a neglected population

'Women and men are different. Equal treatment of men and women does not result in equal outcomes'. (Home Office, 2007:3).

The needs of men and women in prison are, arguably, different (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2007). Women differ in their pathways to prison (Moloney et al, 2009) and are considered to be amongst the most marginalised women in our society (Loper and Tuerk, 2006; Fawcett Society, 2007; Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2007). Histories of trauma, violence and sexual victimisation typify the experiences of women in prison (Moloney et al, 2009). In comparison to both women who are not prisoners and to men prisoners, women in prison are more likely to be from oppressive backgrounds, be economically deprived and have been a looked after child, often excluded from school and with lower educational attainments. Furthermore, women in prison are more likely to have poorer employment histories

and experienced homelessness, with higher frequencies and severity of both mental and physical health needs (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Moloney et al, 2009).

In relation to both the general population and male prisoners, women in prison are also more likely to be parents (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Moloney et al, 2009). Mothers in prison are also more likely than fathers in prison to be the primary and sole carers of their children prior to imprisonment (Enos, 2001; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). For 85% of mothers in prison, imprisonment was their first significant separation from their children (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). Yet despite the fact that a large percentage of the women in prison are mothers, there remains a relative absence of empirical research focusing specifically on the woman prisoner who is also a mother (Weiss and Sekula, 2008). Little information is known about their specific characteristics; how they differ from non-mothers in prison or mothers in the general population (Loper, 2006). There is an almost complete absence of literature exploring the way in which mothers in prison understand and participate in mothering.

In comparison with the general population, women in prison become mothers at a much younger age and are more likely to be lone parents (Caddle and Crisp, 1997: Home Office, 2007). Around 30% of young women prisoners² are suggested to be mothers of dependent children (Women in Prison, 2012). Mothers in prison are also disproportionately from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to both the general public and the overall prison population (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). Ethnic minorities account for 25% (Berman, 2012) of the population of women in prison, in comparison

² In England and Wales and 'young offender' is defined as a person aged 17 or under, who has committed an offence (The National Archives, no date).

to 11% of the male prison population (Ministry of Justice, 2010) and 11.2% of the general population (aged 15+) (Berman, 2012).

The number of foreign national prisoners within England and Wales has progressively increased over the last two decades; from 8% of the total prison population in the mid-1990s to around 15% in 2011 (Prison Reform Trust, 2012) and then falling slightly to 13% in March 2012 (Berman, 2012). Owing to the increased likelihood of economic deprivation and distance from home, maintaining contact with children is even more problematic for these mothers (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). As with mothering in the community, mothering from prison is mediated by many factors, including social class, access to resources, family support and cultural factors (Enos, 2001). Although it is not the intention of this research to 'profile' mothers in prison, their 'mothering' cannot be considered in isolation from their socio-biographical contexts.

At only 5% of the overall prison population, women prisoners remain a minority (Jupp et al, 2000; Carless, 2006; Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2007). As a result, prison policies tend to be engineered towards the needs of male prisoners, with the gender specific issues arising from women's imprisonment often largely neglected (Carlen and Worrall, 2004; Kruttschnitt, 2005; Carless, 2006; Home Office, 2007; Fawcett Society, 2007; Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2007). The historical gap in provision for women prisoners has been the focus of much debate, attracting the attention of academics, practitioners and campaigners over many decades (Millie et al, 2003; Roberts and Gabor, 2004; Walmsley, 2005; Tombs and Jagger, 2006).

Despite increasing numbers of women being sent to prison there remains a lack of policy and programming that addresses their specific needs (Home Office, 2007).

Whilst there have been innovative attempts to gender sensitise criminal justice policy, their transient existence has compromised their success (Carlen, 2005). A growing reliance on the voluntary sector for the deliverance of prison programmes and facilities has also led to inconsistencies in provision across the estate. Although largely welcomed, more recent initiatives, such as 'Gender Specific Standards' (HM Prison Service, 2008) fail to build upon one of the primary recommendations of the Home Office (2007) Corston Report³. The report (2007:5) suggested that the government should aim to 'replace existing women's prisons with suitable, geographically dispersed, small multi-functional custodial centres' to protect family relationships during imprisonment. However, it is proposed that the cost of producing and maintaining such units is considered too expensive (Home Office, 2007).

As a consequence of women's comparatively low representation among prisoners, fewer women prisons exist. Only 13 of the 139 prisons in England and Wales are for women; only two of those are open prisons and only seven have mother and baby units. Women are therefore generally held further away from their homes than male prisoners, making visitation even more problematic (Women in Prison, 2012). On average a women is held 62 miles from her home (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). Women in Prison (2012) suggest that in 2009 over 750 women were held more than 100 miles from their homes. Women's prisons are often in remote geographical locations, creating many logistical difficulties in visitation. As a consequence, only half of

³ The Corston Report (2007) was a Home Office commissioned report of vulnerable women in the Criminal Justice System.

women in prison receive visits from their children throughout their sentence (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; *Women in Prison*, 2012). Strained relationships with carers and unsatisfactory visiting conditions have also been cited as difficulties in maintaining contact (Raikes and Lockwood, 2011). As discussed later within the narrative findings chapters of this thesis, it is the restricted contact, consequent disruption in maternal relationships and loss of mothering roles that are often cited as the most significant 'pains of imprisonment' (Goffman, 1969) for women.

Panopticism and motherhood

Introducing Foucault

Foucault's seminal work 'Discipline and Punish' (1979) has been described as 'the most celebrated attack on the 'science' of imprisonment' (Bosworth, 1999:14). Although many of Foucault's theorisations are considered to be incompatible with feminist ideas (Ramazanoglu, 1993), his work has been highly influential across several disciplines and subject areas within the social sciences (Bosworth, 1999; Sargiacomo, 2009). Foucault's theorisations are not the primary analytical framework within this thesis; however, they remain significant in two ways. Foucault's (1979) 'Discipline and Punish', remains influential in exploring disciplinary power and institutions both within and beyond prisons. His related concept of 'disciplinary gaze' (Foucault, 1976), combining both 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalising judgement' within disciplinary regimes is useful for exploring and understanding both prison institutions and the surveillance of 'mothering' from professionals such as health visitors, midwives, teachers and social workers (Peckover, 1998). Secondly, his later work relating to 'the self' and 'governmentality' is useful for understanding and exploring the way in which such mechanisms inform individual subjectivity and

identity. However, unlike Foucault's original concepts, this research will also maintain a focus upon agency and women's multi-faceted identities in resisting the 'pains of imprisonment' (Goffman, 1969). The section will continue by exploring Foucault's concepts further in order to consider the way in which power and knowledge may inform prisoners', women's and mothers' narratives.

Discipline and punish

Foucault noted a distinct shift in penal disciplinary measures from the late 18th to the early 19th century (Bosworth, 1999). Prior forms of punishment, focusing upon very public and 'theatrical painful mutilations or destructions of criminal bodies' (Sargiacomo, 2009:270), were replaced with a focus upon disciplining the soul (Bosworth, 1999: Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001; Sargiacomo, 2009). Foucault situates the shift in penal regimes within the rise of modernity and developments in scientific knowledge (Bosworth, 1999). Punishing the 'soul' represented a 'specific technique of power [and authoritative knowledge] addressed to dominate [and] supervise' (Sargiacomo, 2009:270). The intention of this penal shift was to replace punishment and retribution with reform (Bosworth, 1999). Questioning the purportedly humanitarian plight of reformers, Foucault (1979:82) argued that the shift represented a desire;

'not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body'.

Whilst the pre-occupation with reforming offenders' souls led to arguably less punitive conditions, it was characterised by intensive surveillance and [disproportionately] close discipline, particularly for women (Bosworth, 1999).

Foucault identified Bentham's Panopticon as being the architectural symbol of this modern form of discipline and punishment, typifying the 'relationship between power, knowledge and punishment' (Bosworth, 1999:16). The structural design of the Panopticon enabled the constant and complete surveillance of all prisoners from one central surveillance tower whilst the surveyor remained invisible to the prisoners (Taunton, 2008; Brivot and Genfron, 2011). Foucault argued that through the threat of constant visibility and fear of punishment prisoners were radically disempowered, producing 'docile bodies' (Lee-Bartky, 1988). Engaging in a process of self-regulation prisoners then become the agents of their own subjectification (Taunton, 2008).

Panopticism

Foucault adopted the concept of the Panopticon as a metaphor, which he termed 'panopticism', to represent society's power to survey, control and punish (Bosworth, 1999). For Foucault, disciplinary power throughout society is characterised by three mechanisms; hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination (Foucault, 1979:170). Hierarchical observation is distributed from a central position of authority; a head teacher, prison warden, nurse or government. This mechanism enables a;

'single gaze to supervise everything under the purview of the disciplinary power. It is enough that there be the possibility of continuous surveillance by those with greater power for hierarchical observation to be used functionally as a specific mechanism of coercion of those with less power' (Ells, 2003:215).

The second mechanism of 'normalising judgement' is central to disciplinary power. This technique 'compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises and excludes' (Foucault, 1979:183). These judgements transcend the institution of women's prisons

and are often embedded within many micro-practices underpinned by patriarchal notions of femininity and dominant ideologies of 'good mothering' (Carlen, 1983; Peckover, 1998:79; Bosworth, 1999).

Combining hierarchical observation and normalising judgement the third technique, 'examination', relates to surveillance in the form of a 'normalising gaze' (Ells, 2003:215). Foucault (1976:89) noted that surveillance was not only that of any observer, but of a professional authorised and supported by 'an institution ... endowed with the power of decision and intervention'. Individuals are therefore categorised, surveyed and controlled.

Introducing the concept of 'governmentality', Foucault furthered his ideas of discipline and punishment by exploring not only the techniques of power and the principles behind them but also the way in which this relates to and informs individual subjectivity and identity (Lemke, 2001; Miller, 2008; Taylor, 2011). The pinnacle of panoptical self-regulation is the internalisation of the authoritative knowledge and surveillance, to the extent that the individual assumes themselves to be 'the author of the ideology or discourse' (Bergstrom and Knights, 2006:354) dictated by expert knowledge. From this perspective subjectivity 'is not the activity of a free agent but a requirement or onus to invent and discipline the self, to become the self-governing subject' (Taylor, 2011:357). Feminist scholars have argued that authoritative knowledge generated about women's bodies, roles and identities 'serve[s] to regulate femininity and the very experience of what it is to be a woman' (Ussher, 2003:133), a mother and a prisoner. In relation to mothers in prison, disciplinary power is exercised in many forms, through a range of regimes and macro and micro

practices, both within and beyond the prison. Experts exercise their knowledge and power to judge women's compliance to desired degrees of 'normalcy', determining many aspects of their lives, sentences and mothering opportunities. These processes serve to observe, regulate and produce the 'objects of their gaze' (Foucault, 1976, 1979, 1984; Peckover, 1998:80).

Foucault, feminism and resistance

Scholars have criticised Foucault's construction of passive 'docile bodies', questioning the role of agency, autonomy, resistance and identity (Bosworth, 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001; Rowe, 2011). Whilst Foucault indicated that power always leads to resistance, critics have argued that little attention is given to resistance or opposition in his writings, particularly in relation to the surveillance and control of prisoners (Bosworth, 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001; Rowe, 2011). Criminologists have challenged Foucault's unilateral notion of power to suggest that power within prison flows from all directions and that power relationships are never entirely fixed and are rarely linear (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001). Based upon findings from an ethnographic study of male prisoners, Crewe (2007:256) suggests that overt resistance is uncommon but identifies a range of what he terms 'backstage resistance' strategies; whilst Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) highlight both dramatic, drastic and ordinary acts of resistance within prison power relations.

Mechanisms of resistance are also sometimes developed in the private sphere, away from the gaze of experts and professionals, enabling the construction of counter-hegemonic understandings (Fisher, 2008). Establishing a private sphere in prison may be more problematic as prisoners are constantly under a 'disciplinary gaze'. However, Rowe (2011:585) highlights 'private acts of resistance' of women in

prison that function as 'hidden transcripts of meaning that make the acts of resistance by the disempowered intelligible'. Rowe (2011:585) illustrates 'giving up smoking, weight loss, study and detoxification' as being such 'private acts of resistance'. Similarly, Rowe (2011) tells of the way in which women draw upon their status as adult women prior to imprisonment, largely through motherhood, to resist their infantilisation through imprisonment that serves to deny choice and agency. Similarly, Bosworth (1999:44) also argued that many of the women in prison who participated in her study 'clung to a fairly rigid traditional order', attaching great significance to the 'role and responsibilities of motherhood, even if they themselves did not have children'. Therefore, resistance may relate to 'directly sabotaging the instruments of ... dominance or by constituting their consciousness in a way that undermine[s] their subordination' (Lewin, 1994:336). Such negotiations of power relationships can often constitute significant moments that counter the pains of imprisonment (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001).

The impact of socio-cultural identities upon power relations and strategies of resistance in prisons has been highlighted as an absence in Foucault's understanding of the sociology of prisons (Bosworth, 1999). Foucault (1979:236) argued that upon entering prison, prisoners succumb to 'a re-coding of existence', setting aside pre-existing roles and identities. Yet, drawing on an importation model (Cressey and Irwin, 1962) criminologists have emphasised the influence of external identities in shaping individual responses to imprisonment (Medlicott, 2005; Butler, 2008; Phillips, 2008; Presser, 2008:2010, see Chapter Five for further discussion).

Whilst it has been argued that the pre-occupation of modernist punishment with women's gendered roles has led to more oppressive conditions for women in prison

(Carlen, 1983; Rowe, 2011), Bosworth (1999) and Rowe (2011) have argued that, in constructing themselves as active agents, women draw upon their gendered identity and roles in order to negotiate and resist the oppressive regimes of prison life (Bosworth, 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001; Rowe, 2011). Therefore, examining the role of key identities such as mothering in compounding or mitigating biographical disruption in the form of imprisonment is imperative in further exploring gendered understandings of imprisonment.

The regulation of mothering

Panoptical mechanisms and governmentality have infiltrated mothering both within and outside of prisons. The rise of modernity and reliance on authoritative knowledge have increased and intensified the hierarchical observations of mothering. The medicalisation of pregnancy and childbirth and the social regulation of mothering have led to increased routinised surveillance with the expectation and requirement of women to engage with 'expert knowledge' (Peckover, 1998; Miller, 2005). Mothers are assessed and compared with others to normalise and exclude (Peckover, 1998; Miller, 2005). Combining both hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, 'examination' is then a regime of surveillance carried out by experts and professionals, such as midwives, health visitors and social workers, doing the work of the state in order to encourage conformity. As noted by Ells (2003), these mechanisms are coercive as they differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' mothering in order to impose 'normalcy'. Those classified as 'bad mothers' are sanctioned by relevant disciplinary powers in order to ensure their compliance. As will be seen in Chapter Seven, the fear of losing and prospect of gaining further maternal contact for mothers in prison operates to safeguard their conformity to the penal regime.

Both within and beyond the gates of prison, the surveillance of mothering in society relies upon the domination and acceptance of expert knowledge of both child bearing and child rearing. Foucault characterises 'surveillance' as the 'process by which discourses define people's understandings of the world and encourages them to conform to particular behavioural norms' (Davies and Allen, 2007:366). Before birth or even conception of their child(ren), mothers are expected to engage with these expert discourses and regulate their behaviours and parenting skills (Fisher, 2008). These pervasive discourses bound within expert knowledge set the context within which women negotiate their role and identities as mothers (Murphy, 2004; Miller, 2005; Davies and Allen, 2007).

Deviant [m]others

Parents, more often mothers, are further scrutinised, ordered and controlled via an array of legislative changes conceived under the Conservative Government of the 1990s and developed and expanded within the New Labour Government (Peters, 2012). Whilst these measures were deemed to be supportive, critics have argued that they serve to survey and control through a fear of punishment (Peters, 2012) and potential maternal separation. Although many of the orders are civil orders, a breach can have significant consequences incorporating a fine, criminal conviction and imprisonment (Peters, 2012). Such mechanisms of parenting surveillance function to control and mould parents into those desired by governments.

This form of surveillance often falls disproportionately on economically, socially and racially marginalised mothers and those with the characteristics that tend to be at odds with dominant ideologies of the 'good mother' (as will be seen in the following section). The mechanisms of governmentality therefore seek to perpetuate an understanding of 'good mothering' that is inextricably linked to social class. This

excludes alternative understandings of mothering and motherhood and constructs an underclass of 'bad mothers'. This is particularly pertinent to exploring understandings of motherhood and mothering in the context of imprisoned women. Marginalised women are disproportionately represented within a prison system (Home Office, 2007) that has historically embraced and imposed normative ideas of femininity and dominant ideologies of 'good mothering' in the control, punishment and reform of women in prison (see Chapter Three for further discussion).

Through a fear of societal condemnation and authoritative intervention, mothering discourses operate to dominate and control. As noted by Davies and Allen (2007:366) 'discourses are not simply a way of describing the world. They are a major means by which social power is exercised'. From this perspective discourses function to condition what can and cannot be said or thought about mothering and, therefore, are a pre-requisite for behaviour and actions. However, whilst mothers draw upon dominant cultural and social discourses of 'good mothering' to construct their identity and role as a mother (Hays, 1996; see following section), strategies of resistance are also developed and women construct themselves as active agents. Mungham and Lazard (2009) have argued that whilst the recent explosion of parenting websites may illustrate individual women's lack of faith in their own knowledge, such fora may actually serve to resist dominant expert knowledge. Mungham and Lazard (2009; cited in Craig and O'Dell, no date; online) argue that by accessing such sites, women 'actively create and engage in lay knowledge networks, [giving] rise to alternative forms of embodied mothering' [and] opening up the possibility for 'collective action'. Whilst this may serve to refute Foucault's concept of subjectification, in that women are seen to challenge rather than embody dominant discourses, what constitutes conforming or resistance is multi-faceted and complex.

Therefore, understanding individuals as active agents, regardless of whether their actions are interpreted as compliance or resistance, provides a more nuanced understanding of power relations.

Making sense of motherhood

The subject of mothering has long been a central concern of feminist scholarship (O'Reilly, 2004:2008; D'Arcy, 2011). Feminist writers have aimed to deconstruct the meaning of motherhood and mothering. In her influential book 'The institution of motherhood', Rich (1976) distinguished between the two terms, motherhood and mothering. According to Rich (1976) 'motherhood' was an oppressive and controlling patriarchal institution; whilst 'mothering' on the other hand was local and referred to women's own understanding and constructions of mothering that could be empowering rather than oppressive. Rich's (1976) seminal work therefore facilitated an understanding of the 'double bind of the maternal issue'; both as a point of oppression and of strength for female identity (Braidotti, 2011:129). Hills-Collins (1994:49) has argued that for feminist theorising about motherhood to evolve, different voices needed to be heard and brought to the centre of feminist discourse. Therefore, whilst Rich (1976) was primarily concerned with patriarchy, Hills-Collins (1994:45) drew attention to the intersection of 'race, class and gender', suggesting that 'motherhood cannot be explored in isolation from its context'. A contextual understanding of motherhood is central to this study as women in prison are disproportionately from minority ethnic and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Hills-Collins (1994:49) suggests that in placing the knowledge of motherhood and mothering from subordinated groups at the centre of feminist theorising, 'new themes and angles of vision' are created. Therefore, this review will continue with an

exploration of both motherhood and mothering and consider the contribution to knowledge of this area from marginalised groups.

Becoming mother

The institution of motherhood and the dominant discourses and ideologies associated with it represent patterns of beliefs, ideas, opinions that shape the culture of mothering (Johnston and Swanson, 2006:509). Mothering ideologies develop from collective rather than individual understandings (Glenn, 1994) and are both produced and consumed by societies and individuals (Johnson and Swanson, 2006). These ideologies are both biologically defined and socially constructed within a historical, cultural and political context, providing scripts of expectations that shape women's identities as adult women and mothers (Hays, 1996; Miller, 2005; Johnston and Swanson, 2006; Kielty, 2008).

Historical dominant Western mothering ideologies have been 'rooted in assumptions of biological determinism' (Miller, 1998:10) with motherhood often considered as the 'supreme physical and emotional achievement in women's lives' (Phoenix and Woollett, 1991:13). Women's biological role in re-production has often been used to define female adult identities (Lewin, 1994; Miller, 2007) and 'regardless of whether or not women become mothers, motherhood has [historically] been central to the ways in which they are defined by others and to their perceptions of themselves' (Phoenix et al, 1991:12). Womanhood has therefore, historically, been inextricably linked to motherhood (Gillespie, 2003) with all women perceived as being or wanting to become mothers (Letherby, 1994).

Feminist theorisations of 'motherhood' and 'mothering' have explored the way in which the ideals of a patriarchal society perpetuate women's biological role in

reproduction and position in the domestic sphere through imposed motherhood (Rich, 1976; Silva, 1996). Historically, women were encouraged 'to bear as many children as possible, and their status and well-being often hinged on their ability to do so' (Hill, 2008:107). Women were 'faceless' enablers, 'creat[ing] a place and meaning for others through [their] own effacement' (Pidmore-Brown, 2008:26). However, changes in the labour market, contraception, fertility technologies, resources, law and the notion of 'family' have dramatically shifted women's relationship with motherhood and mothering (Bock, 1997; Hill, 2008; Pridmore-Brown, 2008). Essentialist notions of identity have been deconstructed to acknowledge the diversity of women's lives (D'Arcy et al, 2012). Listening to the voices of 'childfree' women, new narratives have emerged within which women are able to frame their mothering stories. Feminist scholars have challenged the assumption that motherhood is the only and most satisfying role for women (D'Arcy et al, 2012) to celebrate the meaningful lives of women outside of motherhood (Letherby and Williams, 1999). The identities of 'woman' and 'mother' have therefore been separated (Glenn, 1994; Miller, 2005). Becoming a mother is therefore 'no longer a matter of fate or of the natural order of things, it is not a matter of economic necessity' (Pridmore-Brown, 2008:25) but 'a matter of thought [and] judicious timing' (Pridmore-Brown, 2008:40). Increased choice and agency have served to alleviate some of the sex inequalities that had traditionally defined mothering. However, available feminist research highlights that mothering choices continue to be constrained by class and racial inequalities (Pridmore-Brown, 2008).

When considering the intersection of class and gender further, the assumption of imposed motherhood has been challenged and motherhood has been constructed as a powerful and enabling institution (Hills-Collins, 1994; Hill, 2008). Feminists have

argued that owing to the lack of socially acceptable alternatives to achieve the difficult to establish identity of woman (Baker; 1989; Pheonix et al, 1991) motherhood is often an identity actively sought by marginalised women. In commenting upon the intergenerational transmission of social exclusion, feminist scholars have noted that young girls growing up in disadvantaged households are more likely to forge their adult identities through early motherhood than their more advantaged peers (Bottlong et al, 1998; Hobcraft and Kiernany, 2001; Berthound et al, 2003). For marginalised women 'motherhood' can, therefore, often be recognised and welcomed as 'a potentially significant symbol of adult status within society, associated with feelings of increased personal maturity' (Mitchell and Green, 2002:14; Lewin, 1994). Although not specifically focusing on mothering, Skeggs (1997:56) in addition illustrates that working class women also actively invest in caring roles, developing and monitoring a 'caring self' in order to be 'recognised as respectable, responsible and mature'. However, Skeggs (1997:56) argues that 'the caring subject is constructed by the conflation of caring 'for' with caring 'about', in which the practices of caring become inseparable from the personal dispositions. From this perspective an enforced relationality emerges. Therefore, although Pidmore-Brown (2008:25) suggests that motherhood is no longer 'a social badge signalling full adulthood', this is highly contingent on social class and the sense of choice that this enables.

Exploring the intersection of ethnicity with gender and class, Hills-Collins (1994) demonstrated that, for Black women, motherhood can be a powerful rather than oppressive institution in which the act and meaning of 'mothering' is both social and political. Hills (2008:113) also notes that 'motherhood among Black women was often seen as a route to achieving adulthood, [as] the concept of legitimacy, which

was based mostly on property and inheritance rights had [historically] less relevance to them'. Hills (2008:113) illustrates that mothering for Black women often 'added further credence to the idea that slavery had neither stripped Black families of their cultural heritage nor completely defined them'. Drawing on a study with Caribbean mothers in the UK, Reynolds (2005) has argued that mothering can be a form of resistance to societal racism, challenging dominant ideologies that serve to characterise their familial identities and experiences as inferior. However, Hills-Collins (1994), Reynolds (2005) and Hills (2008) all indicate that prevalent constructs of Black mothers as 'super mothers' or 'valiant' can be disabling, often constraining the voicing of their own needs. Therefore, available literature highlights that women's relationship with motherhood is both constraining and enabling. These relationships are dynamic and shift over time and space and are bound by many factors including ethnicity, age and class.

Being mother

Central to women's mothering identity is the role of mothering (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). As introduced earlier in this chapter, pervasive discourses set the context within which women negotiate their identities as 'good' mothers (Murphy, 2004). Feminist scholarship recognises that such discourses are historically, culturally, socially and politically bound (Johnston and Swanson, 2004). 'Intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) is often identified as the dominant mothering ideology available to Western women (Johnson and Swanson, 2006; Vallido et al, 2010). It is considered to be a selfless state, 'child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive and financially expensive' (Hays, 1996:8). Feminists have challenged this dominant ideology, suggesting that it is founded upon ideals of the patriarchal society and privileges white, middle class, dual-parent, heterosexual idealisations of

'normative' mothering (Pheonix et al, 1991; Glenn, 1994; Gorman and Fritzsche, 2002; Bemiller, 2010). By exploring the specific context in which mothering ideologies are produced, feminist scholars have argued that such ideologies often support the most powerful groups, excluding marginalised women from what is considered 'normative mothering' (Glenn, 1994; Miller, 1998). This creates a hierarchy of mothering (DiLapi, 1989) that serves to other and stigmatise marginalised women, constructing them as less appropriate mothers.

Mothering ideologies are dynamic and shift over time, based upon political, social and cultural changing discourses. These changes facilitate greater choices relating to how women mother, providing differing and often competing and contrasting mothering ideologies (Johnson and Swanson, 2006) within which women are able to negotiate their identities and roles as mothers. Not only do mothering ideologies shape women's roles as mothers, but women can shape their mothering ideology in order to accommodate the reality of their changing circumstances (Johnson and Swanson, 2006). Motherhood and mothering are therefore 'irresolvably messy' (Kinser, 2008:123) and inherently relational. The meaning attached to motherhood and mothering is continuously being shaped, emerging within interpersonal relations which all serve to strengthen and undermine each other (Kinser, 2008). Therefore, to offer a more nuanced exploration of the meaning of motherhood, greater attention needs to be paid to listening to women's individual and collective stories (O'Reilly, 2008).

Much of the research exploring the negotiation of women's roles and identities as 'good mothers' relates to mothering and paid employment. Mothers often account for their decisions about paid employment in relation to 'what they think they 'should' be

doing' (Christopher, 2012:75) and the way in which they might be considered by others, often informed by shifting cultural and political ideologies. Traditional mothering ideologies prescribe that mothers should not to be in paid work outside of the home (Johnston and Swanson, 2003). This dominant ideology has significant racial and class biases with those who can afford to stay (work) at home being seen as 'good' mothers, unlike those who, for financial reasons, have to dedicate themselves to work outside the home. Further highlighting the contradiction with dominant good mothering ideologies Johnston and Swanson (2003:22) suggest;

'economically or financially privileged mothers continue to hire working-class women, and [Women of Color], who are often mothers themselves' and therefore the construction of motherhood, particularly in the form of dominant ideologies, may have little correspondence to the lived social realities of mothers'.

Berry and Eigenberg (2003:105) note that marginalised women can 'feel particularly duped when they try to assert traditional mothering behaviour only to find out that it was never intended to apply to them'. Listening to the voices of marginalised mothers has drawn attention to the way in which women develop distinctly different systems of mothering which are often related to shared resources shaped by race and class (Hill, 2008).

Changing political discourses have instigated shifts in dominant Western mothering ideologies. This was most recently illustrated in 1997 with the introduction of the New Labour government. 'Intensive mothering', characterised by the 'stay at home mum', was challenged by the 'working mother' a role which incorporated financial provision into 'good mothering'. This transition brought about a 'mothering war' in which

competing ideologies of the 'Superwoman' (working mother) and the 'Earth Mother' (stay at home mum) were set in opposition (Johnston and Swanson, 2003). Commenting on the consequent changes Christopher (2012) has identified 'extensive mothering' as an emerging ideology. Extensive mothering constructs the mothering role as being 'in charge' of, but not necessarily performing, all mothering tasks. Christopher (2012:74) suggests that 'extensive mothering' is a way in which 'mothers respond to the cultural constructions of the ideal mother and worker and reframe how employment fits into notions of good mothering in their lives'. Similarly, the term 'mumpreneur' (Duberley and Carrigan, 2012) has recently emerged in relation to women who become self-employed in order to combine both the 'care work' and the 'financial provision' associated with contemporary conceptions of mothering (Ekinsmyth, 2011; Duberley and Carrigan, 2012). This is a term often celebrated and associated with women 'having it all'; however, it equally often relates to women 'doing it all'.

Whilst research illustrates that women's relationship with mothering and employment is diverse and fluid, it also highlights that it is inextricably linked to socio-economic culture. For low-income mothers financial provision is often constructed as central to 'good mothering' (Hattery, 2001; Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Johnson and Swanson, 2006), yet this ideology frequently emerges from a position of restricted choices and fails to consider the potential impact on the well-being of the mothers or their children. Middle-class women often account for their employment status in relation to their contentment beyond motherhood; however, this contentment is often told of in relation to their children's well-being, i.e 'a happy mother makes a happy child'.

Therefore, whilst women account for their employment in differing ways, the needs of the child are often emphasised with the mother's needs and well-being ignored.

Research in relation to economic migration has illustrated that mothers can be separated from their children for sustained periods of time (Schen, 2005). Cultural mothering ideologies, positioning the mothering role as central to economic provision, are often considered to be protective factors for the mothering identity. As illustrated by Reynolds (2005), race makes a considerable difference to women's experiences of mothering. Reynolds (2005) goes on to argue that, unlike for white women, labour has historically formed an intrinsic element of Black women's identity. Dominant narratives of mothers separated from their children through economic migration often centre on poverty reduction (Jones et al, 2009). This dominant narrative perpetuates the notion of Black women migrant workers as being 'Super Mums' (Reynolds, 1997; Hills-Collins, 2002). However, whilst economic migration may provide opportunities to fulfil familial responsibilities, it can remain distressing for both mother and child (Hohn, 1996; Hondagreu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Miranda et al, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, 2005). Whilst financial provision may provide an acceptable means of accounting for separation, it may also mask other potential stories of migration including escape and refuge from domestic violence and crime (Jones et al, 2009). Failure to recognise, understand and respect such differences may serve to further marginalise and 'other' some mothers. Schen (2005) has noted that the way in which mothers construct their understanding of maternal separation varies dependent upon the circumstances surrounding the separation, the anticipated length of the separation and their control over the decision to separate

and that, therefore, a more nuanced approach to listening to mothering stories is required.

Feminist research has also aimed to deconstruct family ideologies in their exploration of 'lone mothers'. Public and political discourses construct 'lone motherhood' as a social problem and inherently bad, with negative consequences for mother, child and society. Silva (1996:3) challenges the term 'lone mothering', arguing that it implies a sense of 'abandonment and loneliness, negating the rich networks of support within which many women mother outside of marriage or heterosexual relationships'. However, a preferable term is not provided. Research indicates that 'lone' mothers construct positive mothering identities; yet, again these negotiations take place in specific contexts. Research with both 'low income unmarried mothers' (Edin and Kefalas, 2005) and 'professional older mothers' (Pidmore-Brown, 2008) suggests lone mothering is often a choice. Women often chose to enter mothering alone rather than have a child within an unsatisfactory relationship or with an unreliable or irresponsible partner. Both studies indicate that women engage with lone motherhood as a way of adding meaning to their lives. However, Edin and Kefalas's (2005) study suggests that, owing to limited available resources, motherhood is a means of negotiating an identity as woman. However, the women in Pidmore-Brown's (2005) research stressed choice and autonomy and their right to have a child as older single women. Therefore, availability of options for these women differed greatly.

Disrupted mothering

Progressive feminist theorising has served to incorporate understandings of marginalised mothering (D'Arcy, 2011; Bemiller, 2012:170) and the way in which

mothering ideologies are negotiated and accommodated into the reality of women's everyday lives. The literature has indicated women's ability to assert agency in order to negotiate a mothering identity that is unique to them within their own socioeconomic and cultural frameworks. Appreciating the complexities and intricacies of women's lives and the multiplicity of interweaving identities may indicate that there are as many mothering ideologies as there are mothers. However, there remains a relative absence of literature exploring what mothering means to women when their everyday lives and their capacity to mother become disrupted.

Vallido (2010:1436) suggests that the concept of disrupted mothering was first identified by Jackson (2000) (cited in Vallido et al, 2010:1436) who claimed that 'women experience guilt and distress when their mothering is disrupted'. Despite this recognition the concept remains relatively unexplored. Vallido (2010:1436) suggests that disrupted mothering occurs when a 'woman perceives that her maternal life has become disordered'. Women express distress accompanied with guilt, failure, shame and role strain when their capacity to 'mother' is incompatible with the expectations of their mothering role (Ciambrone, 2001; Vallido, 2007; Kielty, 2008; Harris, 2009).

As with the origins of biographical disruption (see Chapter Three), much of the available literature exploring disrupted mothering is situated in the context of illness. Available literature indicates that women are able to re-negotiate their role as mother and to re-construct a positive mothering identity. These accounts are primarily embedded in the dominant ideologies of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), highlighting self-sacrifice and the prioritisation of their children's needs. Consistent with Carricaburu and Pierret's (1995) concept of biographical reinforcement, mothering identities are not only re-constructed but are also reinforced when illness occurs. Vallido et al (2010:1440) highlight that the role of mother affords women with

a chronic illness 'a meaningful identity, a sense of safety and belonging' and a motivation for survival. Similarly, Ciambrone (2001) found that the diagnosis of HIV reinforced mothers' sense of mortality and served as the impetus to change their lifestyle for the sake of their children's well-being. Ciambrone (2001) and Harris (2009) suggest that illnesses such as HIV and Hepatitis C may be experienced as biographically congruent; an expected consequence of their lifestyle, reinforcing an identity as drug user. Despite the women being able to incorporate their illness into their biographies, the ensuing separation from their children was constructed as more disruptive.

Ciambrone (2001) found that the women's narratives were informed by their histories, with HIV being evaluated as more problematic for women with more positive pre-diagnosis life situations. For women with a history of crises including substance abuse, violence and poverty, HIV was not the most disruptive event of their lives or assault upon their mothering. Jones (2009) notes that for Caribbean mothers with HIV, fears of disclosure often contributed to psychological trauma and other conditions, including depression, guilt and anxiety. Jones (2009:162) notes that;

'there are strong social, economic and cultural factors that exert pressure on [Caribbean] mothers to breastfeed their babies. The risk of infecting the baby through breastfeeding is high, however not breastfeeding one's baby may be seen as evidence of HIV and may inadvertently reveal the woman's status. In some instances, the fear of disclosure is so great that the woman convinces herself that breastfeeding does not carry any risk to the child or that the risk is offset by the treatment she is receiving.'

Social and individual responses to conditions and illnesses can differ greatly (Frank, 1995). Stigmatised illnesses such as HIV and mental illness often evoke a great sense of shame and can therefore be more threatening to a woman's mothering identity (Vallido et al, 2010). For some women the condition is therefore denied which in turn can lead to the woman suffering alone (Jones et al, 2009).

Much of the literature relating to disrupted mothering starts with the underlying assumption that a positive mothering identity is present and equally available to all. Consequently, much of the literature is located within a grand narrative of tragedy and struggle to maintain the mothering role and identity. However, acquiring a positive mothering identity is not as easily accessible or sustainable to all. For some women the re-negotiation of their mothering role is neither possible nor desirable. Ciambrone (2001) found that mothers with HIV relinquished their mothering role but maintained a positive mothering identity by evaluating the separation as in the best interests of their children. Similarly, dominant ideologies of 'intensive mothering' for American homeless women supported separation from their children (Hoffman and Rosenheck, 2001; Cowal et al, 2002). Exploring the meaning of motherhood for non-resident mothers, both Kielty (2008) and Bemiller (2010) found that women's relationships with dominant ideologies shifted between acceptance and resistance dependent upon the women's agency in the child residence decisions and their ability to draw on other positive sources of identity. Understanding the wider social context of maternal separation is therefore imperative as maternal separation is often involuntary and accompanied by extreme hardship (Schen, 2005). As discussed by Miller (1998) and O'Reilly (2008), it is also important not only to deconstruct dominant ideologies but also to listen to individual women's stories in order to

understand how they negotiate and adapt mothering ideologies within the reality of their own lives.

This literature has identified that the role and identity of motherhood is particularly salient for marginalised women. Women's agency in resisting and accommodating dominant mothering ideologies within this role has also been identified. Drawing upon available literature I have illustrated that an understanding of the situational context of mothering is crucial to the exploration of the meaning of motherhood. The following section will continue by exploring guilt, shame and motherhood before going on to consider disrupted mothering in the context of imprisonment.

A mother's lot: guilt, shame and mothering in prison

Owing to the individual, social and cultural investment in the role of mothering, motherhood is an area fraught with emotions of guilt and shame (Barnes, 1997; Vallido et al, 2010; Longhurst et al, 2012). When mothering is disrupted and women become unable to care for their children, guilt and shame can be particularly problematic. Teroni and Deonna (2008:726) aim to differentiate between guilt and shame to suggest that 'guilt is the emotion of internal sanction [whilst] shame [is] the emotion of social sanction'. This differentiation is echoed in much of the available literature (see Probyn, 2005; Longhurst, 2012). Guilt is often associated with self-condemnation, incorporating reactions of remorse and regret (Probyn, 2005; Longhurst, 2012). Whilst guilt often brings about negative thoughts about the self, these thoughts are considered to be fleeting and momentary with the individual's self-concept remaining unharmed (Tangey, 2002). Guilt is often associated with the ethics of care and orientated towards others and a desire not to cause harm or upset (Boney, 2002; Rortveit, 2010 Longhurst, 2012). However, guilt is often considered to

be instigated by a specific action that can be easily appeased with reparation and is therefore often perceived as less painful and traumatic than shame. Shame is considered to be more devastating, moving beyond negative evaluations of the individual act to incorporate negative evaluations of the whole self (Boney, 2002). Shame is suggested to incorporate 'painful self-scrutiny and feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness which renders the individual feeling diminished or defective' (Probyn, 2005:45).

For women in prison who are constantly reminded of and encouraged to reflect upon the harms caused by their specific actions and behaviour, accompanied with limited opportunity for reparation, guilt may not so easily be 'smoothed away' (Longhurst, 2012:297). This in turn reinforces mothers' negative evaluation of themselves and circumstances, making both shame and guilt on-going (Boney, 2002). Such feelings of guilt and shame may impede the narrative construction and re-construction of women's identities as mothers in the face of biographical disruption (as will be seen in Chapter Nine).

Motherhood, punishment and prison

Several writers have argued that the normative ideas of femininity that are synonymous with motherhood are central in the control, punishment and reform of women in prison (Carlen, 1983:2005; Bosworth, 1999; Carlen and Worrall, 2004). Early criminology adopted an essentialist position to explain criminality in terms of biology, with criminals considered to be inferior through anatomy and biology (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 1996). Women's reproductive systems were believed likely to provoke disturbances of behaviour and personality (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 1996) with menstruation, pregnancy, post-partum and menopause viewed

as 'physical diseases and intellectual liabilities' (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 1996:95). Women offenders were therefore considered to be worse than their male counterparts (Snider, 2003). Contradicting the ideals of early nineteenth century femininity, women lawbreakers were viewed as threatening to society (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 1996) and therefore deserving of punishment which was more often harsher than that reserved for men offenders.

Concerned about women's ability to cope with the harsh prison environment, early reformists served to deconstruct the notion that women lawbreakers were inherently 'bad' by constituting them as 'pitiful fallen creature[s]... [in need of rescuing] from sin and degradation' (Snider, 2003:359). Women offenders were then considered to be in need of reform rather than punishment in order to;

'civilise, socialise and rescue [them], teaching the habits of virtue and piety and the skills of house-keeping and child care, reclaiming her for [her] God-given role as wife and mother' (Snider, 2003:358).

Feminist criminologists have repeatedly argued that the pervading images of normal femininity, combined with the structural restraints of imprisonment, have a negative and disruptive impact on women prisoners' sense of self. However, as noted by Bosworth (1999:2003) and Rowe (2011), research exploring women prisoners' own understanding of their identities is largely absent. Focusing on agency and resistance, Bosworth (1999) argued that women in prison draw upon their roles as wives, girlfriends and mothers to manage and resist the painful meaning of imprisonment and to maintain a positive sense of self. Similarly, Shamai and Kochal (2008) maintain that motherhood remains a motive for survival in prison, offering hope and a mechanism for coping and is an identity that women fight vigorously to retain. However, Carlen (2005) asserts that it is women's already fractured sense of

self that often leads to their imprisonment and, therefore, their ability to draw on positive identities from outside prison may be limited and potential resistance diminished. Consideration of the construction and reconstruction of identity of mothers in prison within the context of their lives prior to imprisonment is therefore necessary.

Women in prison are often trapped in contradictory gender ideologies and expectations (Carlen and Worrall, 2004). Prison policy and programmes often encourage the construction of an autonomous mother, who is able to be assertive and independent in her mothering role; yet focusing on women's victimisation, simultaneously constructs them as less confident, less autonomous, less rational and more passive than men (Carlen and Worrall, 2004). This reinforces a sense that women in prison need to be looked after and can often fail to prepare or equip women for the reality of life on the outside (Carlen, 1983; 2005).

The relationship between women's victimisation and offending has been well documented and debated throughout feminist criminology. Women lawbreakers have been studied as victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, sexism, racism, heterosexism and classism. The significant and disproportionate levels of mental illness of women in prison have also been explored. The discourse of the woman offender as victim is central to contemporary reform agendas (Snider, 2003). In her report on vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, Baroness Corston (2007) argued that victims of violence, abuse and exploitation are over represented within the women's prison population and that women's penal regimes are not equipped to deal with women's complex and multiple needs. The report recommended a restructuring of the whole of the women's estate. Snider (2003) has noted that such discourses have gained acceptance far beyond academe, providing a lens with

which the woman offender is viewed by experts and professionals and by themselves. Whilst victimisation discourses can have a pathologising and disempowering impact, they also provide a useful means to resist demonising identities, manage shame and guilt and reaffirm more positive identities.

Summary

Within this chapter I have highlighted and reviewed the body of research relating to motherhood and imprisonment. Noting the distinct lack of research that explores women prisoners' own constructions of identity, particularly relating to that of mother, I have drawn on wider research relating to the negotiation of mothering identities. In reviewing the literature I have illustrated that women's relationship with mothering and motherhood has shifted historically and culturally over time and space, yet remains largely shaped by class and race. Introducing the concept of disrupted mothering, I have also illustrated that women negotiate and re-construct their identities as good mothers in the face of biographical disruption. Within this chapter I have also highlighted that women's understandings of mothering are informed by the interaction between individual agency and dominant discourses. The discourses available to women in prison can be limited, incorporating those of the 'good mother' and the competing and often contradictory discourses of victimisation. These dominant discourses can be both enabling and constraining in the reconstructed biographies of mothers in prison.

Chapter Three

Identity crisis: developing a feminist framework to explore motherhood and imprisonment

Introduction

When the anticipated biographical trajectory is disrupted 'the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpin them' are disrupted and identities are threatened (Bury, 1982:169). Exploring the concept of 'imprisonment' as biographical disruption this thesis aims to consider the impact of imprisonment upon the mothering identity of women in prison. This chapter builds upon the dominant ideologies of 'good mothering' (Glenn et al, 1996) and discourses associated with the woman offender, as discussed in Chapter Two, in order to expand the theoretical framework of biographical disruption (Bury, 1982). In doing so a conceptual framework is developed to enable the exploration of the mothering identities of women in prison. This chapter will start by considering the feminist principles of this study and the way in which these have informed understandings of identity and the adoption of a relational approach to the narrative construction of identity.

Philosophical framework

A feminist endeavour?

Feminism(s) is a broad and a diverse school of research covering a wide range of philosophical perspectives and methodological approaches (Francis, 2002). Consequently, it is often difficult to define feminist research and what it means to be a feminist. This sentiment is highlighted by West and Marcus (1982:219, cited in Chesney-Lind, 2012:54);

'I myself have never been able to find out what feminism is, I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute'.

Despite the ambiguity and apparent diversity, feminist researchers have traditionally been united in their aim to raise awareness of problems specific to women (King and Wincup, 2000). Feminist research is therefore considered to be research 'for' women and not simply 'about' women and in its purpose is committed to serving the interests of women and generating societal change (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). Feminist research is therefore based on the assumption that 'females are universally (albeit in diverse ways and to varying extents) disadvantaged or oppressed due to their sex, and that this situation should be challenged' (Francis, 2002:42). More recently theoretical stances have emerged to threaten this traditional feminist position (Francis, 2002). Post-modernist rejections of the grand claims to truth that underpin the emancipatory element of feminist research, accompanied with the deconstruction of gender and the apparent death of patriarchy (MacInnes, 1998, cited in Francis, 2002), have, according to some, rendered the feminist endeavour obsolete (Francis, 2002). While the epistemological tensions between feminism and post-modernism will be addressed later within this chapter, I wish at this stage to present my rationale for adopting a feminist perspective within this study. The rationale is twofold; firstly, whilst I acknowledge 'gender' to be a social construction, I maintain that patriarchy continues to impact upon women's lives, albeit it in increasingly complex and changing ways. I draw particular influence from Black feminists' theorisation of motherhood, including the work of Hill-Collins (1994; 2002) and feminist criminologists such as Smart (1995), Carlen (1983 and 2005) and Chesney-Lind (2012) who highlight the intersection of social class and gender in women prisoners'

oppression. As noted in Chapter Two, my position recognises that women continue to be increasingly marginalised within the criminal justice system and women in prison are disproportionately from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The contribution of a feminist perspective within this study therefore remains particularly pertinent. Equally, whilst I accept that women have increasing roles and identities available to them both inside and outside of motherhood, I would suggest that women continue to be defined by their parental status in ways that men are not (Phoenix et al, 1991; Letherby, 1994; D’Arcy, 2011). D’Arcy et al (2011) draw upon the appointment of Australia’s first woman Prime Minister in 2010 to articulate this point, suggesting that:

‘Julia Gillard (Prime Minister) was criticized for not being a mother (she was called ‘deliberately barren’), along with claims that she was being manipulated by the faceless men of her party’.

Equally, whilst dominant neo-liberal philosophies, based upon the modernist concept of the reflexive agent, purportedly encourage parenting free from oppressive rules and rigidity (Fisher, 2008), they also serve to position ‘individuals as solely responsible for themselves, and individual mothers solely responsible for their children’ (D’Arcy et al, 2011:35). Consequently, women remain both judged by and blamed for their mothering, in a way that fathers are not.

Secondly, my understanding that mothers in prison continue to be discriminated against is founded upon the assumption that such disadvantages ought to be challenged. This poses difficulties for post-modernist feminists who are sceptical of such truth discourses. However, despite recognising such tensions, as noted by Francis (2002:49), ‘the project of bettering people’s lives seems to remain a valid

and essential one' and such a project needs to start with the subjectivities of women. As noted in Chapter Two, it therefore remains important to listen to the stories of those women at the margins.

As discussed earlier within this chapter, 'feminist researchers are concerned with issues of voicelessness, invisibility and marginalisation and with raising questions that challenge dominant constructions of gender' (Avis and Turner, 1996:151). A central concern of feminist scholars theorising about motherhood is to challenge dominant ideologies of motherhood and to legitimise marginalised mothering (O'Reilly, 2008). However, this study aims to further this position not only by attending to marginalised mothering but also by considering motherhood in extreme circumstances that may serve as a direct threat to women's mothering identity.

As noted later within this chapter, much theorising about motherhood and mothering, no matter how diverse, rarely considers maternal separation, particularly in the context of imprisonment. This may relate to the lack of a coherent fit with any particular discipline. Whilst feminist scholars' theorisations of motherhood may consider motherhood and imprisonment a criminological endeavour, criminologists remain largely focused upon the causes of and cures for crime (Smart, 1995) and therefore motherhood and imprisonment are often not their primary focus.

Having outlined the rationale for adopting a feminist perspective within this project I will continue by addressing the epistemological and methodological implications of this choice before going on to define myself as a 'feminist narrative researcher'.

Conceptual framework

As indicated in the first section of this chapter, feminist researchers refute the existence of a distinct, specific and unique feminist method or methodology (Stanley

and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1996; Bosworth, 1999; Comack, 1999). However, feminist research is primarily concerned with knowledge and power (Bosworth, 1999) and 'all feminists are concerned with how knowledge which is helpful to women can best be produced and with what such knowledge should be like' (Cain, 1993:73). Therefore, feminist research is primarily concerned with and informed by epistemological questions and issues. Such questions serve to make sense of the research process and to underpin the methodological choices adopted (see Crotty, 1998). Different and often opposing feminist epistemological positions have been developed (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1996; Comack, 1999). Despite tensions emerging within these positions many feminist scholars (such as Stanley and Wise, 1990; Comack, 1999; Francis, 2002) embrace these tensions, suggesting that they reflect the conflicting yet legitimate needs of women (Harding, 1996).

In order to consider the ontological and epistemological positions of the study I revisited some of the tensions referred to in the earlier section of this chapter; I considered the differing claims to knowledge and how and why I rejected some in favour of others. I therefore refer back to Chapter One in order to consider the research aims and objectives. Primarily concerned with mothering and mothering identity, I framed my exploration around what I 'know' about mothering and how I recognise this 'knowledge'.

As will be discussed later within this chapter, this study rejects stable and fixed essentialist categorical approaches to identity in favour of a notion of self that is multi-dimensional (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and 'constructed and reconstructed in the context of internal and external relations of time and place and power that are

constantly in flux' (Somers, 1994:621). In doing so this study also assumes that motherhood and the meaning of motherhood are fluid; historically, culturally and politically bound. This understanding enabled the rejection of objectivism.

Objectivism asserts that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness (Crotty, 1998) invoking a positivistic theoretical perspective. From this position the 'truth' or 'reality' of an object is considered to be static and inherent within the object (Crotty, 1998). This perspective evokes essentialist understandings of self that centre on the notion of a core self that pre-exists society (Miller, 2005; Fisher, 2008). This approach was problematic for this study as the grand truth claims of objectivism assumed the sociological subject to be a man. This, consequently, excluded the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or agents of knowledge' (Harding, 1987:3). As illustrated in Chapters Two and Three in relation to prison policy and traditional androcentric criminological research, the viewpoint of men is the norm with women marginalised (Bosworth, 1999; Rafter and Heidensohn, 2002). Calling for more studies 'on' women, feminist empiricism countered this problem but maintained an objectivist position. Whilst challenging knowledge claims that are based largely on an androcentric research subject (Letherby et al, 2013), feminist empiricists argued that objectivity can be achieved by 'stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry' (Harding, 1986:24). The focus of feminist empiricism was therefore 'challenging the way that methods are used rather than challenging the methods themselves' (Letherby et al, 2013:84).

From an objectivist perspective mothering identity would continue to be viewed as a fixed entity that is inherent within the individual. Such an understanding would not accommodate the influence of external discourses and ideologies or changing relations and the constitution and re-constitution of identity over time. As will become clearer later within this chapter, this study required an understanding of identity and sense of self that revealed the fluidity of identity and the way in which selves are both constituted and re-constituted through biographical disruption (Miller, 2005).

An alternative approach is provided by a post-structuralist framework, which considers identity largely as the 'effect of discourse, a product or construct of the ambiguous and unstable nature of language' (Elliott, 2003:6). Primarily drawing on the work of Foucault, post-structuralism defines discourses as 'socially and culturally produced patterns of language, belief and practice' (Francis, 2002:45). This epistemology has been largely influential within feminist theories and the deconstruction and re-construction of gendered discourses (Thompson, 2010). Post-structuralist feminism asserts that 'biological differences do not have inherent 'natural or social meanings... but are produced within a range of conflicting discourses' (Weedon, 1987:82, cited in Thompson, 2010:120). Power is central to post-structuralist feminism and, as was seen in Chapter Two, research from this perspective has highlighted the way in which 'authoritative knowledge' (Miller, 2005; Thompson, 2010) has impacted upon women's expectations and experiences of motherhood and consequently their knowledge of themselves as women and mothers. Similarly, as will be explored in further detail later within this chapter, feminist criminology has drawn great attention to the way in which such

constructions have served to disadvantage and discriminate against women throughout the criminal justice system (Fegan, 1999).

Whilst the post-structuralist perspective recognises the 'fragility' of identity, this approach has been interpreted as negating concepts of agency and resistance that have been central to much feminist theorising of identity (Bosworth, 1999; Rowe, 2011). This research recognises that dominant ideologies and discourses contribute to women's understanding of themselves as women and as mothers, yet the notion that such ideologies and discourses are internalised uncritically is rejected (Fisher, 2008). Therefore, an approach to motherhood and mothering identity that acknowledges the fluidity of identity whilst incorporating notions of agency was required.

Social constructionist understandings of identity start from a different position. Social constructionism postulates that the world is not static and that objects or events do not have permanent meanings which we respond to but that human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). From this perspective the fluidity of motherhood and mothering identity is recognised. Equally, constructionism recognises the subject as active in the construction of reality but that this reality is not inherent within the subject or the object but is constructed in relation to significant others, culture, locality and history (Freshwater and Rolfe, 2004).

The classic work of Mead (1934) and Goffman (1969) in their exploration of the self adopts a constructionist perspective. Mead rejected the objectivist position, which

assumes that the mind and self are pre-existent to engagement with society, in order to suggest that the self emerges through language in relation to others (Miller, 2005). Goffman (1969) similarly explored the concept of the self as a performance to suggest that identity is socially constructed. However, the meaning of the 'social' is adopted in differing ways. Mead (1934) was interested in the way in which the 'social' related to the notion that our sense of self is established from our engagement with others. However, as noted by Elliott (2001), by prioritising the 'social' self, autonomy and internal desires and needs are negated (Haynes, 2006). Goffman (1969:245) suggested that 'the self is a product of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it'. Hochschild (1983) highlighted the notion of 'true' and 'false' selves. However, as noted by Pattman et al (1998:135), this 'associates the private [true] self with authenticity and stability and the public [false] self, in contrast, with artificiality, peer pressure and external manipulation'. Such an understanding assumes that the construction of private [true] self is more valid than the construction of the [false] public self.

Post-modernism embraces the concept of 'self' as a 'reflexive construction' (De Fina, 2003) with the potential for multiple and ever evolving equally valid selves (Fisher, 2008); however, it refutes any sense of a coherent self (Francis, 2002). Post-modernism serves to deconstruct grand narratives and truth claims. Although I do not assume a pre-existent continuous self, I assume that there are certain elements of our identity and sense of self that remain (Francis, 2002) or that as individuals we choose to present as constant. However, the notion of the self as both fluid and fixed appears contradictory. Therefore, I concur with Francis (2002:48) who acknowledges that whilst 'people do take up different subject positions in different interactive

environments, and also that people are positioned differently in different discourses, [they may also have] relatively consistent opinions or beliefs’.

To negotiate these epistemological contradictions I draw upon the concept of ‘the narrated subject’. Doucet and Mauthner (2008:402) suggest that the narrated subject is the ‘impasse’ through these tensions, allowing for ‘a culturally constructed subject [that] can also be a critical subject’ (Fraser, 1995:71). This position may be viewed by some as ‘epistemologically untenable, in that it both denies agency while reinstating it at the same time’ (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:401). However, as noted by Somers (1994:606), ‘it is through narrativity that we come to know understand and make sense of the social world and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities’. Similarly, Reissman (1993:2) suggests that;

‘nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations... human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives’.

MacIntyre (1981:199) suggests that ‘human life is composed of discrete actions which lead nowhere, which have no order, the story teller imposes on human events retrospectively an order which they did not have while they lived them’. It is the imposition of plot to the events lived that enables an intelligible and continuous story, providing unity and meaning and sense of self (Ricoeur, 1991). Despite temporality and continuity being considered key features of narrative and narrative plot (as discussed further later within this chapter), sociologists such as Bury (1982), Frank

(1995:2010) and Reissman (1989) have explored the significance of 'discontinuity' and lack of plot in the construction of ontological narratives (Somers, 1994).

Narrative approaches to 'self' and 'identity' therefore start with specific assumptions (Bamberg et al, 2007). Embracing post-modernist concepts of the self as a 'reflexive construction' (De Fina, 2003), narrativity views the self as 'narrator', 'speaker' or 'teller' (De Fina, 2003; Medicott, 2005; Bamberg et al, 2007). From this perspective the self is seen as a fluid entity that emerges within narration (Bruner, 1990). Narrative is then an organisational tool that enables individuals to make sense of experience and to grasp the self as a whole (Polkinghorne, 1988). Drawing on the inherent temporality of narrativity, narrative is assumed to enable a coherent understanding of the self. By incorporating the epistemological and ontological notions of relationality (Somers, 1994) the view of narrative as representing an inner reality is avoided. From this position identity is orientated toward context and viewed as a 'process activated in relation to different contexts of interaction' (De Fina, 2003:18). This position acknowledges that identities are co-constructed and negotiated within complex webs of interaction (Somers, 1994; De Fina, 2003). Drawing upon feminist principles and a narrative methodology I therefore adopt a feminist narrative approach within this research.

Relational narrative

The prevailing view of the self in contemporary western cultures is of an autonomous, separate individual, emphasising autonomy, independence, separation, power and competition (Fishbane, 2001). Feminist scholars have argued that women and minorities do not fit this dominant narrative and have therefore countered this narrative with a notion of self that is inherently relational (Gilligan, 1982). However, critiques of this position have argued that it reverts to essentialist notions of

gendered identity (Somers, 1994) and that enforced relationality can be disabling for some women restricting autonomy (Pilley-Edwards, 2005). Somers (1994:621) cautions against perceiving relationality as a feminist ontology, suggesting that 'all identities (male and female) must be analysed in the context of cultural matrices because they do not 'exist' outside of those complexes'. The relational approach to self emphasises interdependence, with self being considered as primarily relational. Knowledge about the self and about mothering and imprisonment therefore does not 'exist' but is produced and reproduced in specific situations and power relations over time and space.

To summarise, I reject stable and fixed essentialist categorical approaches to identity and assume that the self is fluid and constituted within narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). By embracing postmodernist concepts of the self as a reflexive agent whilst incorporating poststructuralist notions of identity that emerges through dominant discourses in power relations, the self as a narrative construction is adopted. This understanding of the self is founded upon a relational epistemology that assumes that knowledge is constructed in relation to, as opposed to in isolation from, social, cultural and political structures (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). From this perspective individuals are assumed to be 'interdependent rather than independent' (Tronto, 1995:142). Assuming a relational epistemology that understands identity as negotiated within complex webs of interaction (Somers, 1994; De Fina, 2003) and constituted within narrative, this chapter will continue by exploring in more detail biographical disruption and its relationship with and impact on identity before, in Chapter Four, I go on to locate this study within a narrative methodology.

Managing identity through a disrupted life course

The term 'life course' assumes that 'lives are lived in a reasonably ordered manner in patterns shaped by age, social structure and historical change (Black et al, 2009:3). 'Transitions' are a key concept within the understanding of the life course. Transitions are public rites of passage (Jewkes, 2005) that represent a gradual change relating to the acquiring or relinquishing of roles (Black et al, 2009) such as gaining employment, becoming a parent and entering retirement. The life course approach assumes both an anticipated and idealised chronology of life course trajectories in which certain transitions occur at certain times (Exley and Letherby, 2001; Jewkes and Letherby, 2002; Jewkes, 2005; Black et al, 2009). Life course transitions remain gendered and are highly bound by cultural expectations, with women often perceived as mothers and men as workers (Jewkes, 2005:368). Events that interrupt, suspend or terminate the anticipated chronology, such as illness, unemployment, infertility or, in this case, imprisonment, are considered biographical disruptions and can have a profound impact on the sense of self (Bury, 1982; Charmaz, 1983:1993:2002; Exley and Letherby, 2001; Jewkes, 2005).

Biographical disruption

The impact upon identity of unanticipated, imposed or unavailable events within life course trajectories has been well explored over recent years (Bury, 1982; Reissman, 1989; Frank, 1995). Much of the available literature is situated within the context of chronic illness and therefore imprisonment as a biographical disruption remains relatively unexplored (see Jewkes and Letherby (2002) and Jewkes (2005) for exceptions). Drawing on research with individuals with rheumatoid arthritis, Bury (1982) argued that chronic illness incorporates recognition of pain, suffering and potential death, increased dependency, the questioning and re-ordering of

relationships and a re-examination of future plans. Chronic illness, therefore, 'disrupts the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpin them, threatening identities' (Bury, 1982:169).

As will be seen in Chapter Four, there is a wealth of literature exploring the biographical impact of chronic illness and the subsequent adaptive processes, including biographical re-construction (Williams, 1984) with narrative central to this process. More recently, researchers have challenged the underlying assumption of a shift from a "normal" state of health to one of illness' (Williams, 2000:49). Carricaburu and Pierret (1995) introduced the concepts of 'biographical reinforcement' and 'biographical continuity', arguing that illness may be constructed as reinforcing or congruent with a person's sense of self. Williams (2000:50) highlights the relevance of biographical continuity in relation to the 'conditions which one has from birth or early childhood...which are integral to an individual's biographically embodied sense of self'. Faircloth et al (2004:245) adopt the concept of 'biographical flow' to suggest that 'a sudden illness, such as stroke, does not always serve as a disruptive event, but may instead meld into an enduring chronic illness narrative, part-and-parcel of biography'. Harris (2009:1037) also illuminates 'narratives of unconcern' in which a diagnosis of Hepatitis C is constructed as 'biographically congruent' for participants with an injecting lifestyle. Exploring the relationship between women's diagnosis of HIV, substance misuse and other health conditions, Ciambone (2001) concluded that some women constructed HIV as less of an immediate disruption or threat than other more pressing concerns, such as cancer, homelessness and domestic violence.

Sinding and Wiernikowski (2008) argue that narratives of 'critical situations' are informed by moral, cultural and structural discourses which may constrain individual

narratives of disruption. They draw upon Cornwell's (1984) theory of 'hard earned lives'. This theory suggests that, for older people or the lower social classes whose lives may be characterised by decreased ability and economic and social struggle, narratives of disruption may be suppressed, as such disruption becomes an anticipated part of the life course.

Equally, such available discourses of hardship may sustain or promote a narrative of disruption. Reeve (2010) argued that it is the prioritisation, by others, of the imposed identity of 'patient' or 'disabled person' that not only hinders the continuity of 'sense of self' but assumes and imposes a fractured self. This is particularly pertinent when considering the impact of imprisonment and the associated discourses that not only inform institutional responses to women offenders but also women's responses to imprisonment (as discussed further in the next section). Reeve (2010) has also argued that in focusing on 'disruption', the smaller and more mundane continuities that sustain a sense of self are neglected. Stanley (1992:12) has also argued that research often prioritises accounts which tell of 'obstacles [being] overcome [in order for the] true self to be actualised or revealed' which, in so doing, denies the 'ordinary'. More recently, there has been a shift to adopt a biographical approach to capture the lives of 'ordinary' people and 'ordinary' events (Miller, 2005; Haynes, 2006). From the perspective of this study, motherhood is viewed as an 'ordinary' event that happens to 'ordinary' women in extraordinary conditions. In marrying biographical disruption with a 'relational' approach to narrative, (as will be discussed in Chapter Four), the impact of biographical disruption is considered in relation to the self, in relationship with others and informed by cultural and structural factors. Having introduced the concept of biographical disruption in this section, the following section will go on to consider prison as biographical disruption.

Prison as biographical disruption

Theoretically, imprisonment represents a severely disruptive event, having the potential to radically alter one's life, depriving liberty, reducing autonomy and interrupting relationships (Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1961). The effects of imprisonment have long been explored in criminological research (Goffman, 1961; Foucault, 1979). However, the impact of imprisonment as a disruption to the anticipated life course and sense of self has been little explored (Jewkes, 2005).

In the *Society of Captives* (1958:64) Sykes argued that imprisonment presents 'a series of deprivations and frustrations that come to constitute a series of psychological assaults upon the self'. From this perspective the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1961) are considered to be the deprivation of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, security and societal rejection of criminals. Such features are considered to unify prisoners and promote their interdependency.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Foucault argued that punishment and the power to punish radically disempowered prisoners making redundant the social roles that they adopted outside of prison (Foucault, 1979). Feminist critics of Foucault's position have argued that it fails to acknowledge gender and assumes that men and women respond similarly to power and discipline (Lee-Bartky, 1988). Owing to the gendered nature of life course trajectories, it is anticipated that both the disruptive impact of imprisonment and responses to it will also be gendered. Despite such critiques, Foucault's (1979) understanding of the pre-occupation of modern punishment with individual offender's 'conscience and self' (Rowe, 2011) has been largely influential in facilitating developments in the theorisation of women's imprisonment (Bosworth,

1999; McLaren, 2002; Rowe, 2011). From Foucault's perspective, 'modern punishment' was based upon control and represented power that was concealed yet more insidious (Lee Bartky, 1988). These concerns with the 'self' have been particularly visible in the control and punishment of women offenders. Rowe (2011:571-2) argues that the 'selves and identities [of women] as gendered identities have been a perennial pre-occupation in [prison] policy and scholarship', which have led to less punitive conditions but are characterised by 'intensive surveillance and close discipline centred on the norms of 'appropriate' feminine behaviour' (as previously discussed in Chapter Two).

In contrast, the 'importation model' (Irwin and Cressey, 1962) emphasises the influence of external identities, statuses and behaviour patterns on individuals' experience of and responses to imprisonment. Butler (2008:858) investigated the way in which male prisoners behaved aggressively in order to protect and 'reaffirm their identity' as men. Medlicott (2005) explored 'place identity' and how male prisoners draw upon relationships with past 'places' in order to protect their moral identity. Phillips (2008) explored issues of ethnicity and racism within male prisoners stories. The research highlighted affiliations based upon 'same-race solidarity', 'localized identities' and 'postcode territorialism' as significant dimensions of prisoners' re-constructed identities (Phillips, 2008:322).

Explorations of women's imprisonment are diffuse in the literature (Smart, 1995; Commack, 1999; Rowe, 2011; Chesney-Lind, 2012). However, it is within the literature around women's imprisonment that greater attempts are given to dispelling the polarised debate between 'deprivation' and 'importation' in order to illuminate prisoners' agency and resistance in their response to imprisonment (see Bosworth,

1999; Rowe, 2011). Consideration of agency has encouraged an appreciation of women's own power to negotiate their response to imprisonment, construct their own narrative and reclaim a sense of their personal identity (Bosworth, 1999; Jewkes, 2005).

Responding to the relative silence on the intersection of gender and race, Kruttschnitt and Hussemann (2008) explored the way in which women's racial and ethnic backgrounds informed their experiences of and responses to imprisonment. They argued that racial identity was a salient factor in coping with the prison experience for many women. Martel and Brassard (2008) highlighted the complexities and nuances of the relationship between women's racial identities and imprisonment. They suggested that imprisoned women's relationship to their racial identity was often tactical, circulating between a stereotypical identification adopted for strategic purposes and a rejection of the identity in order to refuse the prison's rigid hegemonic construction of their ethnicity. While some women embraced ethnicity specific facilities, affording a reconnection with their culture, for others their identification was not imported but provided a utilitarian value.

Available research consistently highlights the impact on and loss of pre-prison gendered roles and relationships as a significant pain of women's imprisonment (Bosworth, 1999; Rowe, 2011). The symbolic value of motherhood across all socioeconomic groups (as discussed in Chapter Two), and its significant contribution to the identity of woman, may make imprisonment particularly disruptive for women. Interruptions to women's roles as mothers may be experienced as a disruption to their anticipated life course trajectory with a consequent assault on their sense of

self. Equally, within both a social culture and institutional environment that pervasively reinforce the ideals of femininity and enforce notions of 'good motherhood', women in prison may experience imprisonment as the failure of their womanhood. Whilst motherhood and the associated norms of femininity are often considered as a method of social control, they have also been highlighted as forms of resistance and resilience for women in prison, providing a motive for survival.

Summary

Within this chapter I have introduced the philosophical framework of the research along with the feminist underpinnings. I have considered the differing approaches and considerations of identity. Within this chapter I have concluded that I reject stable and fixed essentialist categorical approaches to identity in favour of a notion of self that is multi-dimensional (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and constantly in flux (Somers, 1994:621). Having outlined these assumptions I have introduced my understanding of the narrative construction of identity (which will be explored further in Chapter Four). This chapter has also given greater attention to the analytical framework of biographical disruption and the importance of narrative in the reconstruction of identity in the face of disruption. The methodological implications of this will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Methodology: discovering narrative

Introduction

Narrative research is the study of stories (Reissman, 1993; Polkinghorne, 2007; Squire et al, 2008). As seen in Chapter Three, this study starts with the assumption that it is within stories that identity is constructed (Somers, 1994; Bamberg, 2007; Watson, 2009); that narrative is central to the study of identity; and narrative is considered to be one of the primary ways in which we make sense of our experiences and the world around us (De Fina, 2003). Narrative is also a useful approach in making sense of and accounting for biographical disruption (Bury, 1983; Reissman, 2002). Stories are not told in isolation but in relation to past events, to future expectations and to other people, institutions and social networks (Somers, 1994). In constructing stories people draw upon culturally available scripts (Somers, 1994). The availability of these scripts to individuals and to groups depends largely on the distribution of power (Foucault, 1979; Somers, 1994), as was discussed in Chapter Two. Whilst these scripts can offer meaning (Woodiwiss, 2009) they can also be problematic and restricting, particularly for stigmatised and marginalised groups (Fisher, 2008; 2012), as will be discussed in greater detail later within this chapter.

This chapter aims to consider the opportunities and challenges for adopting a narrative approach for exploring the construction of the mothering identity of women in prison. This research seeks to understand how women in prison construct their mothering identity through narrative within the extreme conditions of imprisonment.

This research will also consider the 'role of stories [and] the way in which they are produced' (Plummer, 1995:19) with a particular interest in what can and cannot be told of mothering.

I begin this chapter by exploring some of the existing confusions within the use of the terms 'narrative' and 'story', providing definitions of how I am adopting both terms within this thesis. I continue by offering a brief introduction to the history and development of narrative research. I then offer a discussion of some of the differing approaches to narrative within social sciences before outlining the approach adopted within this research. I reject interpretive approaches to narrative that claim to 'give voice' and go on to account for my adoption of a relational approach to narrative. I discuss the development of narrative research within criminology before then proposing a feminist narrative criminology. I continue by exploring in more detail the significance of narrative resources and the role of narrative in the reconstruction of biographical disruption. This section will pay particular significance to the role of narrative in accounting for imprisonment and disrupted mothering.

Conceptualising narrative

Narrative: More than a story...?

Many writers aim to define 'narrative' in relation to and in distinction from 'story'. Some writers such as Polkinghorne (1988) view narrative as coterminous with story and therefore use the terms interchangeably; yet others go to great lengths to differentiate between the two (Chase, 1995:2002; Presser, 2008; Frank, 2010). However, it is often difficult to ascertain any discernible difference from available literature. A consistent distinction is therefore far from established. I continue by

exploring the various approaches and definitions before going on to specify how they are used within this thesis.

Some writers such as Presser (2008:2) limit their definition of narrative to be 'an oral self-narrative, a spoken rendering of one's personal experience', therefore seemingly viewing narrative as a data source. In attempts to differentiate other writers have claimed the defining features of a narrative are 'plot', 'structure' and 'sequence'. In encapsulating all of these characteristics Denzin (1998:37) suggests that;

'a "narrative" is a story that tells a sequence of events that are significant for the narrator and his or her audience. A narrative as a story has a plot, a beginning, a middle and an end. It has an internal logic that makes sense to the narrator. A narrative relates events in a temporal, causal sequence. Every narrative describes a sequence of events that have happened'.

Although Denzin (1998) articulates a useful definition of narrative, a clear distinction between narrative and story remains absent.

Offering a multi-layered understanding of narrative Somers (1994) distinguishes between narratives that people tell about their own lives and the publicly available narratives that are resources drawn upon to construct their own stories. Somers (1994) uses the term 'ontological narratives' to refer to the stories that individuals construct to make sense of their lives and define who they are. Whilst people tell stories that are of their own making they do not make these stories up themselves (Woodiwiss, 2008; Frank, 2010). Somers (1994:619) defines these narrative templates as 'public narratives' (see page 86).

The inherent difficulty in attempts to differentiate between the terms 'narrative' and 'story' appears to be in viewing them as separate entities. Frank (2010) articulates the inseparable relationship between story and narrative;

'Stories depend on their respective narratives; a story outside a narrative is a fish out of water; it can't breathe and will usually have a quick end..., the occasional fish out of water becomes a new species on land. This occasional story persists and becomes the basis of a new narrative (Frank, 2010:122)'.

In this sense narrative and story are inextricably linked. In telling their stories individuals draw upon a limited number of acceptable available narratives (Somers, 1994). In this sense narratives are also templates. As templates narratives are resources within which stories are constructed and re-constructed (Harrington, 2008). As such these templates are adopted and negotiated in order to construct the narrator's identity. In the telling of individual stories templates are drawn upon in order to construct and maintain a coherent sense of self.

Within this thesis I adopt an understanding of the terms of narrative and story consistent with Frank (1995; 2010), Harrington (2008) and Somers (1994). Whilst narrative relates to the created structure and meaning of the story told in order to construct a coherent sense of self (Poirier and Ayres, 1997), the story is the personal account told. These personal stories are 'living, local and specific' (Harrington, 2008:24), whilst narratives are cultural templates that provide the structure and meaning to make sense of the stories we tell and stories we hear.

An introduction to narrative research

Narrative research is vast and therefore a precise definition is difficult to explicate from available literature (Reissman, 1993:2004; Frank, 1995:2010; Miller, 1998; Squire et al, 2008; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). The historical contradictions

(Squire et al, 2008) and the inherently interdisciplinary nature of 'narrative' (Reissman, 1993) make a definition in relation to any particular method, methodology or epistemology problematic (Stanley, 2008; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). The consequent ambiguity of narrative has left some researchers perplexed, arguing that the range of approaches adopted is often fragmented, incompatible and conflicting (Stanley, 2008). Squire et al (2008:1) argue that;

'unlike many qualitative frameworks, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points [and] there are no self-evident categories on which to focus... it offers no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation, or the best level at which to study stories. It does not tell us whether [where] to look for stories ... whether to aim for objectivity or researcher and participant involvement; whether to analyse stories particularity or generality; or what epistemological significance to attach to narratives'.

Researchers have often adopted the term 'narrative' when referring to particular methods of data collection or types of data sources, such as any form of in-depth qualitative interviewing (Reissman, 2002) or piece of 'prosaic data' (Chase, 2005:651). However, I consider narrative to represent a very particular type of inquiry, incorporating concepts of 'social epistemology and social ontology' (Somers, 1994:606). From this perspective narrative is understood as a means by which we 'come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and ... constitute our social identities' (Somers, 1994:606). Therefore, the object of investigation is the story itself (Reissman, 1994:1).

Narrative as a form of inquiry can be traced back to studies within history, literature and anthropology (Reissman, 2004). Traditionally, narrative had been conceptualised as a form of representation, a resource that 'speaks for itself' and as an objective reality or truth (Reissman, 2002:5; Miller, 2005). As an approach to inquiry, narrative was integrated within the social sciences during the 1960s (Reissman, 2004). The rise of narrative is generally located within the 'interpretive turn' (Reissman, 1993; Miller, 2005; Stanley, 2008; Squire et al, 2008) which served to deconstruct positivist notions of science and research (Rainbow and Sullivan, 1987). This movement set the scene for differing epistemological stances that challenged 'truth claims' and rejected realist assumptions and the quest for 'certainty' and 'objectivity' (Reissman, 1998:2004; Miller, 2005; Squire et al, 2008).

The rejection of positivist empiricism drew greater attention to personal narratives in the form of 'case studies, biographies and life histories' (Squire et al, 2008:3). Critiquing the truth claims of traditional androcentric social sciences, feminist scholars also embraced the study of personal narratives. Such claims to truth had previously been considered to represent 'the experiences of white Western males, and more recently, white, middle class, first world feminists' (Gill, 1998:24). This led to dilemmas in knowing and the production of knowledge (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). As highlighted in Chapter Three, many feminist scholars argued that 'knowledge must be grounded in individual experience, perspective, subjectivity' (Harding, 1996:61). In the exploration of personal narratives and listening to formerly silenced voices 'race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, sexual orientation and disability came to the fore as central aspects of women's lives' (Chase, 2005:654).

Whilst many feminist scholars have argued that listening to the stories of women diversifies the production of knowledge, Stanley (2008) has cautioned against a

'testimonial' approach to narrative that may result in a celebration of marginalised voices. Such approaches have been criticised for serving only to re-present individual stories, prioritising agency and choice, without consideration of the informing structural and cultural factors (Reissman, 2002). Whilst often claiming to 'give voice', particularly to marginalised groups, this uncritical approach does not always address issues of power or promote social justice. McRobbie (2002:131) argues that voices of pain are often decontextualized in research and 'without the wider web of social relations in which they are embedded, these testimonies exist merely as the stated truths of personal experiences'.

Emphasising the narrative links between agency and structure, Somers (1994) calls for the reconfiguring of narrative within a relational approach. Relational narrative incorporates both explorations of 'agency', considering what the teller is trying to achieve within their story, and 'structure', considering what are the factors informing and shaping their story (Sandberg, 2010). In advocating a relational approach Somers (1994:619) identifies four narrative dimensions. The first three of the four dimensions are 'ontological', being individually held narratives used to make sense of the world; 'public', being those 'attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to inter-subjective networks or institutions'; and 'meta', those in which we are 'embedded as contemporary actors in history and as social scientists'. In highlighting these dimensions of narrative Somers's (1994:634) relational approach views narratives as being constructed within 'numerous patterns of relationships, social practices, and institutions mediated by ... political power, social practices and public narratives'. From this social constructionist perspective narrative is viewed as a creative process, accommodating agency and intentionality,

in which individuals create their own multiple and often contradictory realities (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

Somers (1994:620) fourth 'conceptual' narrative dimension refers to the 'concepts and explanations constructed by social researchers'. For Somers (1994:620) conceptual narratives serve to 'develop a social analytic vocabulary'. However, whilst this dimension incorporates the analytical role of the researcher in the production of narrative, it does not fully accommodate the on-going construction and reconstruction of the narrative produced. Emphasising the capacity of stories, Frank (2010) highlights the interpretative role of the reader, suggesting that stories 'breathe' and from one story another will emerge and so on. Frank (2010) argues that conceptual narratives should not be closed or considered a final product but seen as the inspiration for new narratives to be developed. Therefore, I consider the fourth dimension to be on-going and never complete.

Emphasising the relationships between narrative, epistemology and ontology also helps to account for the link between narrative and action (Miller, 2005). Somers (1994) argues that narrative is a prerequisite for knowing what to do. As such, stories also provide the apparatus for living (Burke, 1973, cited in Adams, 2008) helping individuals 'to understand, negotiate and make sense of situations' encountered (Adams, 2008:175). Narrative is then a 'mode of reasoning and a mode of representation' (Richardson, 1990:118). Narrative location provides individuals with a sense of who they are and their position in the social world. In turn individuals 'then act or do not act, in part, according to their place in any number of given narratives, however fragmented, contradictory, or partial' (Somers, 1994:618). Therefore, 'narrative is not just an exploratory device, but is actually constitutive of the way we

experience things' (Brody, 2002:186). However, these narrative templates are 'vulnerable and fragile' as biographical disruptions occur leaving individuals narratively shipwrecked (Frank, 1995). Narratives are therefore constructed and re-constructed to accommodate the changing self and position in the social world (Brummnett, 1984). Relational narrative is, therefore, a particularly useful approach with which to explore the way women make sense of motherhood and imprisonment.

Narrative criminology

Narrative has long been a component of criminological research. However, criminological studies that explicitly draw upon a narrative methodology are rare (Sandberg, 2010; 2013). Researchers such as Presser (2008:2009) and Sandberg (2010:2013) have recently argued for more attention to be paid to the utility of narrative within criminological studies. Drawing on Ricoeur's (1984) conceptualisations of narrative Presser (2010:434) highlights two narrative approaches currently adopted within criminology, 'narrative as record' and 'narrative as interpretation'. A third approach is then proposed by Presser adopting a constitutive view of narrative entitled 'narrative as a shaper of experience'.

'Narrative as record', is the most dominant approach within criminology (Presser, 2008:2010; Sandberg, 2010:2013). Primarily concerned with issues of truth and validity of offenders' storied accounts (Presser, 2010), this approach adopts a representational approach to narrative to explore criminal behaviour (Sandberg, 2013). Adopting a social constructionist perspective, narrative as interpretation aims to consider how individual offenders view their world and their behaviour (Presser, 2010). This interpretative model problematises positivistic notions of truth and embraces the contradictions within offender accounts. Although the epistemological

approach shifts within narrative as record and narrative as interpretation, according to Presser (2010), these two approaches are very similar as they view narrative as a presentation of 'what happened'. Often conceptualised as testimonies (Stanley, 2008) interpretive approaches can decontextualise stories from the wider web of social relations within which they are located.

The third approach proposed by Presser (2010) views narrative as a shaper of experience. This perspective draws primarily on the notion of narrative being a guide for life and a prerequisite for knowing what to do (Somers, 1994). Therefore, narrative is considered to be an antecedent to crime in that it influences behaviour (Presser, 2010). Presser (2008) has offered a more nuanced approach to narrative criminology. Equally, recognising the dominant models of western masculinity informing the narratives of the men who participated in her research, Presser (2008) has also called for a more gendered approach to criminological narrative research. However, Presser's (2010) 'constitutive view of narrative' remains embedded in conventional concepts of criminology, primarily concerned with the 'causes' and 'cures' for [male] criminal behaviour (Smart, 1995; Garland, 2002).

From a feminist perspective I am interested in challenging the 'masculinist' biases of mainstream criminology (Chesney-Lind, 2012:55; Jewkes, 2012). Consistent with Presser's (2010) notion of interpretative narrative, my research aims to explore the subjectivity, partiality and temporality of women prisoners' narratives. However, the primary concern of my research is not in ascertaining 'what happened' or the link between narrative and offending but in exploring, from a gendered perspective, how women construct understandings of mothering and imprisonment (Bosworth, 1999).

Embedded within a relational ontology and epistemology, I therefore propose a feminist narrative criminology. This approach would aim to incorporate concepts of agency and its interaction with dominant narratives. Combining a feminist narrative criminology with biographical disruption, my approach emphasises the role of story in accounting for a changing self (Bury, 1982) in the face of imprisonment. Recognising the central role of the researcher in the constructed accounts of prisoners, a feminist narrative criminology also prioritises reflexivity, an approach that is often negated within mainstream criminology.

Biographical disruption: a call for stories

Plummer (1995) has argued for a greater exploration of not only the content of stories but equally of their social role. Medical sociology has emphasised the role of story in accounting for a changing self (Bury, 1982). Narrative construction and reconstruction is considered a tool which enables individuals to 'actively shape and account for biographical disruption' (Reissman, 1990:1196). Frank (1995:53) argues that illness calls for stories in two distinct but complementary ways. He suggests that firstly;

'stories have to repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life and where she may be going... [and the second] call for stories is literal and immediate, stories of illness have to be told'.

Similarly, I would argue that crime and imprisonment call for stories. Frank (1995) suggests that when people are ill they have to recount their illness, conditions, symptoms, treatments and recovery. These stories are called upon on a regular basis by medical professionals, family, friends and colleagues. In the immediacy and aftermath of an offence or sentence stories are also demanded. These stories are

constructed at an individual, professional, organisational and societal level; offender, witness and victim statements are collected; police reports and pre-sentence reports⁴ are submitted to the courts; and solicitors; barristers and judges provide stories within the court room. Equally, stories are constructed for public consumption within media reports and coverage. These stories serve a vital function and although each story may be an account of the same event, each will serve a specific and distinct function; to excuse, justify, blame or secure hope for a particular outcome (Frank, 1995). Each of these stories will be framed by differing available narratives. The telling of stories is both necessary and anticipated in the event of disruption. Stories need to be told and stories need to be heard (Frank, 1995).

The second function of narrative is repair. Adopting the metaphor of a shipwreck, Frank (1995:54) suggests that when biographical disruption occurs, a person loses a sense of where they are going or where they have come from and of who they are. Storytelling then functions to repair the damaged caused by the wreck. Reissman (2004:10) suggests that 'when biographical disruptions occur that rupture expectations for continuity, individuals makes sense of events through storytelling'.

As stated earlier within this chapter, narrative approaches exploring the way in which prisoners make sense of their situation are rare. However, research concerned with how people make sense of living with chronic illness signifies the importance of narrative construction and reconstruction and the implications for self-identity. In seeking to understand how individuals make sense of disruptive or transitional events in their lives, the role of narrative has been recognised as an important

⁴ A pre-sentence report is submitted to the court by a probation officer to assist the court in determining the most suitable method of dealing with an offender.

enterprise in which individuals actively shape and account for biographical disruption (Miller, 2005).

There is a wealth of literature exploring the biographical impact of chronic illness. Frank (1995) highlights a 'narrative of chaos' characterised by a loss of hope. Frank (1995:97) suggests that such 'stories are chaotic in their absence of narrative order'. Psychological understandings often draw upon post-traumatic stress disorder to account for chaos within individual stories after a disruptive event. However, this would assume that an inner reality is and should be accessible. Yet, as noted earlier within this chapter, from a sociological perspective, an inner reality is not necessarily available. The narrator of the story requires distance from the chaos to enable new stories to be created (Etherington, 2000) that account for the disruption.

A rich body of literature on the subsequent adaptive processes of biographical disruption, including biographical re-construction (Williams, 1984), is also available. Reflecting Parson's (1951) sick role theory, Frank's (1995) restitution narrative emphasises the ill person's desire and expectation to get well. This is a linear narrative that relies on 'expert help' to construct a positive future (Fisher and Goodley, 2007). Therefore, although the focus is on 'being' well, the responsibility for 'getting' well is placed with medicine whilst the narrator remains passive in their recovery. Relying upon 'authoritative' and 'medical' modernist interpretations to understand illness, individual agency and personal narratives are constrained (Kirkmayer, 1992). Yet, Frank (1995) asserts that the restitution narrative 'is the culturally preferred narrative' and is therefore shaped by the audience's expectation of hearing it. This has particular resonance when working with the narratives of offenders. As asserted earlier, crime and imprisonment call for stories; yet these stories are not free to be told in any way but are shaped by expectations, which are

in turn shaped by the range of available narratives. Sandberg (2009; 2010; 2013) notes that prisoners sentenced for violent offences often draw upon dominant cultural ideologies of masculinity as a means to perform masculinity and to make sense of their situation. Presser (2008) also noted that owing to cultural and organisational expectations, narratives of 'reform' were a common feature of the stories of male prisoners.

Quest narratives are also frequently found in stories of illness. Unlike the restitution narrative, the quest narrative constructs the author as an active agent. Characterised by the 'ill person's belief that something is to be gained through the experience' (Frank, 1995: 115), the quest narrative emphasises a sense of ability rather than impairment in order to promote a positive sense of self and resist being defined by the illness or disability (Reeve, 2002). The 'quest narrative' is evident in much of the literature around the adjustment of people with acquired disabilities. Kendall and Buys (1998) and Charmaz (1993) suggest that a 'super normal' self is sought, with the aim of doing things equally if not better than their able bodied self in order to construct a valued identity by disregarding associations with helplessness and disability. Frank (1995:115) argues that the 'quest narrative' functions to keep 'chaos' at bay. However, Kendall and Buys (1998) argue that quest narratives are not always sustainable and are often interspersed with segments of chaos that reoccur iteratively, dependent upon the resources available to support them at any given time. Similarly, Fisher and Goodley (2007:74) identify a 'narrative of challenge' in parents with disabled babies. The narrative of challenge is characterised by parents' attempts to 'resist oppressive interpretations and practices' yet can often be difficult to 'reconcile with the normal complexities, contingencies and experiences of human

life' (Fisher and Goodley, 2007:74). Reeve et al (2010) highlight narratives of 'fracture' and 'flow' in the accounts of people with cancer. The narratives of 'flow' are interrupted with narratives of 'fracture' that function to restore 'flow'.

As was seen in Chapter Three, imprisonment potentially constitutes a biographical disruption, therefore narrative may serve to justify, excuse (Scott and Lyman, 1968) and repair (Bury, 1982; Frank, 1995). The intention of this research is to explore how women prisoners draw on culturally circulating narrative frameworks to construct their stories of imprisonment and motherhood. Charmaz (2002) has suggested that the narrative construction and re-construction of illness may only be a product of the research process and the narrative itself rather than the 'reality' of individual experiences. In this sense narrative is thought to both expose yet emphasise the 'disruption' and 'repair' whilst negating the mundane continuities that may sustain a person's sense of self. Therefore, whilst aiming to explore imprisonment as a disruption to the mothering identities of women in prison, this research also serves to explore the continuities and repairs to mothering.

Charmaz (2002) has argued that there is an over-reliance on narrative in understanding disruptive events and that this neglects the importance of what is 'not' said, arguing for an understanding of both 'silences' and of what it is a struggle to say. Watson (2009:470) has suggested that as there are as many of ways of narrating something as there are ways of not saying something and that each of these ways 'constitutes a counter narrative, each of which is related, not as an opposite, but as a simultaneous presence'. From this position, what is said and what is not said are 'activities that go hand in hand' (Bamberg 2004, 353) and should be given equal understanding. As will be seen in Chapter Nine, remaining silent was a narrative strategy adopted in order to maintain the presentation of a moral self.

Reeve (2010) has also questioned the neglect of 'emotion' in narrative research, suggesting that a focus on what is 'said' negates the importance of what is 'felt' and what an individual is unable to articulate. However, Rosaldo (1984:143) has argued that it is too simplistic to separate what is said from emotion as 'emotion influences and shapes thought while thought is laden with emotional meaning'. This remains a salient factor when researching the potentially emotional and moral subject of motherhood and imprisonment and the complexities of the context of in which such stories are told. With its multi-layered approach to narrative analysis, the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) helps the researcher to attend to what is both said and what it is a struggle to say.

Narrative resources: a gendered approach

The stories individuals tell of their circumstances, experiences and what they know of themselves are social and interpersonal (Somers, 1994). In telling those stories individuals adopt a template from publicly available narratives (Woodiwiss, 2009). These frameworks are culturally, politically and historically specific (Plummer, 1995:2001; Bauman, 2001; Lawler, 2002; Woodiwiss, 2009) shifting over time and space. These frameworks are drawn upon individually and collectively to construct and re-construct stories. Whilst this demonstrates personal agency it does not demonstrate independence from the narratives but rather shifts 'the nature of our dependence' (Taylor, 1989:39, cited in Somers, 1994:619).

Bauman (2001) suggests that the construction and articulation of narratives are constrained by the options of publicly available narratives. Whilst available narrative frameworks can provide meaning they can equally be problematic, oppressive and damaging, particularly within situational contexts (Fisher, 2008:2012; Woodiwiss,

2009), in which dominant narratives can restrict and deprive agency (Fisher, 2008:2012). Bamberg (2005:287) argues that dominant public narratives 'delineate and confine local interpretation strategies and agency constellations in individual subjects as well as social institutions'. Public narratives (Somers, 1994) are historically, culturally and politically bound, changing over time and space.

The narrative of the autonomous and separate self has dominated westernised perceptions of self (Fishbane, 2001:273). Such understandings have permeated criminology and have had a pathologising impact on women within the criminal justice system who do not appear to fit this narrative (Fishbane, 2001). The narratives of men's offending have centred on a dominant understanding of rationality, logic (Wilczynski, 1997) and abstract moral decision making (Presser, 2008). Yet, women offenders have been constructed as 'bad, mad or sad' (Wilczynski, 1997). As was seen in Chapter Two, understandings of the nature of women's offending and women's pathways to prison have been highly debated within feminist criminology, as have the complexities of gender and sentencing. Available research is inconclusive in its attempts to ascertain whether women are treated more leniently or harshly than men; however, it does indicate that women are dealt with 'differently' to men (Gelsthorpe, 2007). This 'different' treatment is often informed by differing public narratives of both men and women offenders. Such narratives serve as informal mechanisms of social control impacting upon the legal processing of women (Wilczynski, 1997) and the way in which women offenders understand, respond to, experience and construct imprisonment.

As discussed in Chapter Three, feminist criminology has traced the development and availability of these narratives and their impact upon women's imprisonment. Aiming to reclaim and re-story the history of women's criminality, early feminist criminologists rejected the notion that women lawbreakers were inherently 'bad'. Harsh punishment was then rejected in favour of reform based on gendered roles which sought to rehabilitate women into good wives and mothers (Bosworth, 1999; Carlen, 2004). The imposition of these ideological notions of femininity (Bosworth, 1999) is considered to have directly impacted on the delivery of women's imprisonment with the women 'most likely to be imprisoned, [being] those who have stepped outwith domestic discipline' (Carlen, 1983:16). Consequently, much of the prison regime has historically served to 'discipline, infantilise, feminise, medicalise and domesticise' women in prison (Carlen, 1983; Bosworth, 1999; Carlen and Worrall, 2004).

During the 1970s, the combination of the victim movement and the growing discipline of feminist criminology brought about a heightened awareness of women prisoners' victimisation. Gelsthorpe (2004:8) indicates that this led to an understanding of women offenders as troubled rather than troublesome. Although this encouraged a more therapeutic approach to women's imprisonment (Gelsthorpe, 2008), many have argued that the construction of women's prisons as a 'community of victims rather than a collection of victimisers ... reinforces a notion of dependency which, in turn, reflects an anachronistic ideal of passive femininity' (Bosworth, 1999:56) and is inadequate in preparing women for release (Carlen, 1983). Worrall (1990:33) identifies the paradox of these two dominant concepts, founded upon the contrasting ideals of femininity available to women in prison. Bound up in 'good mothering'

ideologies, Worall (1990:33) argues that 'being a normal woman means coping, caring, nurturing, and sacrificing self-interest to the needs of others. On the other hand, it is characterised by a lack of control and dependence'. It is the complexity of these negotiations of motherhood within the context of imprisonment that is of interest within this research.

Whilst women in prison are not forced to construct 'specific' narratives they are constrained by the limited number of stories currently in circulation (Woodiwiss, 2009). The dominant available public narratives can often be inadequate to frame an individual's 'ontological' (Somers, 1994) narrative. As noted by Frank (1995:55) this 'disjunction can be worse than having no story at all'. This is particularly pertinent for marginalised groups, including women and, in particular, mothers in prison who often do not have access to dominant public mothering narratives that primarily serve the dominant groups in society. This lack of fit with available narratives may lead to the construction of 'counter narratives' (Somers, 1994; Frank, 1995:2010; Miller, 2005). Counter narratives are a 'crucial strategy when one's identity is not expressed in the dominant public ones' (Somers, 1994:631). As such, counter narratives are often constructed by marginalised voices as dominant narratives do not represent their realities (Somers, 1994). Story and the ability to narrate is therefore a re-distribution of power enabling opposition and resistance to dominant cultural narratives (Watson, 2009). McQuillan (2000:23) suggests that counter narratives are a necessary condition of narrativity as it is the contest between narrative and counter narrative that structures the narrative matrix. From this position it may be argued that 'every narrative is also a counter narrative' (Watson, 2009:470). However, although 'narrative and its counter create a site of contest... [they] should not be thought of as

binary opposites' as counter narratives do not only 'oppose the dominant narrative but offer both resistance and complicity to it' (Watson, 2009:470). Embedded within a relational approach to narratives, this research is particularly interested in the way in which women negotiate dominant narratives within the context of mothering and imprisonment to construct their identities as mothers.

Summary

Within this chapter I have addressed the confusion in the use of the terms 'narrative' and 'story' and have provided my own definition of these two terms in relation to this study. In Chapter Three I concluded that narrative offers an appropriate methodology through which women's accounts of motherhood and imprisonment can be explored. Within this chapter I have therefore gone on to offer a brief outline of the history of narrative within the social sciences and to discuss my own approach to narrative. I have acknowledged that whilst interpretive approaches to narrative aiming to 'give voice' highlight 'agency' and 'subjectivity', they are often inadequate to consider the structural factors that may inform and shape women's stories. The approach to narrative adopted within this research is therefore based on a relational model in which narratives are viewed as being interdependent and constructed within a matrix of social relationships mediated by dominant public narratives.

Having adopted a relational approach to narrative I have then gone on to propose a feminist narrative criminology for research with women prisoners. Presenting imprisonment as a potential 'critical event', I have explored in greater depth the role of narrative in the face of biographical disruption. To consider the informing factors that may shape the women's stories of this 'critical event' I have considered the limited repertoire of public narratives about women, mothering and imprisonment. I

have concluded that whilst women's stories may be facilitated or constrained by these available narratives, women remain actively engaged in the construction and telling of their own stories. The methods adopted to capture and interpret the women's accounts will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Methods: a narrative approach

Introduction

Having outlined my relational narrative methodology in Chapter Four, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the methods used throughout this study. This chapter will begin with a brief outline of the process of obtaining ethical approval for the study. Detailed discussions of ethical considerations and challenges will be embedded within more detailed illustrations of the research processes throughout the chapter. Such processes include the challenges of gaining access and recruitment, the complexities of the interview encounter, transcribing and analysis. Negotiations of power were also central to the research processes within this study. Therefore, considerations of how power relations were attended to will also be interwoven within this chapter.

The account offered in this chapter reflects 'life as told' (King and Horrocks, 2010), adopting a research narrative template informed by the theoretical frameworks to offer a coherent account of my research journey. Therefore it is with a reflexive stance that I write my PhD journey. My reflexive account will consider the way in which my own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, and social identities have shaped the research processes (Willig, 2008:10). A more detailed discussion of reflexivity will follow in Chapter Six.

Obtaining ethical approval

An ethics application was prepared, submitted to and approved by the University of Huddersfield's School of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics Panel. The application was informed by the guidelines of The British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2005). Four initial primary ethical considerations were identified; 'informed consent', 'protection of participants', 'confidentiality and anonymity', and 'researcher safety'. Along with the initial identification of these areas, this study remained grounded in feminist understandings of ethics. Such understandings stress the contextual and situational nature of ethics rather than viewing them as abstract principles (Edwards and Mauthner, 2003). This perspective emphasises the way in which 'context' can influence ethical dilemmas faced. Therefore, discussions of these ethical considerations will be interwoven throughout this chapter alongside the research practices, methods and strategies employed and the dilemmas faced. The feminist ethical position is also concerned with the analysis of power relations in the research process, whilst also acknowledging the values of emotions and empathy. Therefore these issues will also be reflexively and iteratively addressed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Breaking in: research in women's prisons

The large body of literature relating to the 'doing' of prison research often negates the complexity and multi-layered process of negotiating access within the organisational context. The way in which potential participants would be accessed was an important consideration for this study. I initially had concerns regarding contacting women directly via criminal justice agencies. I feared that working closely with these agencies may impact on the way in which I was perceived by potential

participants, making them suspicious about my personal and political sympathies (Becker, 1967). I was also concerned that women may assume the research to be linked to the delivery of family support services and this could influence participation or non-participation. Yet, without the collaboration of such organisations, access would be problematic and it remained imperative to work directly with women currently serving a prison sentence. Therefore, collaboration with a prison was essential.

To allow for the consideration of the timing of and context in which the women's stories were told (see Chapters Two and Three) I also considered it valuable to talk with women released from prison. A lack of means to directly access women in the community prevented the use of a snowballing approach and therefore a Probation Trust was approached. A prison sentence of less than a year does not require a mandatory period of 'release on licence' and consequent probation support. I therefore, also approached a voluntary sector women's centre working with women who have offended or may be at risk of offending.

Literature relevant to 'gaining access' in relation to research with offenders is minimal, yet assumes inherent difficulties and challenges (Patenaude, 2004; Trulson et al, 2004) with gatekeepers central to this process (Reeves, 2010). As Patenaude (2004:70) suggests 'it is easier to gain access to study the residents of a remote Alaskan community than to study the lives of prison inmates'. On the other hand Bosworth et al (2005), Jupp et al (2000) and Moser et al (2004) have found that once access is gained prisoners can be eager to participate in research, motivated by the opportunity to talk with someone new. Conversely, I found that potential collaborating organisations were particularly receptive to the research. However, I soon discovered that although getting in is necessary, it remains insufficient (Trulson,

2004) as the negotiation of access required a multi-layered and iterative process (Reeves, 2010). This process involved negotiating both 'formal' gatekeepers, being those who have the 'authority' to take the research 'on', and 'informal' gatekeepers, being those who have the 'ability' to take the research 'forward'.

When gaining research access to 'prisoners' a layered approach to negotiation with both formal and informal gatekeepers is often required (Reeves, 2010). A further layer of 'primary' gatekeepers was also identified within this project. Personal contacts were able to act as 'primary gatekeepers', providing access to 'formal gatekeepers' within relevant organisations. My experience of negotiating access was consistent with Boneham et al (2003), Reeves (2010) and Trulson (2004) who suggest that personal contacts are advantageous within the negotiation of access, as the person is able to 'establish [your] validity' (Trulson, 2004:459). I was introduced to 'primary' gatekeepers at both the prison and the voluntary sector organisation through a colleague. These introductions provided the opportunity to meet with 'formal gatekeepers' to discuss my research and build relationships, whilst simultaneously creating the invaluable opportunity to be 'there' and be 'seen' (Boneham et al, 2003). Negotiation of access was therefore on-going. At the prison this process spanned over a two year period starting with my previous involvement in an evaluation of a visiting facility located at the prison. This provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the environment. As had Reeves (2010), I also found that having a personal contact aided the pace of negotiation as I was able to bypass much of the bureaucracy in trying to arrange meetings via administrative personnel.

In the process of gaining and negotiating access, the research subject was also particularly pertinent to the organisations approached. Patenaude (2004) argues that a primary consideration for the denial or granting of research access is the

operational or policy benefits perceived for the gate-keeper. My research was situated within a criminal justice agenda contemporaneously prioritising familial relationships. Therefore, potential collaborating organisations appeared to be particularly receptive to the research.

Difficult negotiations

Access was quickly established at the three aforementioned organisations; the Probation Trust, the Prison Service and a voluntary sector organisation working with women. However, not all requests were successful. After approaching a further prison, I was invited to discuss my research further. In contrast to my previous experiences where I felt the relevance of the subject area had been a positive contributing factor in gaining access, in this instance it appeared not to be the case. As the meeting progressed it appeared that my commitment to the subject area was regarded with suspicion.

Patenaude (2004) suggests that the three constituent groups within the institution of prisons, including prisoners, uniformed staff and administration, share a distrust of researchers. Becker (1967) suggests that for social researchers it is important to ask the question 'whose side are we on?' as our personal and political sympathies may contaminate our research. In criminological research Becker (1967) uses the notion of 'hierarchy of credibility' to highlight the accusation of bias at researchers who take the side of the offender. Prioritising the stories of the typically 'unheard' denies the credibility of the 'established status order' which allows the 'highest members...the right to define the way things really are' (Becker, 1967:241). Feminist criminologists have argued that such hierarchies are embedded within mainstream andocentric criminology and further marginalise the voices of women (Bosworth, 1995; Comack, 1999: 296) which remain largely absent from criminological research.

Becker (1967) continues to argue that the 'officialdom' fear that offender accounts of imprisonment may expose institutional flaws and are therefore discredited. My prison encounter appeared to reflect this position. My prioritisation of the accounts of women prisoners appeared to be seen as 'unsympathetic' to the institution. The prison official appeared to discredit the anticipated accounts of the women by constructing them as 'immature', 'irresponsible' and 'indifferent mothers'. The construction of the women as uncommitted mothers may have served to protect the institution against potential accusations. As Sykes (1958) maintained, the prison bureaucracy fear scandal if mis-management is publicised. It also served to discredit the entirety of the women's accounts as women's integrity is ultimately judged against their mothering qualities regardless of whether they are mothers or not (Schram, 1999; Jewkes, 2005).

In order to ascertain my loyalty to the institution the official suggested that the prison may require editorial control of my research. Bryman (2008:131) suggests that 'often gatekeepers will seek to influence... the form of any report'. Prisons are never far from the media spotlight (Birmingham, 1997) leaving them susceptible to research repercussions regardless of the intention or bias of the researcher. To alleviate concerns I offered to provide a summary report of the findings, yet felt unable to meet their requirements. I assumed that the official's interpretation of my 'sympathy' to the women appeared to undermine my integrity as a researcher with an assumption that 'sympathies' could not be located throughout the 'hierarchy of credibility'.

Liebling (2001) argues that not only can researchers be on more than one side in social research but that research benefits from an attempt to synthesise different

perspectives. However, Bosworth (1995) suggests that criminological research rarely aims to achieve this. On reflection I feel that my approach to the encounter may have benefited from more consideration of my expressed allegiances. Mulhall (2003:310) suggests that 'negotiating access also involves a subtle but rarely acknowledged process of presenting oneself in the 'correct' way... and is a 'process of managing your identity, projecting an image and convincing gatekeepers that you are non-threatening'. Despite many follow-up emails the request to participate in the study was not responded to.

Despite having access agreed within a prison, a Probation Trust and a women's centre, taking the research 'forward' proved more problematic. Although by gaining formal access I had my foot 'in' the door, getting my foot 'through' the door to begin interviewing presented on-going challenges. As Mulhall (2003:310) identified, gaining access is more complex than simply 'speaking to the person in charge and obtaining the approval'. Despite initial enthusiasm and commitment communications became increasingly fragmented with all three organisations. I became incredibly anxious that I was never going to get my foot 'through' the door. Two reasons emerged for the rupture in communications; the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on public and voluntary sector organisations and the challenges of working in closed institutions.

The consequences of the economic crisis had a direct impact on my ability to take the research forward. Diminished funding across the sectors with subsequent restructuring and critical focus on sustainment resulted in the organisational de-prioritisation of my research. With increasing demands on the 'formal' gatekeepers who had taken the research 'on', it became apparent that further informal gatekeepers needed to be approached to take the research 'forward'. It became

necessary to adopt a multi-layered approach to gaining access, negotiating informal gatekeepers on a number of levels (Reeves, 2010).

My previous research experience at the prison provided a valuable opportunity to meet and work with members of the family support team. Having direct contact with the women meant that their support was essential in order to take the research forward. The family support team facilitated a continuous line of communication and accelerated the research processes. They were also able to negotiate other gatekeepers on my behalf to facilitate recruitment.

Despite continued efforts, the on-going demands of re-structuring, reduced funding and focus on sustainment, made taking the research forward at the Probation Trust and the women's centre progressively difficult. In part this was owing to difficulties in being able to access and negotiate informal gatekeepers but also, as is discussed further later within this chapter, partly owing to challenges presented by the approach adopted to recruitment. Only one participant was recruited via the Probation Trust and no women came forward from the women's centre.

Recruitment

Recruitment began during the earliest stages of my PhD when I was involved with an evaluation at the prison to which I had gained access. During this project I worked with mothers to evaluate a visiting facility. The women were aware of my PhD research and agreed at an early stage to participate. The second stage of recruitment was based upon a self-selecting approach informed by an ethical agenda to maximise individual autonomy. This approach initially introduced the research to potential participants via posters and leaflets displayed at each of the three collaborating organisations. The literature detailed the aims and objectives of

the research and directed potential participants to a specified member of staff within the relevant organisation. The literature displayed within the Probation Trust and women's centre also provided my details to enable potential participants to contact me directly. Once an initial interest was shown, I would be contacted, either directly by the women or the organisation on the women's behalf. A meeting would then be arranged between myself and the woman with an opportunity for discussion and questions. If interest was expressed an interview would be arranged for a later date. As discussed later on page 110, challenges with the approach emerged and it was therefore adapted to engage a more diverse sample.

How many mothers to recruit?

The question of 'how many' participants to include in the study was a recurring dilemma throughout the planning stages of my research. It felt impossible to know 'how many participants would be enough' as there are no rigid rules or guidelines to establish sample size in qualitative research (Sandelowski, 1995; Morse, 2000). An iterative approach informed by an evaluation of the quality of the data against the aims of the research and the methodology and methods, was adopted. This process was also informed by external factors such as participant non-completion, withdrawn consent and time limitations. In total 16 interviews were conducted across two prisons and the Probation Trust.

Which mothers to recruit?

As with the dilemma of how many participants to recruit, great deliberation was also given as to who to recruit. Firstly, difficulties arose in the definition of 'mother'. Many studies include an upper age limit of the youngest or only child when defining 'mother' in relation to women in prison. Caddle and Crisp (1997) and Berry and Eigenberg (2004) defined mothers as women who had dependent children under the

age of 18; whilst for Loper and Tuerk (2006) the upper age limit was 21. This definition is primarily dependent upon the definition of who is considered a 'child' and does not acknowledge that women's roles and identities as 'mothers' often continue and adapt with the familial situation beyond the child reaching adulthood. Therefore, it is not to be assumed that mothering is any less disrupted for mothers of older children.

The definition of mother adopted in many studies also tends to support a narrow biological definition of motherhood and does not reflect the way in which many women 'mother' or consider themselves as 'mothers'. Caddle and Crisp (1997) included women pregnant with their first child and Berry and Eigenberg (2004) recognised adoptive mothers within their recruitment criteria. However, these definitions fail to consider those who participate in 'mothering' and take on the primary roles and responsibilities of 'mothering' without being recognised as 'mothers' within the socially constructed term, such as step-mothers or grandmothers with the role of primary carer. It was also important not to replicate the neglect of women's mothering roles and identities in prison that do not conform to legal, cultural or organisational definitions. My intention was to allow for personal definitions of mothering, making this explicit when introducing the research to potential participants. However, restrictions on my personal involvement in recruitment created difficulties in communicating the latitude for self-definitions of mothering. Therefore, volunteering participants still reflected the biological, cultural and organisational definitions of mothering. The ability to communicate personal meanings of motherhood warrants further consideration in future research with mothers in prison.

Difficulties with the recruitment strategy

Hewison and Haines (2006) have noted that the role of recruitment can have a direct impact on participation levels. Within this study one of the main limitations of a self-selecting method of recruitment was a low response rate, as noted by many other researchers (see Hewison and Haines, 2006; Miller and Boulton, 2007). No response was generated from the display of literature within all three organisations. There is limited exploration or understanding of why participants who have to take the initiative to become involved in research choose not to do so (Hewison and Haines, 2006). Working within a prison environment with a stigmatised group evoked certain challenges. Firstly, owing to security restrictions, my presence at the prison was limited. Therefore I was not always around to offer clarification or further explanation before a decision not to participate was reached (Hewison and Haines, 2006). The approach also relied upon literacy skills which may have hindered participation with this particular group. However, as will be discussed later within the findings chapters, a limited repertoire of culturally available and socially acceptable narratives (Somers, 1994) may have equally restricted participation.

In response to this limitation I worked with informal gatekeepers to introduce the research to women in group contexts, such as educational classes at the prison. This method facilitated the opportunity to introduce the research to groups of women without directly approaching individuals, which I feared may have raised ethical concerns around coercion. I was advised that this would not be possible at the Probation Trust as there were no groups specifically aimed at women. Despite a few more women volunteering, it appeared that the continued approach was having an impact upon participant diversity. Qualitative research does not aim to produce

generalisable findings; therefore a statistically representational sample is not required (Robson, 2004; King and Horrocks, 2010). However, a diverse range of participants remains important in order to 'throw light on meaningful differences' (King and Horrocks, 2010:29).

Miller and Boulton (2007:2208) suggest that the 'increasingly prescriptive access routes' based upon the 'construction of participants as modernist subjects', 'autonomous, informed, empowered and rational', supporting the self-selecting approach, leads to a distortion in recruitment. In research exploring transitions to first time motherhood, Miller (2000:51) noted a predominantly white, middle class sample, arguing that 'self-disclosure, in a society in which motherhood is all about being a 'moral' person, may be perceived as too risky'. Similarly, Fisher (2012) found that the suspicion of socially marginalised groups towards researchers often leads to an over representation of middle class participants. For imprisoned mothers, the risk is heightened as they are often perceived as 'bad' and 'neglectful' mothers by virtue of their imprisonment (Jaffe et al, 1997; Boudin, 1998; Shamai and Kochal, 2008). The women who initially volunteered to participate in the study did not appear to reflect the characteristics of women in prison presented in academic literature. None of the women who initially agreed to participate in the study disclosed previous convictions or chaotic histories of crises. A lack of diversity in sentence length, number of sentences served and social circumstances prior to imprisonment was also apparent. I was concerned that the recruitment process was potentially further marginalising the stories of imprisoned mothers. Some women may have potentially lacked the confidence or assertiveness to instigate contact and participate in a study that perhaps would expose them to maternal and moral scrutiny (Fisher, 2012).

Whilst non-participation may be viewed as an act of agency and should be respected, as discussed by Fisher (2012:3) 'refusal to participate ... is often defensively orientated from a position of social disadvantage'. I was concerned that my pre-occupation with reducing potential coercion may have actually served to perpetuate the continued marginalisation of the least powerful.

The approach to recruitment was therefore revised. My initial reluctance to enlist the assistance of organisation staff to directly approach individual women was based upon a fear of reducing women's participative autonomy. However, the need for a more diverse sample relied upon the expertise, experience and skills of staff and practitioners to identify and introduce the research to individual women. This revised approach made me feel trepidatious as I feared that the women would feel obliged to participate when invited by a member of staff. However, this approach proved to be successful and a further seven women came forward to find out more about the research. On meeting the women, their direct questions and requests for information provided reassurance of their capacity to remain autonomous in participation and to challenge information (see page 164). Six of the seven women agreed to participate. The children of the woman who chose not participate were currently being adopted. No longer having contact with her children she suggested that she did not feel her story would be of any use. The mother's decision not to participate should be respected. However, as noted by Fisher (2012), this decision may be 'defensively orientated'. As will be seen in the findings chapters, much of the emphasis of the stories of women in prison was in constructing themselves as good mothers. The inherent power structures within which those stories are told may leave women feeling narratively shipwrecked and therefore powerless to tell their own stories.

The revised recruitment approach was also attempting to increase participant diversity and engage with the most marginalised and potentially 'vulnerable' imprisoned women. Within the criminal justice system, 'vulnerable' women are often defined as having multiple and complex needs that are considered risk factors (Home Office, 2007; Moloney et al, 2009). Although it is important to recognise that participation may induce unanticipated anguish, it is also important to understand the potential benefits for individual well-being that may be derived by inclusion in a research study that is embedded in a paradigm of recognition (as illustrated on page 173) (Blackwell, 1997; Rowe, 2011; Fisher, 2012). The continued construction of women in prison as 'vulnerable' may be implicative in their relative silence in academic literature. 'Vulnerability' may be measured by a subject's degree of deviance from a normative mode of citizenship, in ways that can devalue and potentially silence the stories of those labelled 'vulnerable' (Fisher, 2012). Negotiating the perceived risk to and benefits for a particular group may create difficulties for researchers. Working collaboratively with prison staff enabled a more holistic approach to recruiting 'marginalised' women whilst safeguarding the well-being of potentially 'vulnerable' women.

Negotiating consent

In order to safeguard research participants, 'informed' consent has become a key ethical consideration for social research and forms a central aspect of gaining ethical approval (Berg, 2001; MacKenzie et al, 2007; King and Horrocks, 2010). Despite its intentions, the process remains fraught with complexities (MacKenzie et al, 2007). As Miller and Boulton (2008) have noted, participants are still not always fully aware of what they are consenting to and the significance of that consent. In criminological

research, Roberts and Inermaur (2003) have highlighted how data in which participants may disclose criminal activity can be subpoenaed and question the extent to which participants are made aware of this. The 'involuntary nature' of much of the prison regime, coupled with concerns over 'decisional capacity' (Moser et al, 2004:1) and restricted autonomy (Pont, 2008) intensifies such complexities when obtaining consent from prisoners. An awareness of such challenges informed my aim to 'negotiate' rather than 'obtain' consent through an iterative process of negotiation, with communication and transparency fundamental to this process.

In line with standardised ethical practice I constructed an information leaflet, information posters and a consent form (see Appendices Two, Three and Four). The literature aimed to detail the nature of the research and participants' rights in a concise and unambiguous manner (Milnes, 2003). This process, however, was informed by my own assumptions of adequate information, albeit founded upon the aforementioned ethical codes of practice. It was therefore imperative that the women were able to 'seek' information that was pertinent to them in order to facilitate 'informed consent'. I met with the group of women that I had worked with on the evaluation of the visiting facility to gain their feedback on the literature produced before distributing it. The mothers indicated that the literature was appropriate.

Negotiating consent became an iterative process. Once a participant expressed interest in the research an information sharing meeting was arranged. The purpose of these meetings was to facilitate transparency by creating an opportunity to discuss aspects of the research including the aims and objectives, potential values and risks

of participation, limitations to confidentiality, interview prompts (see Appendix Five), women's autonomy in guiding the interview and the voluntary nature of participation.

These meetings also gave the women opportunity to ask questions. Their questions were primarily concerned with who I was and my motivations for the research. The consequent discussions highlighted the importance of the relationship between researcher and participants (as discussed further in Chapter 6). Interviews were generally held within a week of the first meeting, providing opportunity to reflect and reconsider the information gained. At the start of each interview consent was again re-confirmed. As the process continued it became apparent that unanticipated disclosures often required the re-negotiation of consent at the end of interviews too.

Narrative interviews

Within narrative research various methods have been adopted to elicit and record narratives, including photographic prompts (Bender et al, 2001) and personal documents such as diaries and letters (Hampsten, 1989; Stanley, 1992). When working with women in a closed institution the construction of diaries and letters raises ethical dilemmas of confidentiality, as post is frequently intercepted and read and personal possessions searched. I also remained mindful of Kvale's (1996:1) suggestion that 'if you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?' I also felt that interviews were more appropriate to the research aims and objectives and that the research subject would be more accessible within an interview setting, with the both the participant and I present, allowing for reciprocity and intimacy (Oakley, 1981).

The adopted approach to narrative interviewing draws upon both 'episodic' interviews (Flick, 2009) and Mischler's (1991) 'focused' narrative interviews. These particular approaches encourage participants to narrate certain events, situations or experiences that are of particular relevance to the research (King and Horrocks, 2010). Selecting an event as a starting point for an interview remains problematic as the researcher gives significance to the event that may not be shared with the participants (MacIntyre, 1981). Miller (2000:35) argues that this limitation should not prevent the exploration of the construction and reconstruction of narrative accounts of the event, but that the narrative accounts should be considered temporally and spatially. The prompts, as shown in Appendix Five, were constructed with the assumption informed by the theoretical framework of biographical disruption (Bury, 1982) and Somers' (1994) four dimensions of narrativity (as discussed on pages 86-87). These assumptions highlight the significance of the timing of and context in which a disruptive event occurs in exploring the way in which individuals make sense of such events (Williams, 2000:62). The prompts therefore served to explore the women's stories before, during and beyond imprisonment.

Established research relationships with the women at one of the prisons were utilised to conduct initial formative interviews. Whilst contributing to the overall study the initial interviews allowed for consideration of the appropriateness of the prompts and the quality of the data generated. A more collaborative approach was also facilitated as I engaged with the women to evaluate this process. The women indicated that the prompts were appropriate and although they were not always needed, the women found them reassuring.

Venue

The interviews settings were arranged and provided by the organisations. Comfortable rooms used to facilitate counselling and supervised contact were provided where possible. On occasion less comfortable settings were offered, either a staff office or a side room, providing only desk and chairs. Being influenced by scholars such as Oakley (1981), who draw attention to the importance of the interview setting, this led to great apprehension for me. I remained concerned that the 'office' setting may represent official encounters and assessments, reinforcing hierarchical barriers (Deery, 2003) and impeding my ability to establish rapport and intimacy. Herzog (2005:17) argues that the choice of interview location is the most neglected aspect of the interview process. Equity and the needs of the participants should guide decisions around interview venue (Seidman, 1991); however, some of the problems of inequity are often out of the researcher's hands (Herzog, 2005). Owing to the nature of the prison environment, neither the women nor I had any leverage on where the interviews took place and were guided by the hierarchy of the prison.

Despite limited autonomy in the location of interviews more control was available in relation to 'when' the interviews took place and this was negotiated between the women and me. Aiming to create as much flexibility as possible the interviews were scheduled around the women's work and educational commitments, visitation and home leaves.

Roll calls and pitfalls

The venue and timing of the interview proved to have a direct impact upon level of interruptions and distractions. Although every effort was made to work around the women's and the prison's schedule, interviews would occasionally be interrupted by

'lock down'⁵ or 'roll call'⁶. Awareness of impending interruption would often lead to 'clock watching' for both myself and the women, anxious that schedules were adhered to. The rooms within which the interviews occurred were rarely isolated. This was partly owing to availability but also for reasons of safety. Consequently, noise from activity in surrounding areas often created a distraction and concerns of being 'overheard'. Young children present during the interviews with two women on probation, created many distractions. These interviews occurred within a crèche facility at a women's centre. Although the crèche created a comfortable and appropriate environment, the competing needs of the child often created distraction and presented many challenges during transcription. Unfortunately, owing to the restrictions presented by the prison environment and a desire to work with the women around their needs and commitments, such interruptions and distractions were unavoidable.

The presence of the recording equipment also created distractions. The women would often make fun of themselves, mocking how they may sound on tape. The main distraction posed by the recording equipment presented as the women discussed particularly sensitive subjects or specific details that related directly to their offence. I interpreted this as anxiety over sharing such personal and intimate information and concerns over confidentiality. Bosworth (1999:74) notes that 'the control of knowledge in prisons is prized' with a lack of trust making women fearful of sharing personal information. I would often attempt to re-negotiate consent, reiterating the points within the consent form, if I sensed concerns over such issues.

⁵ Specified periods of time throughout the day where prisoners are held in their cells.

⁶ Specified times throughout the day when women have to record their attendance.

The ethics of anonymity: being heard, remaining silent

Ethical guidelines stress the importance of anonymity in research. This is generally achieved through the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identity within this study. To enable a more participatory approach, where possible, pseudonyms were chosen by the women themselves. Some women chose names that had a particular significance for them, others greatly enjoyed choosing 'fun' names. This approach did however create some practical difficulties. Duplication occurred which resulted in my having to assign one of the women a different name (Grinyer, 2002). I had initially attempted to differentiate between the women by using initials along with the chosen name. However, on reflection I felt that this was distracting and confusing for the reader and therefore changed the name to what I felt was a suitably similar name in terms of associations with age and culture. A woman of Asian Indian descent chose a typically 'English' name. My initial reaction was that this choice did not appear to be an 'equivalent' name (Grinyer, 2002) and I feared that it may distort apparent participant diversity. On reflection I wondered if the woman was resisting being defined by her ethnicity. Another woman's request to use her own name within the research documentation led me to wonder if it was the actual process of anonymity that the women were resisting. I recognised that I had not considered the assumptions that privilege anonymity and the consequences for this researching with women in prison.

Ethical codes of practice assume anonymity is desirable. However, identifiable stories of women in prison are regularly constructed and made public by others, through the media, in the courtroom, with their individual voices remaining silenced. Within the prison environment women are often referred to by their prison numbers.

Attaching a pseudonym to personal narratives may facilitate a continued sense of silencing and a loss of ownership of the stories told (Grinyer, 2002). Denying this important component of personal identity (Dinur et al, 1996) may also contribute to the deprivations of imprisonment (Goffman, 1961). However, facilitating the use of personal names may have been equally problematic, potentially having repercussions for the women themselves, the prisons involved and participants' families. I used pseudonyms throughout the study and wherever possible the women chose the names that they wished to represent their stories; however, this remains an area fraught with complexities and to minimise participant alienation the assumptions that privilege anonymity may need further exploration.

Emotionality

Interviewing was emotionally very challenging. Some authors have argued that the importance of 'emotionality' within qualitative research is often denied, particularly within criminological research (Bosworth, 2005; Jewkes, 2012). Although I had mentally prepared myself for the emotional content of the encounters, at times I was nevertheless surprised by the intensity of the experiences and emotions described. On occasion the presence of the recorder felt obtrusive and I asked the women if they would prefer that I turn it off if they became particularly upset. Equally, the recorder was not turned on until the women indicated that they were ready. If the women became upset breaks were offered for drinks, refreshments, cigarettes, to allow for the opportunity to rest, re-compose and re-consider. Sometimes I suggested terminating the interview yet the women insisted always on continuing. Many of the interviews concluded on positive notes as we talked of plans for release. If, toward the end of an interview, the woman remained anxious, we would sit and chat about more 'light-hearted' topics for a while, to ensure that no-one left the

interview upset. I had arranged that, if necessary, and in agreement with the women, they would be referred to the chaplaincy or The Listeners⁷, however, this need did not occur.

As recognised by Bosworth (1999), research with women in prison was emotionally exhausting. After our encounters, I experienced physical symptoms of loss of appetite, sleeplessness and increased anxiety. My responses often left me feeling inadequate as I struggled to reconcile what was an appropriate 'emotional' response. The first-hand experience gained of the turbulent nature (Liebling, 1999) of qualitative research increased my awareness of the value of reflexivity along with the need for structured supervision and debriefing support. I created a research journal to record my immediate emotional responses to interviews and returned to this during data analysis, particularly in relation to the reflexive reading (see page 135). My emotional responses to interviews were also discussed in supervision and my supervisors were available immediately after interviews for debriefing. This proved enormously valuable in helping me to process my responses to interviews. A more reflexive account of emotionality is offered in Chapter Six.

Establishing rapport

The significance of establishing rapport in research relationships has been eloquently explored in feminist literature (see Ribbens and Edwards, 1998; Miller et al, 2003:2012). This study highlighted many ethical and practical challenges to this process. Being escorted around the prison by a prison officer immediately highlighted me as an outsider, with the women and staff often staring in curiosity. Aware of prisoners' potential suspicion of researchers (Becker, 1967) I recognised

⁷ Samaritan trained peers

the need to work hard at 'doing' rapport (Duncombe and Jessop, 2008:120). Much of the literature relating to the difficulties in establishing rapport in the research encounter stresses the 'importance of achieving symmetry in the social identities of the interview pair' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:30). I anticipated that my identity as a woman and a mother, my social background and my geographical location in relation to many of the women in the study would help to mediate the research relationship. I recognised that I was actively illuminating these aspects of my identity, disclosing information about myself as a mother and my background in order to reap the benefits from intimacy gained through reciprocity (Oakley, 1981; Kirsch, 2005).

I also remained aware of the potential deceptiveness of research relationships (Gorelick, 1991:469; Cotterill, 1992; Duncombe and Jessop, 2008) that serve to replicate friendship. The women's questions of me (see page 163-164) illustrated their own awareness of the existence of such deception. It was therefore important to articulate my 'values regarding the research relationship' (Arvey, 2003:164). I highlighted the fact that the research was for my doctorate and that I would gain an educational qualification from it. I drew attention to the 'research' nature of the relationship during moments of what appeared to be unanticipated intimate disclosures by re-confirming consent and then again at the end of each interview. This transparency aimed to minimise deception, participant disappointment, and sense of alienation and exploitation (Kirsch, 2005). This transparency was informed by a respect for the person rather than 'friendship' (Kirsch, 2005; Duncombe and Jessop, 2008). A more reflexive approach to rapport is offered in Chapter Six.

A third presence

In reducing hierarchical barriers within the research relationship, much of the literature assumes a two way process between the researcher and the participant. It

tends not to explore the impact of a third hierarchical component. Little is known about how the environment can serve to impact on research relationships. As previously discussed, I aimed to reduce hierarchical research barriers by encouraging transparency and friendliness based upon respect for the person. On visiting the prison I tried to distance myself from the staff. I would dress casually, and where possible move around the prison alone or with the women rather than with staff. However, the prison environment often served to reinforce inequity and hierarchy. As a visitor to the prison, I was offered refreshments during group meetings with the women, yet the women prisoners with whom I was meeting were not. When preparing the interview refreshments I had brought to the prison I was provided with a ceramic mug but told to use the standardised plastic prison cups for the women. I was also instructed to use a different toilet to the women. On one occasion I was asked to sign a 'movement slip', granting a woman permission of movement between prison buildings when leaving the interview. Where possible I negotiated these obstacles, choosing to use the same cups and toilets as the women and asking a prison officer to sign the 'movement slip', but this was not always possible and barriers were reinforced.

Narrative interview and reflexivity

Storytelling is a familiar means of communication. It is this familiarity that I hoped would enable the women to feel at ease and take control of telling their stories (Harlow et al, 2009). However, this was problematic at times, and it became necessary to consider the assumptions inherent within the approach. Not only does narrative interviewing assume the capacity for reflexivity and that there is a story to be told (Miller, 2005) but also that the story will have a coherent sequence and plot (Frank, 1995). With a focus on reform and rehabilitation it could be argued that

imprisonment evokes a heightened sense of reflexivity making stories more readily available. However, at times some of the women appeared to struggle to construct and narrate their own stories.

As discussed by Harlow et al (2009:223), being asked to simply 'tell their story' lacked clarity for some of the women. Two women agreed to participate in the study on the proviso that I would offer more structure within the interview and 'ask questions'. The prompts therefore proved useful and the women went on to take control of their stories. For some women the difficulties persisted and it became necessary to construct a further series of prompts. Often focusing on specific events, the responses were often short and appeared to lack coherence and depth.

Some writers have argued that the requirement of reflexivity may make a narrative approach inappropriate for the developmentally immature (Luttrell, 2003; Harlow et al, 2009). This notion led me to question if a more structured approach may have made the research more accessible for some of the population of women in prison. However, I recognised that my concerns regarding the quality and depth of the data produced were based upon what I considered to be a 'good interview' (Birch and Miller, 2000). I had anticipated hearing stories of disruption and grand narratives of tragedy. I had assumed that the stories compiling of short responses and lacking in depth illustrated an absence of reflexivity. However, this denied the tellers' understanding of their own story and prioritised my own. As the findings of this research indicate, not all of the women's stories were embedded in grand narratives of tragedy with some women constructing imprisonment as biographically congruent and others attending more closely to the mundanity of everyday prison life.

Some of the stories told also appeared to lack continuity and coherence and were often difficult to hear and analyse. Frank (1995:98) argues that to have a reflexive grasp requires some distance from the chaos as 'those who are truly living the chaos cannot tell in words'. Frank (1995:109) goes on to argue that what he terms chaos stories (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four) should be honoured, as to deny them is to deny the teller and reinforces the notion of the modernist subject (Miller, 2005), as being 'bounded, rational and autonomous' (Alldred and Gillies, 2008:146). Embracing 'chaos narratives' of the women who participated in this study enabled exploration of what can and cannot be told of mothering and imprisonment and in what context.

Transcribing

Transcribing was something I had given very little thought prior to embarking on the task. I was keen not to wait until data collection was complete before starting transcription and therefore employed a professional transcriber recommended through the University for some of the early recordings. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriber (see Appendix Six). On the advice of my supervision team I began to transcribe the remaining interviews to enable me to become more fully immersed in the data. In total five interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and eleven were completed by myself. I always transcribed interviews myself that I considered particularly sensitive or where the woman had a high media profile.

I had initially approached transcribing as a laborious 'chore' without any methodological consideration (Oliver, 2005). On starting this task I soon realised that my inattention to this area was a massive oversight. I became overwhelmed with the

amount of questions it generated. I recognised that transcription is a theoretical process and requires transparency in order to increase the rigour and trustworthiness of the data and overall findings of the research (Davidson, 2009; Witcher, 2010).

Most qualitative studies have some form of a transcription process transforming the spoken word into a text format. However, despite the commonality of this process little attention is afforded to it in academic publications. Oliver (2005) identifies two approaches to transcription, the 'naturalised' and 'de-naturalised' approach. The 'naturalised' approach captures every utterance in as much detail as possible. The 'de-naturalised' approach represents a verbatim depiction of talk yet attempts to correct grammar, remove interview noise, including pauses and stutters, and standardises nonstandard accents (Oliver, 2005:1273). On reading the transcript I wanted to be able to hear the women speak and felt that if I de-naturalised the data something would be lost. The Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; 2003; 2008) method of analysis adopted within this research aims to re-insert the 'listening' element of analysis, listening and responding to the person being interviewed (Weller, 2012). With this in mind and also aiming to honour the participant (Schegloff, 1997) by maintaining their 'unique meaning', my approach to transcription was largely influenced by naturalised approaches.

Being from the same geographical location of many of the women who participated in the study presented some advantages for transcription. Such advantages included a familiarity with the dialect and local terms and phrases. I was keen to protect these colloquialisms, accents and regional dialects and therefore visited literature on

linguistics in order to explore how to present this sympathetically. As I continued with this approach I was concerned that the written text appeared fragmented and may be difficult for anyone other myself to interpret. I was also concerned as to how the women would consider this written interpretation given the opportunity to view their transcripts. Despite aiming to honour the participants' spoken words (Schegloff, 1997), I was anxious that the women may not recognise this as their own talk and, as discussed by Oliver (2005), I worried that they may not be comfortable if they did. I wondered if the women's transcripts would look the same if they had transcribed their own talk or if a different method had been used such as email interviews.

I also became aware that I was being less sympathetic to my own talk than to that of the women. I realised that I had adopted a more 'denaturalised' approach and was 'tidying' up my own talk. This may have resulted from a failure to recognise the significance of interpreting the meaning and impact of my own talk. I also became aware of the assumptions of education and socio-economic class embedded within regional accents and dialects that are evident in the texts produced within naturalised approaches (Oliver, 2005). I was increasingly uncomfortable in seeing my words transcribed verbatim and wondered if I was aiming to conceal my own 'working class' background.

This dilemma generated concerns about the way in which I was potentially reinforcing and contributing to the inequalities of power and control in the research process (Standing, 1998). This raised representational concerns; I had the power and control to choose how I represented myself and the women, a power that the women did not. If I was uncomfortable with the written representation of my spoken word I wondered if it was appropriate to continue with a naturalised approach for the

women. Bhavnani (1994:29) argues that a feminist project 'should not reproduce the researched in ways in which they are represented within dominant society ... which re-inscribe inequality'. Standing (1998:192) has argued that 'language acts as a barrier, a way to reinforce inequalities ... creating hierarchies of knowledge'. Yet I was also concerned that homogenising the women's voices, language, accents and dialect, may deny the fact that working class and lower-working class women are over represented in prison. Doing so would also deny their knowledge and ways of knowing.

English was not the first language for one of the women who participated in the study. Having transcribed the interview verbatim I tried to capture the woman's accent and her 'broken' English. When providing feedback my supervisors drew attention to some of the ways in which I had interpreted and represented her use of language, concerned that these were typing errors. Yet it was particularly significant to capture the woman's words as she spoke them. The participant told of how she had been asked by social services to ensure that all her communications with her children, both verbal and written, were in English and not in her first language. During the interview the woman told of how deeply upset she was by this suggesting that it further restricted her relationship with her children, impeding her ability to communicate with them. I felt that by 'tidying up' her accent and language I would be further adding to this marginalisation.

I recognised that a more reflexive approach to transcription was required considering the aims and objectives of the research (Willig, 2008). As discussed in Chapter Four, personal narratives are informed by public narratives in cultural context and social structures (Somers, 1994; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). Therefore, it was important to maintain the meaning of the spoken word and capture the purpose of the narrative

(King and Horrocks, 2010). The relational approach also recognises that narratives are constructed for a particular audience. The shared socio-economic background within the research relationships would undoubtedly have informed the personal narratives provided. My own 'talk' was therefore significant in the construction of the knowledge produced and warranted equal consideration and preservation. The approach to transcribing was therefore positioned on a continuum of naturalised and denaturalised approaches. Despite adopting a predominantly naturalised approach that attributed attention to both the words of the women and myself, I paid less attention to preserving regional accents so as not to re-produce the dominant representations of women in prison⁸.

Listening to the stories of mothers in prison

Introducing the Listening Guide

I was initially overwhelmed by the differing approaches to narrative analysis whilst equally frustrated by the lack of what seemed to be a 'perfect fit' for my research. As noted by Mauthner and Doucet (1998:139) 'analysis is a crucial stage of the research as it carries the potential to decrease or amplify the volume of our respondents' voices'. It was important that the analysis approach adopted was consistent with and guided by the theoretical assumptions brought to the research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Reissman, 2004; King and Horrocks, 2010). With this in mind, a method of analysis needed to identify women's individual agency whilst facilitating critical examination of the public, meta and conceptual narratives that impact the personal 'ontological' narratives told (Somers, 1994) (as discussed in Chapter Four).

⁸ See Appendix Twelve for example of transcript

The narrative methodological approach adopted within this study recognises that research narratives are a joint endeavour constructed between researcher and participant, as discussed in Chapter Four. Unlike the original work of Gilligan (1982), I therefore reject the idea that research 'gives voice' to participants. To 'give voice' may assume an essentialist notion of 'voice' and that researchers gain unmediated access to the otherwise silenced and invisible pure 'voice' of participants (Edwards and Weller, 2012). As noted by Andrews (2007) researchers often create empowerment narratives to story what they are doing and why. Andrews (2007:42) notes that it is 'far better to see oneself as a giver [of voice] than a taker'. Reissman (1993:8) illustrates that 'representational decisions cannot be avoided' and must be confronted and made transparent. It was therefore also important that the method of analysis recognised the co-constructed nature of narratives, incorporating a reflexive element, encouraging attention to the way in which my social/cultural background and theoretical assumptions may have impacted upon the research relationships and narrative findings. Influenced by the work of Reissman (1993) I therefore, alternatively claim to 'hear', 'record' and 'interpret' the voices of the women who participated in the study (Reissman, 1993).

I therefore wanted a method of analysis that would recognise that women's stories of motherhood and imprisonment would be co-constructed, shaped by structural factors, dominant cultural narratives and individual agency (Somers, 1994). With these considerations in mind I was drawn to the Listening Guide method of data analysis (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). The Listening Guide combines a reflexive and multi-layered approach and 'simultaneously works with critical subjects through

their 'ontological narratives' and constructed subjects through highlighting the 'conceptual narratives' within which everyday narratives are told and heard' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:407).

Developing an interest in the Listening Guide I engaged with many scholarly activities to further my knowledge and understanding of this method. In February 2011 I attended a Listening Guide Master class. The Master class was facilitated at the University of Huddersfield by the co-founder of the method, Natasha Mauthner, alongside Ruth Deery, who also has expertise in the application of the Guide. Following the Master class I also attended a Feminist Research Methods Workshop, at East Anglia University, in December, 2011. Natasha Mauthner was a keynote speaker at the event which provided great opportunity to further my understanding of the Guide and discuss this with her in detail.

As I discuss later within this chapter, myself and two other PhD researchers interested in the Listening Guide established a postgraduate student led study group. Meeting on a monthly basis, the group provides ongoing peer support, practical experience and theoretical discussion to develop researcher skills and experience with a specific focus on the Listening Guide. The group has been established for two years and still meets regularly with people now attending from across the country. Hoping to locate the guide within broader theoretical and methodological frameworks the group was keen to learn from other leading scholars in this area of expertise. We therefore decided to facilitate a Feminist Narrative Symposium. We approached four prominent feminist academics, including Natasha Mauthner, who all agreed to participate. The event was held at the University of Huddersfield in June, 2012, attracting practitioners, academics and researchers from interdisciplinary subjects

across Britain. Following on from the success of this event I was involved in a further symposium event to celebrate International Women's Day, 2013, entitled 'Women's stories: Women's Lives'. This event was to showcase feminist research at the University of Huddersfield. The events that I have both attended and organised have been an integral part of my development as a researcher. They have also facilitated the development of broader peer support networks and opportunities for collaborative working.

The principles of 'The Listening Guide'

The Listening Guide 'holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology' that views 'human beings as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:125). The Listening Guide aims to translate this ontology into methodology and methods of analysis through a process of four separate readings (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). The method explores individuals' narrative accounts in terms of their relationships to the broader social, structural and cultural context within which they live (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:126). The guide is embedded within narrative frameworks that I have introduced and explored within Chapter Four.

First reading: relational and reflexively constituted narratives⁹

The first reading of The Listening Guide is 'a reflexive reading of narrative', composing two elements (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:405). The first element focuses on the 'overall plot and the story that is being told by the respondent, whilst the second element is a reflexive reading in which the researcher reads for herself 'placing herself, with her own particular background, history and experiences, in relation to the [narrator]' (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:126). The narrative element of

⁹ Titles of readings taken from Doucet and Mauthner (2008)

this reading may vary in relation to the researcher's theoretical orientation (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

Part one: what's the story?

As Mauthner and Doucet (1998) suggest, during the first reading of the transcript I listened to occurring main events, characters, recurrent images, words, metaphors and contradictions in the narratives of the women. These are common elements of narrative analysis (see Mishler, 1986; Reissman, 2004 and Elliott, 2005). Despite ample discussion within literature relating to the reflexive element of this reading, including both the theoretical foundations and practical direction, I felt that guidelines for the first element were inadequate. Having determined 'what' I should read for, as indicated by Mauthner and Doucet (1998), I remained uncertain as to what to do 'with' it. Therefore, I felt it necessary to revisit the broader literature on narrative analysis of plot.

I found the concept of 'evaluation' (Bamberg, 2004; Presser, 2008) particularly useful. Chase (1995:2) suggests that during story telling the narrator takes responsibility for 'making the relevance of the telling clear'. Similarly, Bamberg (2004:367) suggests that characters, events and situations 'are chosen for the interactive purpose of fending off and mitigating misinterpretations' and the narrator's evaluations of such 'function to convey how they want to be understood'. Similarly, Presser (2008) suggests that 'evaluation' establishes the kind of self that is presented as it reveals the attitude of the narrator to the narrative. Therefore, within this reading I was listening to how the narrator constructed and evaluated events, characters and situations and in doing so how they were constructing themselves. I then drew on the narrative notion of 'global coherence' (Agar and Hobbs, 1982; Polanyi, 1985; Polonoff, 1987; Linde, 1993) to explore the purpose of the evaluations

and how they served to establish the overall point of the narrative (Presser, 2008:54). This approach facilitated the consideration of women's pathways to prison and their changing mothering roles. This reading also helped me to explore if imprisonment was constructed as disruptive, reinforcing or continuous within their life course trajectory.

Part two: what's my story?

The second element of this first reading encourages the researcher to focus on their own responses to the interviews to recognise 'how [they] are socially, emotionally and intellectually located' (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:127) in relation to the participants. Doucet and Mauthner (2008) argue that the way in which we come to know narrative is informed by our own subjectivities. A worksheet technique is advocated for this reading. This worksheet consists of two columns. The respondent's transcript is to be placed in one column with the second column used by the researcher to record their own reactions to and interpretations of the transcript (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003)¹⁰. I found the worksheet technique advocated by Mauthner and Doucet (1998) and Brown and Gilligan (1992) for this reading to be too restrictive. I therefore compiled my responses and constructed a brief reflexive account of my reading for each transcript¹¹.

I remained aware that my personal background, history and experiences had already informed the research greatly, as discussed in Chapter One. I therefore recognised the potential of a dominant emotional response. In listening to the accounts I often found myself upset when hearing the anxieties, fears and pains of the women in relation to their children and found myself envisaging being separated from my own

¹⁰ See example of how I used this in Appendix Seven.

¹¹ See example in Appendix Eight

children. I recognised that at times, this emotional response led me to prioritise narratives of tragedy and disruption and negate narratives of continuity. It therefore became important to revisit the aims, objectives and theoretical foundations of the research iteratively throughout analysis. This brought issues of resistance and resilience back to the forefront of the research and encouraged me to continually challenge my assumptions.

The Listening Guide also advocates listening for 'critical dimensions of social location such as race, class and gender especially those that do not resonate with the speaker's experience' (Brown, 1994:392). As I go on to discuss in more detail in Chapter Six, the women who participated in this study were diverse; however, we shared characteristics including gender and mothering; there were both similarities and differences in race, class and age. The complexities of reflexively considering and negotiating difference have been eloquently explored (see Wilkinson and Kitinger, 1996). I found that the assumptions underlying similarities were more often difficult to identify and articulate than those of difference (Hurd and McIntyre, 1996). Many of the transcripts were filled with 'you know'. Although some authors have interpreted this as 'stumbling inarticulateness' (DeVault, 1990:103), I interpreted this as the women looking to me for reassurance and understanding based upon a social, cultural or political connection. I questioned the data and the assumptions embedded with the women's words, asking 'what is it that the women assume I know' and 'why is this so'. Similarly, the word 'obviously', was also frequently used. I interpreted this use as representing an anticipation that I would understand the attached meaning based upon social and cultural norms, values and expectations. For example, Lauren suggested 'I obviously wanted to breastfeed him'. I interpreted this statement as Lauren drawing on dominant mothering ideologies and

authoritative knowledge and expertise. See Chapter Six for a greater and more in depth reflexive account of my approaches to the research as a whole and to the analysis.

Seconding reading: tracing narrated subjects

Following the method suggested by Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) adaptation of Brown and Gilligan's (1992) original method, the second reading attends to 'I'. This reading traces how 'participants represent themselves in interviews through attention to personal statements' (Edwards and Weller, 2012:203). This particular reading attends to 'the stream of consciousness that is carried by the first person references that run through the interview, rather than being contained by the full structure of sentences' (Edwards and Weller, 2012:205). Specifically listening to the 'I' encourages the researcher to listen to 'how [the woman] speaks of [herself] before [the researcher] speaks of her' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992:27-8). However, epistemological tensions emerge when listening for 'I', as an essentialist 'I' may be assumed. Edwards and Weller (2012:207) note;

'the notion of 'I' invites us to think of something that is part of a person's make-up that drives or influences what they do, think or say, and that 'I' gives access to that'.

Consistent with a relational ontology it is imperative that the 'I' reading is therefore not considered in isolation. The 'I' should be considered in relation to the other three remaining readings for the narrated self to emerge.

Following the practical instructions for this method I used a coloured pen to highlight elements of the women's stories that contained personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'you' along with the accompanying verb and any other seemingly important

words (Gilligan et al, 2003). The lines highlighted within this reading were often 'lifted' in sequential order to construct 'I-poems' (Debold, 1990; Edwards and Weller, 2012; Gilligan et al, 2003)¹². 'I' poems offer a more creative approach to explore and analyse the second reading. The poems help the researcher to trace 'contrapuntal voices' within individual transcripts and across data sets, tracking the 'ebbs and flows of change and continuity' (Edwards and Weller, 2012:205). Although Gilligan et al (2003) assert that the series of highlighted 'I' statements will naturally fall into stanzas, I would more readily agree with Edwards and Weller (2012:205) who suggest that the construction of 'I' poems is an 'intuitive process, with the analyst judging what is important to understanding the interviewee's sense of self'.

Exploring the 'I' in 'relation' highlighted the women's struggle to narrate and negotiate the competing and contrasting 'I's' of the subordinate 'prisoner', the un-agentive 'offender' and the autonomous 'mother'. Somers (1994:631) suggests 'struggles over narrations are thus struggles over identity' and therefore this reading was particularly helpful.

Third reading: reading for relational narrated subjects

In this third reading I listened for how the women talked about interpersonal relationships with their children, partners, family, friends and broader social networks and institutions, including the prison. This reading recognises narrated subjects as intrinsically relational and as part of networks of relations (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008). Kerby (1991) suggests that stories of the 'other' form an integral part of the construction of self. Listening to how the women spoke of others and evaluated themselves in relation to others became particularly useful in exploring how the

¹² I poems will be offered within the narrative findings in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine. For a greater range of examples see Appendix Nine

women wanted to be understood. Within this reading I also explored where relationships were constructed as supportive or constraining; if relationships were disrupted, disruptive or continuous and times when the narrator struggled to articulate this. Pilley Edwards (2005) cautions that enforced relationality can be disabling for some women as it restricts their autonomy. However, directed by the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), I was listening for relationships within broader cultural and structural contexts.

As with the reading for I-sequences, I adopted a different coloured pen to trace elements of the transcript that related to relationships. Reading for relationships was both difficult and valuable. Within this particular research relationships were evident in most of the women's talk; I was therefore overwhelmed at times at the amount of data this particular reading addressed. However, it was most valuable in exploring how the woman's identity was constructed in relation to others. The reading also highlighted a narrative of support with family members. It also highlighted key relationships with the prison and prison staff in maintaining a sense of self and in constructing a new reformed self.

Fourth reading: reading for structured subjects

The fourth reading involved locating the women's stories 'within broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts' (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:132). This particular reading attends to the link between 'micro-level narratives [and] macro-level processes and structures' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:406). This final reading therefore creates the context in which to consider the other three readings (Paliadelis and Cruickshank, 2008) and positions subjects in relation (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). In exploring the women's stories I considered how they reflected or integrated dominant mothering ideologies and institutional discourses of prison. This reading

highlighted how the women predominantly constructed a moral self by evaluating events, themselves and their relationships in relation to cultural values and norms including education, employment and dominant cultural mothering ideologies. The women's stories also appeared to be informed by their situational context and publicly available narratives of 'reform' and 'victimhood' associated with imprisonment.

The listening guide.....and then what

The four readings provided a way in to the stories, however, having completed the four readings I felt unsure as to what to do next. Frank (2010) argues that the scientific nature of prescriptive and formulaic narrative analysis often closes and controls stories, preventing them from 'breathing'. Both Frank (2010) and Reissman (2004) argue that flexibility and fluidity are required in the exploration of stories to allow for intellectual craftsmanship and movement of thought. Frank (2010:108) urges researchers to 'slow down' and take time to listen, and have patience to learn.

Having completed the readings for each of the transcripts I spent time reading, re-reading and exploring the women's individual stories. Wanting to respect the arc of the women's stories (Frank, 2010) I created summarised narrative accounts of the women's transcripts¹³. Biographical disruption was then utilised as a framework to consider the multiple narratives (Frank, 2010). This proved valuable for understanding the depth and complexity of individual stories, highlighting similarities and significant differences (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). However, owing to the time implications of this approach I soon recognised that it would not be possible to construct the narrative accounts for all 16 participants. I therefore continued with shorter summaries for the remaining participants.

¹³ See Appendix Eleven for an example.

This approach enabled me to construct core narratives (Mishler, 1986) for each of the women, informed by the theoretical framework. During this process I remained mindful of the second stage which incorporates the shift from a focus on individual transcripts to viewing the data set as a whole (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). I constructed electronic files of emerging narratives to which I added segments of transcripts, quotes and notes. Returning to the data set as a whole, 'primary narratives' were then constructed, based upon the identified similarities and differences across the women's accounts. As will be explored in the findings chapters, the primary narratives were 'The wounded mother', 'The unbecoming mother' and 'The suspended mother'.

Summaries, narratives and transcripts were explored in supervision in order to challenge and explore elements of the interview that may have been emphasised or neglected. Peer debriefing (Robson, 2004) was also utilised during the 'Listening Guide Study Group'. A discussion around the definition of 'plot' within the first reading and how we were each interpreting and using this reading is an example of the support and exploration offered by the group. The group has therefore been an integral part of my development as a researcher.

Introducing the women who participated in the study

The narrative findings of this research, as presented in Chapters, Seven, Eight and Nine, are based on the stories of sixteen mothers in prison and it is their stories that remain at the centre of the research. The main concern of the research is to understand how women make sense of motherhood and imprisonment and is therefore not concerned with the factuality of their stories. Before going on to present the research narratives based on the women's stories, it is important to introduce the

'tellers' (Medlicott, 2004) of those stories. Again, these introductions are not offered as a means to judge the validity of their stories or as a way of profiling the women, but as a way of learning something about how they came to tell their stories. Throughout the research I made no attempts to collate demographic data or details of the offences or sentences. Therefore, the introductions presented are edited narrative accounts based upon the stories the women told.

These short biographies provide some background information to the women who tell their stories. However, they are by no means representative of their nuanced lives. I have deliberately not included their ages, relationship status, ethnicity or social background. These individual factors have been frequently explored within academic literature in relation to mothering, although not specifically in relation to imprisonment. Whilst the women whose stories feature in this research were diverse in relation to these factors, it was important that the stories were allowed to be greater than the sum of their parts with the women's voices remaining central. Williams (1991:256) reminds us of this point, suggesting that we should not impose boundaries on individuals' identities with false certainties of categories but consider individuals in relation to a number of social relations and 'governing narratives'. The women's identities are multi-faceted, informed by the intersection of many differing factors. My decision to omit these details from their biographies was to prevent the potential profiling and stereotyping of the women before listening to the stories they tell of themselves. For that same reason I also omit from these biographies the offences for which they were sentenced. In the following chapters I often add these details where they are contextually appropriate, otherwise, they remain absent, as I feel they offer little extra to their stories. What did appear to be significant was the stage of their sentence the women were at when telling their stories and the type

(Open or Closed)¹⁴ of prison they were currently in. Women nearing the end of their sentence more frequently constructed the narrative of the wounded mother, as detailed in Chapter Seven. Therefore, I have chosen to add this information. When acknowledging the length of sentence, I refer to the sentence given by the court; many of these women (not all) would serve approximately half of this time.

Penny

Penny is a mother of three who was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Penny had had continuous contact with her eldest daughter throughout her sentence but was struggling to maintain contact with her younger two children owing to a difficult relationship with their father. Penny was approximately two thirds of the way through her sentence at the time of interview within an Open prison; however, Penny had spent most of her sentence in a Closed establishment.

Anne

At the time of interview Anne, a mother of one, was nearing the end of a life sentence. Anne had spent time in seven different prisons throughout her sentence and at the time of interview was at an Open Prison. Anne suggests that throughout her sentence there were times when contact with her daughter was difficult but had worked to maintain a continuous relationship with her.

Fi

Fi, a mother of four, was sentenced to four and a half years in prison. Fi was approximately half way through her sentence at the time of interview. Although initially taken to a Closed prison, Fi had served the majority of her sentence within

¹⁴ Open and closed refers to the security categorisation of the prison. Within the male prison estate there are four levels of security categorisation. Within the female estate there are only two, 'Closed' and 'Open'.

Open conditions. Throughout her sentence Fi had maintained regular contact with her children who were being cared for by a close family friend.

Anita

Anita is a mother of two who was sentenced to nine years. Anita was approximately half way through her sentence and within an Open Prison at the time of interview. Anita's young son was being cared for by her older daughter and she had contact with both throughout.

Lauren

Sentenced to three years, Lauren gave birth to her first child during the early stages of her sentence. Initially within a closed prison Lauren was moved to an open prison soon after her son's birth and he remained with her throughout her sentence. When I first met with Lauren she was near the end of her prison sentence. At the time of interview Lauren had been released.

Amy

Amy, sentenced to three years, was pregnant at the time of sentence and gave birth to her first child during her imprisonment. Moved from a closed to an open prison, Amy remained with her son throughout her sentence. I met Amy shortly after she had been released from prison on license and was under probation supervision.

Rose

Rose, a mother of three, was sentenced to four years. After being separated from her children prior to imprisonment Rose re-built relationships with her children during her sentence and hoped to be reunited with them upon release. In the early stages of her sentence Rose had limited contact with her children which increased to

regular contact as she re-built relationships with them. Rose was released from prison shortly after our interview.

Celia

At the time of sentence Celia was pregnant and also had a seven year old son. Celia was originally sentenced to five years; this was reduced to three and a half years on appeal. Originally within a closed prison, Celia moved to open conditions when her baby was born. Owing to the distance from home, maintaining regular contact with her son was drastically reduced when Celia was transferred to the open prison. Celia was nearing the end of her prison sentence and was soon to be released at the time of interview.

Emma

Emma's daughter was being cared for by her parents throughout her sentence. Emma maintained regular contact with her daughter throughout her imprisonment and planned to be reunited with her upon release. Emma had been moved to an open prison toward the end of her sentence and was days away from release when interviewed.

Sally

Sally is a mother of one who was sentenced to four and a half years. Sally was at an open prison at the time of telling her story but had previously been at a closed prison and was approximately half way through her sentence when we spoke. Sally maintained regular contact with her daughter throughout her sentence.

Clare

Clare was half way through a Life sentence within a closed establishment at the time of telling her story. Clare had had minimal visitation contact with her daughter throughout her sentence but remained in contact through letter and telephone.

Kelly

Kelly is a mother of two, sentenced to twenty one months. At the time of telling her story Kelly was at a closed prison in the process of moving to open conditions. Kelly found visits from her children particularly difficult and therefore reduced visits but maintained regular phone and letter contact.

Renata

Renata is a mother of five. Initially sentenced to seventeen years, Renata's sentence was reduced to sixteen years on appeal. Renata's children, who were initially being cared for by her parents, were taken into local authority care and contact was problematic. At the time of interview Renata was in the early stages of her sentence.

Suzette

Suzette, a mother of one, was serving a ten month sentence and her release was imminent at the time of interview. Suzette had previously served a prison sentence and her mother had gained a residency order for her eleven year old daughter. At the time of telling her story Suzette's mother was refusing Suzette contact with her daughter.

Louise

Louise is a mother of two, nearing the end of a ten month sentence. Initially being cared for by their father, Louise's two children had been taken into local authority care half way through her sentence. Louise still had regular contact with her children and planned to be reunited with them upon release.

Lyndsey

Lyndsey is a mother of three, with two adult daughters and one daughter of fourteen years. Lyndsey had just started a two week sentence in a closed prison when we spoke and suggested that she had been in and out of jail all her life. Sally indicated that during her imprisonment she had had little contact with her daughters.

Summary

Within this chapter I have detailed the methods adopted to complete this study. In order to contextualise the methods, discussions of the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the research have also been embedded within this chapter. The complexities of negotiating access within a closed institution have been explored whilst considering the ethical and practical challenges of recruitment and negotiating consent. The challenges presented by narrative interviewing along with the need for a more reflexive approach to transcribing have also been identified. Ethical issues and reflexivity have formed an integral and iterative part of this chapter presenting how these challenges were explored. The Listening Guide method of analysis has been introduced and explored. Within this chapter I have also introduced the women who participated in the study. By offering these introductions I have aimed to provide a way of showing something about how the women may have come to tell their stories. The following chapter will present a more detailed approach to reflexivity.

Chapter Six

Reflexivity, narrative and personal biography

Introduction

The significance of reflexivity in relation to methodologies and epistemologies has been emphasised within feminist research (Doucet, 1998). The researcher is considered a 'central figure [that] influences the collection, selection, and interpretation of data' (Finlay, 2002:531). Reflexivity is suggested by some researchers to be self-indulgent. However, drawing on the work of Stanley (1993), Doucet and Mauthner (2008:404) argue that in interpreting the narratives of others 'we rely strongly on our own subjectivities in knowing' requiring on-going reflexivity. The issue of reflexivity was briefly presented within Chapter One as I introduced both myself and the research project. It was then discussed again within Chapter Five as I reflexively explored the methods adopted within this research. The focus of this reflexive chapter is a more in depth consideration of both reflexivity as a methodological tool and the reflexive account of my research journey. My intention is to consider reflexivity within a narrative framework. I acknowledge my own multi-layered position and consider the way in which this has or has not influenced my approach to the research and the production of knowledge and what can be known of this impact.

I maintain that my research, my academic journey and my social positions are inextricably linked. Over the last eight years my life has been immersed in motherhood and mothering, both in my role and identity as 'mum' and as a researcher exploring this subject area. I therefore felt it particularly pertinent to

explore in greater depth the way in which my own shifting and disrupted biography, immersed in ontological and theoretical assumptions, has impacted upon the claims to knowledge within this research. As with the accounts of the women who participated in this study, I recognise that my reflexive account is also a narrative construction. The narrative account, whilst reflexive, provides an opportunity for identity construction and is not an objective report. The implications of this for research and for reflexivity as a methodological tool will be discussed further later within this chapter.

I begin this chapter by exploring current debates around reflexivity. I continue by making explicit the way in which reflexivity is adopted within this research. To do this I revisit elements of narrative theory, as discussed in Chapter Four, to consider a more transparent and ethical approach to reflexivity. After making explicit my reflexive approach I continue by exploring some of the challenges to my assumptions that reflexivity has generated and the impact on my research.

Reflexivity

I begin this chapter by asking what reflexivity is. I go on to define how I have used reflexivity as a methodological tool. My relationship with reflexivity has been dynamic, shifting, developing and growing throughout my research journey. My understanding of reflexivity as I write this account, at the end of the research process, is significantly different from what it was at the start of my journey. I will try and make explicit the development of this journey throughout the process of this chapter. Therefore, considerations of my impact on the research processes and outcomes 'now' may be different to what they were throughout the different research stages. Reflexivity is therefore not a static tool 'applied' to the research but is partial

and temporal. I therefore aim to provide greater transparency in both my reflexive research journey and my journey with reflexivity.

What is reflexivity?

Reflexivity has become a central tenet of qualitative research and in particular feminist research; however, reflexivity is often adopted and discussed without the researcher making explicit their understanding and use of it (Pillow, 2003). Throughout my academic journey I have become increasingly aware of the connection between my biography and my research. As I began my doctoral journey the issue of reflexivity was therefore pertinent; however, the question of what reflexivity actually 'is', how to do 'it' and use 'it' to produce better research, remained unanswered. I recognised that before I could discover 'how' to do reflexivity I needed to ascertain 'what' reflexivity was or, more significantly, what reflexivity meant to 'me' in the context of my research.

Exploration of academic journal articles, theses and research texts raised more questions than it provided answers. Although reflexivity is a common methodological tool, it is often adopted differently by different researchers (Burr, 1995; Pillow, 2003). Confusion arose in the lack of distinction between the terms 'reflection' and 'reflexivity', which are often used interchangeably (Burr, 1995; Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003; D'Cruz et al, 2007). Beck et al (1994:5) consider this to be a 'fundamental misunderstanding'; yet Smart (1999: cited in Dyke et al, 2012:833) has argued that enforced distinctions are 'analytically unnecessary' as the two terms are inextricably linked. I attempt to make explicit my understanding of the two terms to offer greater transparency in how they have been used in relation to my own research.

Drawing on Dewey (1938:86-87), Pillow (2003:177) suggests that reflection

‘is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock of intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organisation and of the disciplined mind’.

Reflection, therefore, is closely linked to knowledge and is considered a ‘project of the self’ (D’Cruz et al, 2007:76). Dyke et al (2012:832) suggest that ‘people’s ability to reflect upon their circumstances shapes their concerns, and in turn influences the way they choose to act in the world’. Reflection therefore does not require an ‘other’ (Pillow, 2003). Reflexivity, on the other hand, demands both an ‘other’ ... some self-conscious awareness of self-scrutiny’ (Chiseri-Strater, 1996:130, cited in Pillow, 2003) and requires individuals to consider themselves in relation to others (D’Cruz et al, 2007). Finlay (2002:532) therefore suggests that ‘the [two] concepts are perhaps best viewed on a continuum where both ends are acknowledged to be important across the stages of a project’. I draw my own understanding from Doucet and Mauthner (2008) who highlight this interdependent relationship, suggesting;

‘reflexivity requires ‘a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference’ [reflection] ... in order to consider how ‘the personnel and process of doing research’ affect claims to knowledge and the ‘products of research [reflexivity]’.

Many scholars recognise differing ways in which reflexivity operates, with many typologies developed (for greater exploration of these typologies see; Pillow, 2003; Keso et al, 2009; Dyke et al 2012). Whilst not always made explicit, these different approaches appear to represent differing ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the researcher. Finlay (2003) makes specific links between the different types of reflexivity and their theoretical underpinnings. Of particular interest to this study are the links made between reflexivity and social constructionism.

Social constructionists highlight the co-constructed nature of qualitative research and therefore stress the significance of exploring the relationship between researcher and research participants. It is this relationship 'which is seen to fundamentally shape research results' (Finlay, 2002:534). In exploring this approach to reflexivity I recognised certain dominant trends that seemed either incompatible with my research methodology or left me with a sense of uncertainty. Whilst I recognise the significance of subjectivity in relation to reflexivity, as noted by Patai (1994; cited in Pillow, 2003), I was often left feeling unsure how acknowledging my 'feelings' or my 'social position' produced better research. I also recognised a potential disjuncture between my own assumptions of my positioning and those of the women who participated in the study. Questioning how I could ever really understand the impact of 'myself' on the findings of the research led me to consider the potential role of reflexive accounts within qualitative research, that are often presented as 'objective reports or truth claims' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1284). It was therefore imperative to revisit the assumptions of narrativity underpinning this study (as highlighted in Chapters Three and Four) in order to reconsider my relationship with reflexivity.

Reflexivity and narrativity

Narrative theory suggests that the self is fluid, constructed and reconstructed over time and place and within interpersonal relations (Somers, 1994). From this perspective narrative is viewed as a creative process accommodating agency and intentionality in which individuals create their own multiple and often contradictory realities (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). Individuals are therefore only 'imperfectly knowable' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1383). Yet, reflexivity as a methodological

tool is often 'dependent upon a subject or subjects to reflect upon how the subject is thought' (Pillow, 2003:180), therefore relying upon modernist notions of the subject as fixed, singular and knowable. A disparity therefore emerges between the construction of research participants and researchers as subjects. This approach often privileges researchers' accounts as 'more sociologically informed' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1284). The notion of the researcher being more knowable than participants seemed untenable with the theoretical assumptions underpinning my research.

Narrativity assumes that individuals constantly interact with their environment and that narratives of the past are constructed in light of new experiences and identities. Determining the overall impact of the researcher on the research is, therefore, problematic (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008) as the reflexive journey is never really complete. Interpretation of the research processes and outcomes is fluid, shifting with new experiences and knowledge (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011). Equally, as noted in Chapter Four, narrative accounts provide an opportunity for identity construction. Reflexive accounts are therefore 'as much stories of the self as they are stories of the past' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1284). Accounts of researchers' emotions and who they believe they are should therefore be considered in relation to the reconstructed nature of narrativity (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011). Reflexive accounts are therefore both partial and temporal and 'what appears in these narrations is a selection only' (Stanley, 2002:144). Reflexivity then becomes a continuing model of self-analysis that not only questions the assumptions that we as researchers bring to the research but also the meaning underpinning the reflexive accounts that we present. Adopting this form of analysis to researchers' personal

biographies can provide a greater level of 'moral integrity, a commitment to be honest, transparent [and] ethical research practice[s]' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1284). It is with this commitment to reflexivity that I now go on to revisit some of the dilemmas that I raised earlier within this chapter on page 152; what can I know of who I am and how does this impact upon the research findings and processes? How does acknowledging how I feel produce better or more transparent research and what does my narrative reflexive account serve to say about myself, who I am or how I want to be known?

Reflexivity and subjectivity

Researcher subjectivity is a central element of reflexivity within qualitative research. The researcher is encouraged to ask questions such as 'who am I?', 'who have I been?', 'who do I think I am?' and 'how do I feel?' (Pillow, 2003). I was mindful of contributions from Patai (1994) who argues that such acknowledgements are of little methodological use if they are not considered in relation to their impact upon the research. Therefore, from a methodological perspective, it was also important to ask how these things affect data collection and analysis. This acknowledges that the way in which 'knowledge is acquired, organised, and interpreted is relevant to what claims are made' (Altheide and Johnson, 1998, cited in Pillow, 2003:176).

This approach to reflexivity has been criticised with some scholars arguing that reflexivity is 'at best self-indulgent, narcissistic and tiresome and at worst, undermining the conditions necessary for emancipatory research' (Pillow, 2003:176). Similarly, Finlay (2002:532) warns of the potential to 'fall into an infinite regress of excessive self-analysis at the expense of focusing on the research participants'. Reflexivity does not generate objectivity and therefore 'we do not escape from the

consequences of our positions by talking about them endlessly' (Patai, 1994:70). Although reflexivity is fraught with ambiguity and complexity, I maintain that it is a useful methodological tool (Finlay, 2002), facilitating a more transparent and ethical approach to research. In agreement with Pillow (2003), I do not believe that the reflexive project is obsolete, but rather that we need to pay further attention to the way in which we as researchers may or may not impact upon the research and how understanding this impact can lead to better research. I believe the way to achieve this is to engage with a more narratively informed approach to reflexivity within my research.

Drawing upon the narrative approach adopted within this study and the theoretical framework of biographical disruption I was particularly inspired by Doucet's (1998) approach to reflexivity. Doucet (1998:2) suggested that it is important to consider not only our multiple social positions but how these 'intersect with the particulars of our personal biographies and how these intersections influence the processes of conducting research'. It was therefore important to consider my social locations as fluid and unstable and in relation to my personal shifting and disrupted biography. Therefore, this section of this reflexive chapter will continue by considering my social location[s] in relation to my biography and the impact on the research.

Social positioning

Reflexivity encourages researchers to 'to identify, be sensitive to and document how their social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour affect all stages of the research process' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1283). In doing so the researcher is therefore required to name their social locations. Both differences and similarities

between researcher and participant are highlighted and considered during this process (Patai, 1991; Hurd and McIntyre, 1996). Understandings of both similarities and differences are problematic if they are not considered firstly in relation to their effect on the research processes and outcomes and, secondly, in relation to the narrative constitution of identity.

As I reflect and try to understand and learn something of 'who' I am, who I believe I am and how I want to be understood by others, I initially name my social position as a white, working class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman. As I make these claims, the words of Patai (1994) echo in my ears and I ask myself why I choose these particular labels and what these claims mean. I soon recognise that the elements of identity that I originally give myself are the 'usual suspects' drawn upon in reflexive accounts and, whilst important, are not the greatest determinants of my identity (Doucet, 1998). In Chapter Three I made explicit my rejection of stable and fixed essentialist categorical approaches to identity in favour of a notion of self that is multi-dimensional (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and 'constructed and reconstructed in the context of changing relations of time, place and power' (Somers, 1994:621). Yet my initial approach to reflexivity appeared to be encouraging the interpretation of my own position from this perspective. After positioning these labels in relation to my biography and in an attempt to offer a more nuanced construction of my identity, I claim that I am also a mother; was a teenage mother, now a mother of teenagers; was a lone parent, now a married mother of three; previously welfare dependent, now part of a dual income household and holder of an academic scholarship; from working class background, currently a research student, potentially soon-to-be middle class. I therefore recognise the need to deconstruct the labels I ascribe to

myself in order to explore what they mean to me and how they may impact upon the research. I also recognise that the meanings of the different elements of my identity are fluid and interdependent and linked to my shifting biography.

I recognise that over recent years I have felt a strong attachment to my working class heritage. This understanding has become a central narrative that I draw upon to construct my identity and make sense of experiences. I feel a 'connectedness' (Doucet, 1998) emerging from this sense of myself, binding together my biography, my history, my meaningful relationships and the structures within which I live. On reflection I therefore understand my attachment to my working class heritage as being symbolic of my relational mode of thinking and being. As discussed in Chapter Three, relational ontology posits the understanding of the self 'in relation to other subjects and to the 'material reality of everyday life' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:403). Therefore, it may be the investment in my working class background that has encouraged the adoption of a relational ontology into my PhD.

I recognise that available categorisations of social class are inadequate to capture the 'complexities of contemporary social life' (Reay, 1996:58). I also recognise that 'working class' is not a static and fixed category and may have different meanings for different people, families and social groups (Casey, 2003). As noted by Moon (2012:1337) 'personal definitions ... may be constituted differently, even among people in ostensibly the same social position'. I therefore tried to understand what being 'working class' meant to me at this particular stage in my biography. I understand the notion of myself as working class to be inextricably linked to my identity as a woman and as a mother, both identities being embedded within

significant relationships with other women in my life. As discussed in Chapter One, women from lower-working class environments can often draw their identities of womanhood from their roles as mothers and carers, providing a sense of power and a collective identity. Therefore, as I reflect on my history, I wonder if my interest in motherhood and mothering can be traced back not only to my own role and identity as a mother but to the significance of mothering within my social and familial history.

As I reflect further on my journey, I recognise that my relationship with and attachment to my working class heritage has shifted subtly throughout my biography with the narrative construction of my identity shifting accordingly. As I introduced in Chapter One, as a teenage welfare dependent lone parent, I worked hard to resist the associated dominant discourses; as I entered higher education as a mature student a lack of belonging left me with a feeling of inadequacy as I tried to fit into the predominantly 'middle class' environment; however, as I embarked on my PhD journey my attachment to my working class background was once again prominent. Exploring the subject area of women and imprisonment I soon recognised the disproportionate levels of women from lower-working class backgrounds and the intersection of gender and class in their oppression. It is possible that this recognition reignited my sense of 'connectedness' and levels of empathy that initially brought me to my research area.

Despite feeling a potential sense of solidarity with women in prison I also recognise, as discussed in Chapter Five, that researchers also manage their identities within the research environment. My constructed identity as a working class mother may therefore have been utilitarian; a useful tool to facilitate rapport in engaging with the women and aid in the breaking down of the hierarchical barriers regarding the

interpretation of working class women by middle class academics (Casey, 2003). Therefore, as I write this reflexive piece, I am less certain of my own interpretation of my social identity and the potential impact of this upon my research. As I struggle with my reflexive account I recognise that reflexivity not only serves as a tool to consider who I am and how this impacts upon the interpretation of my research, but also how my research impacts upon the interpretation of what I know of who I am. I continue by presenting storied accounts of my research encounters with Louise and Sally. By offering these accounts I aim to consider the way in which the women who participated in this research challenged my assumptions about who I am, who I am perceived to be by others and how this may or may not impact upon the research.

Sally: 'I'm a minority in here'

Consistent with much of the criminological literature relating to women in prison, the women who participated in this research were disproportionately from socially deprived backgrounds (Moloney et al, 2009). However, some of the women had relatively affluent 'middle class' lifestyles. As with many of the women who participated in the research, Sally used her narrative to illustrate her difference from the other women in prison. As a woman of Asian heritage, married, with a daughter who was able to remain in her own home and was cared for by her father throughout her sentence, Sally was acutely aware that she was a minority within the prison population (see Chapter Two). Sally's sense of 'otherness' appeared to offer a positive identity during her imprisonment, enabling her to resist many of the negative associations with prisoner identities. Sally's sense of 'otherness' primarily appeared to be derived from her middle class background;

'90% of the prisoners don't have a partner who's the same partner as their, the same father as their child, and their mother comes to see them who isn't

working and looks after their child ... not everyone's family works, most families are on benefits..., that's not my fault'.

Sally told of how both she and her partner were university educated with successful careers. She told of a lifestyle that was significantly different from that of many of the other women who I had talked to at the prison and also to my own. I became acutely aware of a dilemma of difference that I had not anticipated and had not encountered in academic literature. Discussions of the power differentials of class in the context of social research are primarily concerned with 'middle-class feminist theorisations of working class women's lives' (Stanley, 1996:46). As Sally talked I recognised that Sally's ways of being, mothering, relationships and the structures within which she lived were not only very different to the other women whom I had met in prison but were also very different to my own.

At times I felt that, owing to the difference between us, I struggled to empathise with Sally's narrative (see Chapter Seven); the unfolding financial difficulties Sally told of in relation to her offence and consequent imprisonment seemed trivial and incomparable to the desperation and destitution told of by many of the other women. Sherman (1998:84, cited in Brown, 2012:384) suggests that 'empathy relates fundamentally to explaining others' behaviour and communicating back that understanding'. This process is ultimately premised on judgement, often privileging 'vulnerability and suffering' (Brown, 2012:384). At times I felt that Sally's story appeared less urgent or immediate than others. As I reflected upon this story I recognised that I had constructed a hierarchy of vulnerability and suffering to account for the women's offending. I also recognised that this process was completely subjective, dependent upon my own ability to account for their offences within my

own frame of reference; some women's storied accounts of their offences and offending were easier to reconcile with my own moral position than others.

Incorporating a reflexive element into each of four readings of the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) enabled me to challenge these assumptions. As detailed in Chapter Five (page 136), the second reading of the Listening Guide encourages the researcher to listen to 'how [the woman] speaks of [herself] before [the researcher] speaks of her' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992:27-8). In doing so I was encouraged to focus upon Sally's constructed narrative and her own understanding of her suffering and vulnerability. During this process I began to recognise multiple fractured identities that were not present within many of the other women's narratives. Along with disrupted mothering, Sally's narrative also related to disrupted work, career and social identities. As a middle class woman Sally potentially had access to identities that differed from those of many of the working and lower working class women who participated in the study. This may have provided Sally with different ways of knowing and being and differing narratives within which to frame her stories. The availability of narratives for many other women in prison can be constraining (as explored in Chapters Three, Four and the findings chapters). As I note in Chapters One and Two, this can often lead to the investment in identities of mother and carer to gain a sense of respectability and 'womanhood'.

As I reflected on my interview with Sally, I began to recognise that my assumption (albeit informed by academic literature) that women in prison suffer disproportionately from the disruption to their relationships and identities as mothers may have served to silence other aspects of their disrupted biographies. The sense of familiarity I felt

with working class women in the study led me to privilege their stories which in turn threatened to silence the stories and ways of knowing of middle class women. Using reflexivity as a methodological tool I was encouraged to refer back to my theoretical, position to challenge these assumptions.

Reflexivity has primarily focused upon the dilemmas of representing the 'other' which serve to position participants as 'subordinate' and therefore the researcher as 'privileged' (Hurd and McIntyre, 1996:81). This is often based on the assumption that participants are working class and researchers are middle class and on the notion that working class knowledge is somehow inferior and at the bottom of a hierarchy of knowledge (Reay, 1996). I recognise the complexities of my own social position and question the power differentials with research relationships between myself, a working class researcher and middle class participants. As I engaged with this debate I recognised that I was perpetuating the concept of privileged and subordinate knowledge. Edwards (1996:86) notes;

'there is no need to decentre anyone in order to centre someone else, rather power dynamics are fluid and the centre is constantly and appropriately pivoted. Each participant's experience is partial but is also valid'.

Drawing on feminist theory and research Steans (2012:729) has argued that 'differences among women do not preclude solidarity ... respect for difference is a necessary condition for forging solidarity'. The power differential of interest to me is, therefore, not with the hierarchy of knowledge but with the way in which my selection and interpretation of data are informed by my social position in relation to the women with whom I research. By finding more similarities with the working class women

within this study I was potentially 'othering' middle class women (Reay, 1996). The struggles of representation inherent within this research illustrate the need to acknowledge the challenges to reflexivity and representation inherent in all feminist work.

Since my encounter with Sally I have also begun to consider a differing interpretation of her narrative. Whilst primarily I understand Sally's 'othering' strategy as a means to differentiate herself from her fellow prisoners, I also wonder if Sally was looking to find similarities and therefore a connection with myself. Potentially representing middle class academia, it may be possible that Sally viewed the interview as a chance to exercise her middle class identity, which may have been restricted within the prison environment. Ironically, therefore, we may have both entered the interview situation anticipating similarities, only to find difference. What strikes me, therefore, is that we can probably never really understand the impact we have on our participants and therefore on the data generated and knowledge produced

Louise: 'Why do you care?'

I first met Louise at a meeting within the closed prison. The meeting was organised to introduce the research to a group of women who had expressed interest. After introducing the research the women began asking questions. The first question was from Louise who asked 'so why do you care? ... were you in prison, is that why you're interested?' I interpreted Louise's question as a search for authenticity and credibility in my ability to understand, interpret and represent her life, her experiences and her story. Louise may have assumed that if I were or had been a prisoner myself, with more experiential knowledge, I may have been able to construct narratives that were more 'authentic or trustworthy' (Griffiths, 1998:362). Louise's question cuts to the heart of feminist reflexivity and the desire to make

explicit the way in which our own biographies are entwined with our research areas. I began to consider in more detail how who I am may have impacted upon the research relationships.

Many researchers have deliberated whether or not to disclose key aspects of their biography to their participants. Informed by feminist principles of intimacy and reciprocity, I did not see how I could or why I would conceal elements of whom I am. I made no initial personal declarations of my biography yet incorporated such information within individual interactions as and when they seemed appropriate. I recognise that one of the elements of my biography that I was quick to acknowledge was that I was a mum. I was also aware that my regional accent was indicative of my working class background. Owing to the individual nature of disclosures, I soon began to understand the impact of researcher subjectivity to be relational, temporal and partial, with different participants potentially being influenced by the researcher's subjective position differently in different ways and to different degrees.

It is possible that the women told their stories based on gender evaluation. As noted by Bishop and Shepherd (2011:1289), the women may have 'viewed me through the prism of dominant constructions of femininity [and therefore] as more likely than a man to be caring and a good listener'. It is also possible that being a woman may have made the women more comfortable with their disclosures of sexual victimisation and domestic abuse. Similarly, it is possible that, as a mother, the women assumed that I was more likely than a man (or a childfree woman) to empathise with their maternal separation. Disclosing the age and gender of my children may have created a sense of similarity and intimacy that led to more disclosures around the women's own children and their mothering roles and identities. On a couple of occasions the women would ask 'can you imagine?'

Knowing that I was a mother myself, I interpreted this as a request to directly empathise with their situation. It is possible that the women identified with my working-class background and felt that I would be able to understand and empathise with their life stories. For other women, such as Celia and Emma, who told stories of higher education, it appeared to be my dual role as a mother/student in social sciences that was of particular significance to them and our interactions.

Despite my analysis of these interactions alternative interpretations emerged. As illustrated in the dedication of this thesis (see page 2), Anita's motivation to participate in the research appeared to stem from her desire to tell her story and to be heard; my differing positions may therefore have had little impact on the telling. It is also possible that the women's disclosures of sexual victimisation were informed by the dominant narratives available to women in prison (see Chapters Two and Three). In search of reassurance and guidance based on assumed knowledge and expertise, it is possible that the women related to me as a professional, rather than a mother, in telling stories of their children. It is also therefore possible that some of the women may have felt more threatened than reassured by my assumed professional status. Whilst it is possible that being a mother myself assumed greater empathy, it is equally possible that, the women felt that I was more likely to make judgements about their own mothering from this position (Ribbens, 1998; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Bishop and Shepherd, 2011).

With these potentially different interpretations in mind I return to Louise's question; 'were you in prison, is that why you're interested?' I consider the potential impact of my status as a prisoner or non-prisoner on the data constructed within our encounter. I considered Louise's interview to be one of the most difficult. At forty five

minutes long, it was also one of the shortest. There are large sections of the transcript occupied with prompts and short responses from Louise. As I acknowledge in Chapter Five, page 124-125, this may have related to the nature of narrative interviews. However, it is possible that, never having been a prisoner myself, Louise perceived that I was unlikely to be able to empathise with her circumstances and therefore did not feel comfortable in telling her story. Equally, despite staking a 'working-class' identity for myself, it is also possible that presenting as a researcher from an academic institution created a difference from which Louise may have perceived I had no understanding of her life. It is also possible that, as a novice researcher, Louise could sense my lack of confidence and felt uncomfortable in sharing her stories. However, at differing stages of Louise's interview she disclosed very intimate and sensitive details of her life. I initially interpreted this as an understanding of empathy, trust and rapport. However, it is possible that, assuming a difference in our social position, Louise's disclosures aimed to shock or embarrass.

The varying interpretations of Louise's interview lead me to conclude that it is not possible to make any definitive claims about the way in which I was perceived or the potential impact of this upon the research processes or outcomes. In attempts to find the 'truth', reflexive stories can be controlled and closed. What is therefore required is a more nuanced and relational conceptualization of reflexivity (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011). Different aspects of my identity and biography were revealed in particular contexts within individual interactions with different women; their significance or impact being unique to that particular woman at that particular time. There were, therefore, different variables at play at different stages within different relationships throughout the research process 'all dynamically influencing our interactions and the data produced' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2011:1290). I maintain

that reflexivity is a useful tool in conducting ethical research. I also believe that to be truly reflexive is to acknowledge that we can never truly know the impact we have on the research processes and outcomes.

Adopting a narrative approach to reflexivity, I recognise that my account is partial and serves to tell as much about me as about the events, encounters, relationships and dilemmas presented. In telling my particular research stories of my social position in relation to Sally and Louise, I privilege their significance in relation to other potential stories. As I acknowledge earlier within this chapter, I recognise that 'who a researcher is ... affects what they find' (Stanley and Wise, 1993:228). I also acknowledge that who I am and who I believe myself to be is dynamic and shifts with my biography. My encounters with Sally and Louise encouraged me to consider the potential complexities of the impact of my social position in relation to women in prison, my shifting biography and my claims to similarities. Reay (1996:61) suggests that 'if working-class people become educated they cease to be working class, at least to a degree'. The research process has forced me to acknowledge more closely the complexity of my social position, as an educated working class woman, and to consider the methodological implications of this. However, the significance of the telling of these stories lies within the process of narrative identity construction. Acknowledging my shifting social position disrupts the forms of knowledge which underpin what I previously knew of who I am and therefore part of my identity is threatened (Bury, 1982), consistent with biographical disruption. These reflexive stories therefore serve as much as a narrative resource to enable me to make sense of my shifting self as they do as a methodological tool to understand the impact of my shifting biography on the research.

Reflexivity and emotion

Whilst emotionality has become a central concern of reflexivity within qualitative and particularly feminist research, it has been largely denied within the discipline of criminology (Wincup, 2001; Bosworth, 2005; Jewkes, 2012). This is surprising considering the 'challenging and highly charged emotional environment' of prisons (Jewkes, 2012:64) and the particularly sensitive nature of much prison centred research. Jewkes (2012) has argued that

'[the] positivist roots [of Criminology] and reliance on bureaucrats in government departments for both funding and access to the field have commonly resulted in work that neutralises the complex human relationships, potentially dangerous situations, and emotionally charged topics we frequently engage with. There is an unspoken understanding that if we disclose the emotions that underpin and inform our work, our colleagues will question its "validity" and perhaps even our suitability to engage effectively in criminological research'.

Both Wincup (2001) and Jewkes (2012) suggest the neglect of emotionality within much criminological literature ill prepares the novice researcher for their journey.

The emotional toll of listening to repeated stories of despair, pain, degradation and hopelessness is a common risk factor for qualitative researchers (Ellsberg and Heise, 2002) and should not be dismissed. Interviews were often the most emotionally challenging and exhausting element of the research process. At times I felt overwhelmed and unprepared for the emotional encounters. I witnessed women in varying states of anxiety; some cried, others appeared restless with knotted hands and tapping legs; visible scars on women's bodies illustrated histories of self-harm. Women talked of their concerns relating to events happening in the prison; bullying, self-harm and a recent death of a fellow prisoner. Stories of domestic abuse,

physical and sexual violence, substance abuse and mental illness were also told. However, as a mother, it was stories of the pain and separation from their children that I found the most emotionally challenging. On leaving the prison interviews I also felt overwhelming emotions of both 'guilt' and 'relief' that I was going home to my children, in the knowledge that they were safe and well.

I recognise that making transparent the potential emotional and turbulent nature (Liebling, 1999) of prison research facilitates a more ethical approach to research, enabling greater consideration of future researchers' safety and well-being; however, the one dimensional and largely essentialist approach to 'emotionality' seemed inadequate to understand the methodological impact of emotion (Jewkes, 2012). Revisiting the theoretical underpinnings of the research I therefore adopted Jewkes' (2012) social constructionist understanding of emotion;

'societies reveal an emotion culture of ideologies, norms, logics, vocabularies, and other symbolic elements that specify what individuals are to feel in particular types of situations and how they are to express emotions but that there is a biological and universal basis to many emotions'.

Informed by this understanding I wanted to construct a more nuanced reflexive account to consider not only what my emotional responses were but also their role within individual interactions and their methodological significance.

Within qualitative research emotions are 'usually conceptualised as negative, draining emotions' such as distress, frustration, anger and risk (Jewkes, 2012:66). Such conceptualisations then provide templates for researchers, particularly novice researchers, to understand and present their own emotional responses. This in turn

perpetuates the reflexive construction of negative research emotions. The role of these emotions or their methodological significance is often neglected. As I reflect on my own research journey I recognise a myriad of often competing and contrasting emotions, some anticipated and others not, some negative and some not. To consider their methodological significance I continue by drawing on what I 'now' consider to be three 'emotional' encounters with Anne, Penny and Suzette. Although I did not understand all of these encounters to be particularly 'emotional' at the time, on reflection, I am able to consider the significance of the 'emotionality' within them. I consider the potentially exploitative nature of emotions and the role of emotion in listening to and hearing competing and contradictory emotions.

Anne: 'My heart, I felt it crack a thousand times'

Anne had participated in a previous project that I had been involved with at the prison. Therefore, when Anne and I interviewed for my doctoral research we had already met on a few separate occasions. Through our on-going interactions I had some awareness of Anne's story. At the time of interview, as detailed in Chapter Five, page 143, Anne had been in prison for fourteen years. Anne told of how she was accustomed to telling her story. Owing to this familiarity in both telling and hearing I did not anticipate an overly emotional interview. However, Anne's story proved pivotal in encouraging me to deconstruct my emotional responses and to consider them in relation to ethical research.

Throughout the majority of Anne's sentence her daughter had been cared for by her maternal grandfather. Anne told of how 'difficulties started' with care arrangements during her daughter's 'teenage years'. Anne told of how her daughter 'voluntarily put herself into care' at the age of fifteen. Telling of her reaction to her daughter's decision, Anne suggested;

'my heart, I felt it crack a thousand times, I just felt so bad inside as a person, as a mum, for the pain that I'd given her'.

As Anne told this story my eyes began to fill with tears. Particular elements of Anne's story resonated with parts of my own biography; having a daughter myself, of a similar age, I empathised with the sense of powerlessness and despair that Anne conveyed. I quickly apologised to Anne for my emotion and Anne responded 'I know, it's ok, I'm used to talking about it'.

At the time of the interview I don't believe that I considered my emotional response to be particularly problematic. Many of the women told stories that powerfully resonated with my own life, my own experiences and my own mothering. However, as I write this reflexive account I question the role of my emotion in the interview with Anne and the potentially exploitative nature of our exchange. Having spent fourteen years in prison, telling her story, Anne had constructed a narrative within which to present her story and her sense of self. Her primary narrative was of the triumph of her mothering role and identity over the adversity of imprisonment and separation. As discussed in more detail on page 207-208, Anne went on to tell of how she took charge of her daughter's care arrangements to ensure her well-being. In doing so Anne placed significance on her continuing role and identity as a mother.

My emotional response to Anne's story privileged her initial expressed sense of despair rather than her triumph. In the moment of the interview it was this part of her story that I initially identified with. Considering 'emotion' as a social construction I recognise my response was informed by dominant mothering ideologies and the significance of the proximity of the maternal dyad and the anxieties provoked with separation, rather than as a reaction to Anne's constructed narrative. Reflecting on our encounter I recognised two dilemmas. Firstly, my emotional reaction within the

interview may have served to question Anne's constructed mothering identity; secondly, in that moment Anne had become responsible for managing my emotion, which seemed ethically unacceptable.

Penny: 'They don't want to see me'

During particularly emotional moments of the research encounters I became aware of my own need to 'fix' things. As women told of their fears and anxieties around the relationships with their children I wanted to make things better and offer reassurances. As noted by Etherington (2000) the temptation to 'sort people out' was often great. However, as Blackwell (1997:1) points out 'trying to be helpful is easy' and I realised that my helpfulness related to my own need to feel good amidst the misery and pain that I was hearing, and actually did little to help the women in either the short or long term. This was starkly illuminated by Penny who was struggling to build a relationship with her children after having visitation suspended by their father. Penny expressed concerns that her children did not want to visit and she felt selfish for pursuing this. My 'helpful' reaction was to offer reassurance that she was their mother and therefore of course they would want to see her. Penny replied quite simply 'but they don't'. On reflection I realised that attempts of reassurance only served to undermine her pain and 'compound her chaos' (Etherington, 2000:156). In questioning her pursuit to maintain contact with her children Penny was also asserting her mothering autonomy. With her rights, responsibility and role as a mother depleted, the only maternal decision remaining was that of whether to fight for contact. In relating her potential 'self-sacrifice' (see page 214-217 for further discussion) to protect her children's well-being Penny was constructing her identity as a good mother. Therefore, it is possible that my 'helpful' reassurances may have

actually undermined her mothering. Most significantly, I realised that my help was not being sought and in fact Penny just wanted to be 'heard'.

My encounters with Penny and Anne led me to wonder what my emotional role in the interview was. Although feminist literature acknowledges the importance of emotionality in relation to the impact upon research, it offers little guidance on how to deal with emotional responses in the immediacy of the interview. I felt dissatisfied with the contradictions and limitations within the available literature that consider the role of the researcher on a continuum from a passive listener (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) to that of a therapist (Birch and Miller, 2000). The concept of 'Bearing Witness' provided an understanding of the unintended consequences of 'helpfulness' (Dawes, 2007) and the potential to reinforce 'helplessness' and emphasised the virtue of being 'heard'. Motivations for participation appeared to be largely informed by, but not restricted to, a desire to be 'heard'. Appreciating this enabled me to hear the women's stories without becoming overly emotional or needing to fix things, whilst maintaining a connection with the women and the stories they told. It was important that I 'witnessed' the women's stories, providing a space for their chaos to breathe; denying chaos would have only served to relieve myself of having to hear it.

Although I initially struggled to hear the women's stories and reconcile my response to them, the women's evaluations of the interviews were often different. Participants often talked of the interview being 'therapeutic'. Sally suggested 'only people that help me are like you by listening, I bet you feel like a counsellor don't you?' In creating a space that encourages reflection the narrative interview may replicate a therapeutic encounter (Birch and Miller, 2000:190). For some participants the

heightened reflexivity led to new meaning being brought to past events (Birch and Miller, 2000). This was noted by Fi who, during the interview, began to question the foundations of her relationship with her long-term partner. For others it appeared to return them to the chaos of the event being narrated. During my interview with Suzette she became increasingly anxious about her impending release and her inability to cope 'on the out', repeating the phrase 'I'm not strong'. The interview had encouraged Suzette to talk of her release. I therefore felt a sense of responsibility for her anxiety. Although bearing witness enabled me to hear traumatic stories at times it seemed inadequate to deal with the women's anxieties. In relation to Suzette, I borrowed elements of narrative therapy in order to help her re-construct her story. I referred Suzette back to points in her story which I considered demonstrated resilience and strength. Suzette responded 'that's really nice, thank you, cos I didn't know, but you're right, I didn't know I had that, I must have that kind of strength then'. I recognised that my responses were often intuitive and in relation with the individual.

Suzette: 'I'm not strong'

Suzette was one of the few women I interviewed who was separated from her daughter prior to imprisonment and did not expect to be reunited with her upon release. As I mention in Chapter Seven, page 241, Suzette's narrative was not consumed with stories of mothering or her daughter and her disrupted sense of self primarily related to her fractured relationship with her own mother. I remember at times feeling frustrated by this. From a methodological perspective I felt the need to steer the interview to talk of her own mothering and her daughter. From a personal perspective I struggled to understand how her story was not saturated with talk of her daughter. As I go on to discuss there was also a sense of resignation to the

continued separation between herself and her daughter within Suzette's story. At times I was perturbed by this and I silently willed her to fight.

On reflection I began to consider if this response related to the cultural preference for restitution narratives (Frank, 1995). More specifically, I recognised my personal preference for stories of women's resiliency, strength and determination, particularly when faced with challenges, as this affirmed the women and relationships in my own life. However, Suzette's story, unlike my own, is filled with disrupted and fractured relationships that served to impede her strength and resiliency. As with Jewkes (2012), challenging the assumptions inherent in my emotional response acted as an intellectual resource encouraging me to consider a more narratively informed approach to reflexivity. It also encouraged me to consider the impact of imprisonment on intergenerational relationships and the impact of those relationships upon imprisonment.

Emotionality as affirmation

Whilst emotion within criminological research is largely absent, positive emotional encounters are even scarcer. As noted by Jewkes (2012:69);

'prisons can be stimulating, exhilarating, and curiously life-affirming environments in which to do qualitative research, and emotional identification with prisoners and prison staff, like all research participants, is often a positive and powerful stimulus in the formulation of knowledge'.

Jewkes (2012:69) argues that researchers fear telling of positive emotional research encounters would 'imply that prisons are not unremittingly negative, painful environments'. Jewkes (2012:69) also argues that to acknowledge such emotions also leaves the researcher, particularly women researchers, vulnerable to

accusations of being 'woolly [female] criminologists, which can be academically disempowering'. However, it strikes me that to neglect such emotions would be inconsistent with my reflexive approach. It therefore remains important to acknowledge that the individual interviews were not all emotionally charged and challenging throughout. The values of reciprocity permitted more intimate conversational moments to pepper the women's storytelling, generating opportunities to discuss shared interests, stories of mothering, relationships and other experiences. Along with tears, there was also lots of laughter shared.

In order to gain feedback I met with a group of four participants to introduce the research literature that I had prepared including the information leaflet, consent form and interview prompts. After discussing confidentiality and anonymity our conversation turned to pseudonyms. This conversation generated great moments of hilarity as the women invented names for each other. For example Penny's pseudonym derived from the name of 'Penelope'. The group had suggested 'Penelope' as it sounded 'posh' and she was considered the 'posh one' of the group. As I sat in the room preparing to leave after the meeting, one of the family support team who had been working in the next room popped her head round the door and said how she wished she had been in with us as we sounded to be having a lot of fun.

Experiences and knowledge of mothering were also shared between the women and myself. Sally told of the techniques she adopted in encouraging her daughter to become an independent learner in relation to her school work; I remember thinking 'aha, I will try that with my own daughter'. Laughter was also shared around familiar

tales of mothering. Such encounters were common throughout the interviews. As noted by Jewkes (2012:66), 'rapport may be superseded by genuine, if very transitory, friendship, as prisoner respondents seek to make emotional, experiential, and intellectual connections with the researcher'. Yet, such emotions are often hidden from reflexive accounts of prison based research. Connecting with the individual women as a mother, a woman and as a human being was uplifting. I gained a greater sense of affirmation from these positive encounters than any of the sensitive or intimate disclosures.

Acknowledging the narrative construction of these reflexive accounts I consider what they serve to tell of me. Again, in their telling, I privilege my emotional encounters with Anne, Penny and Suzette. Whilst I acknowledge that I aim to consider the way in which I respond emotionally to participants and their stories may impact upon the research processes and outcomes, I recognise that the stories are selected from many potential stories. Whilst these stories represent dilemmas that I have faced, they also represent dilemmas that I am able to acknowledge. There are undoubtedly other tensions and dilemmas that, despite reflexive analysis, I have not recognised or been able to acknowledge. Reflexive accounts are therefore partial and temporal. The reflexive account is also a narrative construction providing the opportunity for the construction of identity that enables the researcher to present themselves in a certain way (Bishop and Shepherd, 2012). The primary purpose of my reflexive account is to be transparent in order to promote an ethical approach to research. However, I also acknowledge that these stories serve to construct myself as a 'legitimate, competent, reflexive, researcher' (Bishop and Shepherd, 2012:69). Therefore, interpretation of these accounts should not be closed or controlled but on-going.

Summary

Throughout this reflexive chapter I have argued for an approach to reflexivity informed by narrative theory. I have argued that reflexive accounts are partial and temporal and therefore it is difficult to claim with certainty the way in which researcher subjectivity impacts on research process and outcomes. I have also argued that narrative reflexive accounts are an opportunity for identity construction and therefore tell as much of the researcher as they do of the events and relationships they reflect. I have therefore argued for an approach to reflexivity informed by narrative theory that, in order to acknowledge greater transparency, also acknowledges the limitations of reflexivity.

Chapter Seven

The wounded mother: prison as biographical disruption

'I'm locked up but I'm not dead ...I want to be a part of his life... I'm in Prison, I'm his Mum' (Anita).

The wounded mother: introduction

Whilst most of the women who participated in the research drew upon each of the three different primary narratives at different stages of their stories and with varying degrees, the 'wounded mother', by far seemed to dominate the majority of the women's stories. The narrative of the 'wounded mother' constructs imprisonment as a major biographical disruption (Bury, 1982). Stories of pain, the trauma of separation and the perceived injustice of their imprisonment were drawn upon to illustrate the disruption to the women's lives, their sense of self and their mothering role. The wounded mother tells the story of the unjust separation of a 'good mother' from her children and the fight to maintain the mothering identity in the face of extreme constraints to ensure a successful reunion upon release. Whilst the wounded mother embodies biographical disruption, it also represents biographical reinforcement, with the women 'living to mother [and] mothering to live' (Vallido et al, 2010:1443) as the mothering identity is brought to the forefront throughout imprisonment.

As with Frank's (1995) 'restitution narrative', the narrative of the wounded mother is the story most frequently told and also most expected to be heard. As discussed in Chapter Two, the dominant western ideology of good mothering relates to Hay's (1996) notion of 'intensive mothering', compelling women to be completely physically and emotionally absorbed with their children and their children's needs at all times (Hays, 1996). It is therefore anticipated that, when this dyad are separated, the

mother will be preoccupied with anxieties and concerns about her children and engulfed in emotional turmoil. It is this narrative structure that underpins the narrative of the wounded mother. Conforming to societal and institutional expectations of 'good' mothering, it therefore appeared that this narrative was the most accessible or acceptable story to be told.

Unlike Frank's (1995) restitution narrative in which the narrator remains passive in their recovery, the 'wounded mother' works hard to construct herself as an active agent. In the restitution narrative the role of the narrator is in being a 'good' patient, placing all faith and hope for recovery in medicine and science to regain good health (Kalbian, 2005). Within the narrative of the wounded mother the role of the narrator is in being both a 'good prisoner' and 'a good mother'; however, being a good prisoner often requires passivity and conformity, whilst being a good mother requires autonomy and agency. The wounded mother therefore also reflects a quest narrative (Frank, 1995) in that it empowers agency and embodies a sense of 'mother knows best', prioritising the knowledge and skills of the women. However, unlike the quest narrative, there is no belief that something good or positive may emerge from imprisonment, with the women actively questioning the legitimacy of their sentence. The wounded mother recognises that mothering autonomy is restricted and functions to negotiate a complex web of power relationships that involves both utilising and challenging the expertise and knowledge of the prison in order to maximise mothering autonomy. For the wounded mother, dramatic or drastic acts of resistance are uncommon with autonomy and agency being derived from pre-prison and, particularly, mothering identities.

Prison as biographical disruption

Consistent with Bury's (1982) concept of biographical disruption, the 'wounded mother' constructs imprisonment as a critical situation (Giddens, 1979) characterised by emotions of pain, fear and worry (Larsson and Jeppsson, 2012). It represents an unanticipated and disruptive event in their life course and is constructed as an event primarily associated with deviant 'others' (Bury 1982). Distinguishing between the 'self' and 'other' is integral to constructing a moral identity, particularly for stigmatised or deviant groups (Green et al, 2006). Constructing imprisonment as a situation reserved for the plight of others was a consistent and dominant narrative strategy within the wounded mother. This strategy served to illustrate both the unanticipated nature of their imprisonment and their difference to 'other' prisoners.

Similar to 'diagnosis' of an illness, sentencing tended to be constructed as the major point of disruption. Research commonly refers to individuals feeling 'devastated', 'shocked' and 'scared' upon diagnosis of an illness (Harris, 2009:1029). Similar emotions were repeatedly drawn upon as the women recounted their physical and emotional responses to receiving a custodial sentence. The women spoke of 'breaking down' and an inability to register information. Lauren illustrated this, suggesting;

'it didn't really sink in..., I've gone to step back out [of the dock] the way that I've come in and the guy's like "no, no, you go through here", and I'm like "but I've always gone through there" and he's like "you're going to Prison for three years love."

Similarly, Celia detailed her response to sentencing;

'I've just broken down, I've just cried..., I think the Court Usher was trying to hold me up..., and then I remember the Usher's holding me and him [Judge] saying "take her down" and then I went downstairs

and I was just crying and crying, and she was like, she's trying to hold my hand and she's like...,"deh-deh-deh-deh-deh", I can't hear her, I'm just crying and I think I'm just all over the place.'

Anita also demonstrated her shock;

'when I got sentenced it just didn't hit me..., I was still stood there, I'm like, you know, I'm not hearing what this man's [the Judge] saying, I heard it but I'm thinking, it's not registering and stuff..., and I just remember just dropping back in my chair, I were like "oh my God" I just went weak, all my legs were just, I were just really shocked.'

Imprisonment was also often constructed as an unanticipated conclusion to the story of trial and preferable and anticipated endings were constructed, as noted by Sally, 'I just thought I'd come home'. Similarly, Anita told of her expectations;

'I think I took it for granted that I've got nothing to worry about it'..., [I just thought] "I'm going to get found not guilty and I'm going to come back home and I'm going to carry on my life."

Fi also suggested, 'I thought when I go back [to court] on this day, they're gonna say "right we realise it's a bit of, there's been a bit of mistake here". In relating their shock at receiving their sentence, the women maintained claims in relation to their anticipated life course trajectory, in that imprisonment was not supposed to happen to 'them'. However, in not being able to live the anticipated narrative ending to their story, the women are left physically, emotionally and narratively shipwrecked (Frank, 1995).

In the immediacy of sentence many of the women were physically unprepared for imprisonment. Some women told of not making arrangements for the care of their

children owing to the belief that they would be returning home after their trial, as suggested by Anita;

‘I didn’t make no plans to say who’s going to have my son or what’s going to happen, I just carried on with my life like, obviously thinking I won’t [go to prison].

Preparing for the worst has often been identified as a significant strategy in doing ‘good mothering’, in the face of biographical disruption (Elmberger et al, 2005). However, for the wounded mother, preparing for imprisonment was often irreconcilable with good mothering. Maintaining a consistent construction of moral self in the past was integral to the wounded mother’s claim to ‘good mothering’ in the present. Accepting the possibility of prison may have indicated acceptance of a lack of morality in the past. As motherhood is inextricably linked to morality (Miller, 2000) constructing a moral self is imperative in order to claim a ‘good’ mother identity.

The narrative of the wounded mother makes moral claims of the self in the past in order to declare a moral self in the present (Reissman, 2002). Similar to Sanberg’s (2009) ‘I’m decent’ narrative and Presser’s (2008) ‘stability narrative’, these strategies function to highlight the ‘goodness of the real self’ in order to deflect from their stigmatised self (Sandberg, 2009:497). The storied accounts of offending (or the offences for which the women were sentenced) were integral to construction of the self as a moral agent (Green et al, 2006). In telling of their offences, the women’s stories were used not only to describe the event but to understand and evaluate the event and their role within it (O’Conner, 2000). Such evaluations are therefore integral to how the narrator understands herself and how she wants to be understood by others.

The notion of self, embedded within the narrative of the wounded mother, reflects a rational and responsible agent. However, for the wounded mother a lack of agency is consistently constructed in relation to offending. Offences were constructed as either unintentional, without understanding or owing to the influence and control of others (Kalbian, 2005). In constructing a moral self, personal agency was narrated differently, shifting in relation to the requirements of the stories being told (O’Conner, 2000). Whilst this shift may be seen to represent a discontinuity of self-definition, it primarily functions to reduce identity dissonance as the actual focus of the story is to preserve the claim to a moral self both in the past and in the present (Kielty, 2008).

Culturally acceptable and recognised narratives of struggle, characterised by the ‘good’ battling and overcoming hostile forces, were sometimes drawn upon to narrate stories of offending within the narrative of the wounded mother (Presser, 2008). In accessing the cultural narrative of struggle, the narrator is able to identify herself as a moral agent (Presser, 2008). Lauren suggested;

‘I was getting in arrears..., I couldn’t buy food, I couldn’t pay my bills, I couldn’t do nothing..., I was walking to get there [college] and stuff because I didn’t have the money to get on the bus or nothing, so eventually it wore me out and I started missing lessons, whereas if you miss a lesson with the EMA¹⁵ you don’t get paid the next week..., so then the next week I went off and no money at all so it was all just getting me down eventually..., my family was like people on the street that’s who I turned to, and, I felt desperate enough to turn to them to make money because I didn’t have any really’.

Lauren went on to tell of how she started to sell drugs in order ‘to make money fast’.

However, Lauren’s continuity of self as a responsible and rational agent is

¹⁵ Educational Maintenance Allowance

maintained by situating her offence in her struggle to meet the culturally valued goals of education and of meeting financial responsibilities.

Also telling of her struggle to meet financial obligations, Sally similarly storied her offending within a narrative of struggle. Sally suggests that her offence was a result of aiming to conceal burgeoning financial difficulties from her family owing to her husband's redundancy;

'He [husband] was getting more and more depressed..., I didn't want to bother him, I didn't want him to know that I'd, that we were in trouble, because his mum was [ill]..., they've told her it's terminal, they can't do anything..., I didn't want to worry him, I didn't want to tell him cos I thought "well this is my problem, I'm working, he's not, his mum's ill, I will sort this out myself", I just couldn't manage, just couldn't manage, I couldn't see the light.'

Embedded within her familial role as primary financial provider, Sally's offending was storied in a way that did not appear to conflict with her sense of being a 'good mother'. Whilst Sally draws upon a narrative of struggle in relation to 'good mothering' to account for offending, it is not sufficient to adequately protect her moral identity. Sally struggled to reconcile her offending with her sense of self and therefore a break in her continuity of self-definition is illustrated (Kielty, 2008);

'I was remanded into custody and I didn't get bail cos they thought I was a threat, I wasn't, I wouldn't do it again, I went to the last woman's [victim] house and said I couldn't do it, I knew what I was doing then was wrong and had the police not arrested me, I wouldn't have gone in and confessed to the police but I would have stopped'.

Sally's assertion that she was not a threat illustrates her struggle to reconcile the social meaning of her offence with her own sense of who she 'really' is. To counter this challenge to her identity, Sally shifts the focus of her story away from her

deviance to one that attends to her morality, upholding a sense of personal worth (Presser, 2008). As the quote illustrates, the primary focus of Sally's story is the victory of her moral character. The assertion is that her criminality is not indicative of who she 'really' is, rather it represents a momentary lapse enforced by desperation.

The meaning attributed to offending was often constructed as disruptive to the women's sense of self. Anne was sentenced to fourteen years for the manslaughter of her partner. Anne positioned her offence within the context of an emotionally controlling and abusive relationship, suggesting 'there was a lot of jealousy, a lot of possessiveness'. Anne goes on to suggest a lack of understanding of her offence;

'I didn't know what made me commit my crime, I didn't know what made me snap, I'm not an angry person, I've never been a fighter at school, I've never gone out of my way to cause any problems, I've never been in trouble with the police, I didn't understand what made me snap'.

Disbelief at having committed the offences for which they were sentenced was common in the storied accounts of offending of the wounded mother. Imprisonment therefore disrupted the meanings the wounded mother associated with her sense of self. For Anne, being labelled a violent offender appeared difficult to reconcile with her un-violent sense of who she was.

Similarly, it was difficult for Celia to reconcile her offence with the meanings she associated with her sense of self. Celia was convicted of causing death by dangerous driving;

'it was like, totally out of the blue, no alcohol, no drugs, I personally don't have any recollection of the accident happening, and me personally, if I thought I

was too tired to drive I would have never got in that [vehicle], never, ever'

Celia constructs herself as a rational and responsible agent and the idea that she would put others at risk is at odds with whom she understands herself to be. The distinction between self and other is often reflected in the social demonisation of prisoners and offenders (Green et al, 2006). However, as illustrated by the stories of Anne and Celia, for prisoners this distinction can become blurred, leading to a fractured sense of self.

Constructing a consistency of decency over the life course, Penny drew upon the positivity of her pre-prison identities in order to dis-identify with the 'badness' she associated with prisoners. Penny talked of her childhood, suggesting;

'when I grew up..., drugs or badness or people going to prison or erm, sex or periods or nothing like that was ever, ever spoken about, I didn't have a clue, not one clue and I went to a private girls school so I knew absolutely nothing.'

Penny makes claims about her own identity through constructing what she is not. Skeggs (1997) suggests that such practices are important in establishing coherent identities and powerful practices of identification. Penny highlights the 'symbolic boundary between good and bad' (Sandberg, 2009: 407) in order to dis-identify with the 'badness' associated with her stigmatised prisoner identity. In doing so Penny distances herself from the 'badness' of offenders, therefore, inferring that imprisonment was not part of her anticipated life course trajectory.

Arrested at customs with substantial quantities of class A drugs in her vehicle, Penny goes on to story her offence within an emotionally abusive and controlling relationship. Separating herself from the offence committed, Penny suggested it was

unintentional and without understanding. Penny told of being placed under pressure to transport the drugs;

‘he wanted me to do it..., I didn’t want to do it, I made that very, very clear, and erm, he started putting pressure on, doing not very nice things, he got really nasty.’

Penny asserts that she had refused to participate in her partner’s plans and that the drugs were placed into her vehicle without her knowledge or consent;

‘I don’t know when the drugs were put on, I don’t know how the drugs were put on and I don’t know who put the drugs on the [vehicle].’

In maintaining her innocence and constructing the alleged perpetrator as ‘nasty’, Penny maintains the distinction between her self as ‘good’ and the ‘other’ as ‘bad’ in order to maintain her positive moral identity.

Accounts that maintained a prisoner’s innocence in the offence for which they were sentenced illustrated a major disjuncture between the meaning of the offence, consequent imprisonment and the teller’s sense of self. Anita, sentenced to nine years for conspiracy to supply class A drugs, proclaimed “I’ll take it to my grave, till the day I die..., I haven’t done anything’. Anita positions the offence for which she was convicted as being abhorrent to her work ethic and her sense of citizenship;

‘that’s not me at all in my life, you hear about in how I grew up and my family, you work for whatever it is you have..., I look at myself as a law-abiding citizen, and that’s where I’ve lived it up to even getting arrest’.

Anita told of resisting expectations to construct a reform narrative. In response to consistent requests from her probation officer to provide evidence of how she will prevent re-offending, Anita suggested;

‘I said “genuinely I find this question really, really hard to answer” and I said “I just, looking back, how I used to live then, there’s nothing I’d change I say at all, if I don’t do that anymore I won’t end up in prison because I just weren’t doing anything you know what I mean?’

Therefore, for Anita, imprisonment represented a more permanent threat to her identity. As noted by Charmaz (1983), assaults on identity can be temporary or permanent. This study has illustrated that for wounded mothers imprisonment represented a profound biographical disruption and assault upon their moral identities, yet these disruptions were narratively managed differently depending upon the woman’s ability to account for her offence.

Questioning the legitimacy of imprisonment

Consistent with previous research exploring individuals’ responses to imprisonment, the wounded mother does not accept imprisonment passively (Bosworth, 1999; Jewkes, 2005); rather this narrative draws heavily on the personal and cultural value of the identity and role of mother to question the legitimacy of sentencing and imprisonment. In doing so, the identity of mother is prioritised over the institutionally defined label of ‘prisoner’, ‘criminal’ or ‘offender’. As discussed in Chapter Two, this represents a form of resistance that may not function to directly ‘sabotage’ their oppressors but nevertheless represents the ‘constitution [of their] consciousness in a way that undermine[s] their subordination’ (Lewin, 1994:336). The wounded mother constructs prison as a disproportionate response. In doing so, the responsibility for the consequences of their imprisonment, particularly for their children’s well-being, is positioned firmly with their oppressors, being the Criminal Justice System. The positivity of the pre-prison identity of ‘good mother’ is therefore promoted and a criminal identity deflected.

Unlike in previous research exploring the narratives of offenders, the wounded mother expresses little explicit resistance against the prison as an institution or individual prison officers or policies, as prison compliance remains imperative in order to increase autonomy. However, implicit resistance, in the form of attempts to invalidate their imprisonment, is primarily directed toward the courts, with particular reference to individual Judges.

Fi constructs her imprisonment as the consequence of social control measures. Sentenced to four years for 'Proceeds of Crime', Fi suggests that her offence was a civil matter and that her arrest and imprisonment were the result of criminal justice manipulation in which civil laws were adopted to pursue a criminal conviction. Fi argues that her conviction was the result of 'one man [police officer] thinking there was something more to this than there was'. In doing so Fi questions the legitimacy of her conviction and therefore refutes her criminal identity. As Fi goes on to talk of her sentence she suggested; '

'what is the sense in it, and you're children are at home without you, I can't understand that myself, there must be a way of saying "well, we'll tag you, do what you're supposed to be doing here but do it at, and be at home for your children."

Fi accepts the imposition of the programmes and courses that she must engage with as part of her sentence, yet her imposed incarceration and consequent separation from her children are irreconcilable with the value of her role as a mother.

As Anita told of her court hearing she drew upon legal discourses relating to gender specific standards and the court's responsibility to consider the impact of maternal imprisonment upon children at the time of passing sentence;

'they spoke about me in Court for about ten minutes, and I'd been there for three months, ten minutes and three months I went every day to Court..., I thought, he [Judge], he was cold, he was cold, he didn't take consideration..., he didn't even think about my child, you know, I remember in the final reading up and he's, well like saying "there's a lot of kids that are in Care", so basically he was saying that it won't do mine any harm.'

Anita specifically draws upon the value of her role as a mother to question the moral validity of her sentence. In doing so Anita questions the morality of, not only Criminal Justice policy, but also the individual Judge presiding on her case. Anita asserts that an alternative conclusion to her trial was possible. However, in claiming that the Judge was 'cold', Anita makes the Judge accountable for her situation. As Anita questions the legitimacy of her sentence she implies that if a more gender sensitive and 'warm' judge had taken her case, imprisonment would have been unlikely.

Similarly, Kelly drew specific attention to the individual Judge;

'I got five minutes..., I was only in the dock for five minutes, he wasn't interested, he's called Judge Walker¹⁶ from Sheffield, he's well known, he was not interested, his mind was made up, he knew what he was doing with me, he didn't listen to nothing..., and my barrister wa', "she's got two children", you know and they wasn't interested, he was not bothered at all, he didn't flicker his head about or nothing..., he did not, he did not, he didn't even flinch, he was not interested, before he was sat in that chair, he'd already looked and he knew what he was giving me, he knew what he was giving me, my children never entered his head, or how it was gonna affect them'.

In questioning the validity of imprisonment in the storied accounts of sentencing, the mothers actively manage their identities as good mothers. The focus of the narrative is shifted from the disruptive impact of their own actions to those of the courts. In 'A

¹⁶ Pseudonym used to ensure anonymity.

different voice', Gilligan (1982) suggested that 'morality' was gendered, claiming that male morality was orientated toward 'justice', whilst female morality was orientated toward 'responsibility'. The wounded mother functions to position the storied accounts of sentencing firmly within a narrative based on the responsibility of motherhood.

Pain and separation

Underpinning the wounded mother is a narrative of pain and separation. Existing studies suggest that separation from their children is the most significant pain of imprisonment for women (Caddle and Crisp, 1997; Enos, 2001; Forsythe, 2004). However, little research has explored the meaning of these narratives. As with all of the primary narratives within this study, the major preoccupation of the wounded mother is to defend against a 'bad mother' label. The underpinning narrative of pain and separation, characterised by stigma, guilt and uncertainty and most reflective of biographical disruption, functions to illuminate the negative physical, emotional and psychological impact of imprisonment both upon the women themselves and upon their children. In doing so, this narrative highlights the teller's commitment to normative mothering ideologies.

The wounded mother constructs motherhood as a primary identity, actively sought, and as a desired lifestyle choice (Kielty, 2008) and embraces dominant western ideologies of 'good mothering' (Hays, 1996). As with the findings of Wilson (2007) and Vallido et al (2010), the wounded mother goes to great lengths to demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to these principles. When the mothering identity is disrupted, stories provide the opportunity to demonstrate allegiance to 'good

mothering' in the past in order to 'distance themselves from negative images in the present' (Reissman, 2002:312; Wells, 2012).

Highlighting how she was completely immersed in and fulfilled by the role and responsibilities of motherhood prior to imprisonment, Fi suggests; 'my life was my children and that was it..., you know it's amazing'. Anne also draws upon the dominant intensive mothering ideology to describe her innate mothering abilities;

'everything just came natural, I was a good mum, very loving, very caring, kept my daughter clean, tidy, well fed, she had a lot of love, a lot of support, did a lot of things, a lot of activities'.

The women's narratives of 'good' mothering were constructed in relation to their unique circumstances and reflect the historical space within which they were told (Plummer, 2001), negotiating single parenthood, employment and childcare. However, the wounded mother remained primarily informed by an 'intensive' mothering ideology (Hays, 1996) characterised by complete maternal devotion. By illuminating their maternal devotion in the past, the mothers not only lay claim to a moral mothering identity in the present (Wells, 2011) but also to the disruptive impact of their imprisonment on their mothering.

Uncertainty about the future is a key element of biographical disruption, with the rupture to the anticipated life course trajectory presenting many unanswered or unanswerable questions (Bury, 1982). For mothers receiving a custodial sentence, these anxieties specifically relate to their children, their mothering role and the impact of imprisonment and separation on those relations. Fi worried that she may lose contact with her children on reception to prison;

'I found myself compelled to say to a girl [other prisoners], every time I talked to them "and have you got children?, who's got them?, who looks after them?, how often do you get to see them?", you know, cos I just felt like I had to get a handle on this.'

The pain, sadness and sense of loss induced through separation consistently feature throughout the stories of the wounded mother. This presented on-going turmoil, with metaphors relating to physical pain such as 'wounds', 'scars' and 'bleeding' to convey emotional suffering. Anne suggested; 'there have been many, many tears throughout my sentence, tears that could've probably of filled up a lot of baths'. Detailing her initial pain at being separated from her daughter, Anne suggested;

'For the first year I was very numb, erm, all I used to think of was my daughter and what was gonna happen to her and how was she and it was really hard..., cos all I wanted to do was be with my daughter, I was missing her so much, and it, it was really hard, really hard.'

Similarly, Sally and Fi suggested;

'all I did was cry, in this cell..., and I was crying because reality had hit me that I was, probably won't see [daughter] for a long time' (Sally).

'the walls were closing in on me, I had a panic attack there..., I just couldn't breathe, I thought I was gonna die, I didn't know where my head was at all, I was just so disorientated, I just couldn't think where the children were, where they must be by now, you know, who's got the children, where are they thinking that I am, that must have been an awful traumatic time for them' (Fi).

Physical symptoms of feeling 'numb', 'living in a daze' and being 'disorientated' were frequently drawn upon in the women's stories of their initial imprisonment. Such

expressed emotions are indicative of biographical disruption, representing a disengagement from or an inability to absorb the reality of their situation.

Visitation was also constructed as particularly painful. Anne referred to visits as 'a double edged sword'. As illustrated by Renata, visits were longed for and represented a way of reconnecting with her children; 'very, very happy because I see them and everything and I can touch him, I can give him hug'. Visits equally represented repeated disruption in that they brought to the forefront the anxieties of separation all over again, as detailed by Penny and Renata;

'to have them there, and to have them gone again, it's like the torture of, it's like torture of when you're separated from them in the first place really erm, that's what it's like, you're coming to prison all over again really' (Penny).

'I been scared when on the visit I see them for, you know, the months..., been crying that day, very upset, cos I see them in just picture, how they looking..., after that we been in a visit and they come..., with my parents, I been feeling a numb, feel ah, I can't to explain' (Renata).

Whilst a narrative of pain and separation was a consistent strategy adopted in the storied accounts of visits within the wounded mother, this was not always the case. Emma constructed visits as a marker of time. Emma suggested that after each visit 'I tell myself that is one less visit until I go home'. For Emma, story represented a re-distribution of power in which she was able to oppose and resist the confines of dominant narratives in which pain and separation are the social norm.

The imposition of rules and regulations also disrupted 'normal' interaction in visits as detailed by Penny, Anita and Fi;

'I remember the first visit she was just erm she [daughter] was just really in tears and because she understood what it was and it was just the first visit was just so horrible..., but obviously you're not really allowed to cuddle them and you're not allowed to have them on your knee and things like that' (Penny).

'But it was awful as well because you couldn't move..., and I never forget, bless him he hugged me and he tried to lift me up he's like "I'll help you Mummy". Never forget' (Anita).

'We were all just like crying and [daughter] wouldn't let go, you can imagine what it must have felt like for them..., and then it was like you can only hug for so long as well..., and they're watching constantly..., and you get so on edge about doing the wrong thing, then you're paranoid and you're thinking "no sit on your own chair, no don't", you know, and they're probably thinking "why do I not wanna hug them"..., you know, it's really hard to explain that to them' (Fi).

As the women talk of the rules and regulations that impede normative mothering, the active voice of 'I' is absent and replaced with a collective 'you'. Reading for the voice of 'I' draws attention to 'subject's own understanding of how she fits into a given narrative' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:406). Whilst the narrative of the wounded mother actively resists a criminal identity, the collective voice of 'you' identified within these quotes highlights the emergence of a collective 'prisoner' identity. The emerging prisoner identity is characterised by a lack of power, as these quotes all refer to things that the women cannot or are not 'allowed' to do; 'hug', 'cuddle', 'have them on your knee', 'move'. The inherent implication in referring to these restrictions as 'hard', 'awful' and 'horrible', is that they are counterintuitive to their 'good mothering' instincts to protect and nurture.

Adopting the voice of 'you' may also signify the loss of individual agency and identity. The impositions were often accepted by the women, as indicated by Anita who suggested, 'the good have to suffer for the bad'; however, they were also constructed as threatening to their sense of self. Goffman (1961:24) described the process of 'mortification of the self', as a 'series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self'. Anita's description of visitation echoes Goffman's account;

'I'm more aware now than before I got there [prison] about things that people do because people do do it, you know, take advantage and do all that things, so I tried to look at it like sort of two ways to say "well they're doing their job" but..., after you've been somewhere for a while, I'm thinking "you build up some kind of credibility" but to me I've realised, prison, you're just a number and nothing's going to change about that, it doesn't matter how nice you are or what credibility, yeah, there are people going to look and think, you know, "Anita will never do that" but at the end of the day when it come down to it, you're just a number and, you know, they're just going to do what they have to do at the end of the day, you know?'

Self-presentations within prison are disrupted because the control of information is embedded within unequal power relations (Rowe, 2011). Anita's quote suggests that she felt that being stereotyped by staff as 'generically criminal' and having restricted ability to defend this label (Rowe, 2011) had stripped her of her identity. The stories of emotional distress during visitation appeared to represent most clearly the disjuncture between the statuses of mother and prisoner. The women were acutely aware of their heightened surveillance during visitation, as noted by Fi who states, 'they're watching constantly'. In fear of losing contact and in order to avoid disciplinary sanctions, behaviours were adapted. Unlike Foucault's (1976) concept of subjectification, the wounded mother does not comply uncritically. As noted by

Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) who challenged Foucault's unilateral notion of power, this analysis illustrates that power relations are constantly being negotiated.

Exclusion from decisions around the care and well-being of their children also presented an immediate threat to the women's mothering identity. Lauren spoke of her restricted sense of mothering autonomy owing to the scrutiny of the mother and baby unit. The 'I' poem below highlights Lauren's anxieties;

'I burst into tears
I don't know
I didn't feel like a mum
I didn't want the attention
I see it as advice
I'm thinking they're prison officers
I'm in that room with them
I'm thinking to do it
I don't know, it just felt like
I weren't in control'.

The submissive demeanour of stigmatised mothers under the surveillance of practitioners has previously been identified (Davies and Allen, 2007). Lauren's mothering autonomy is restricted by her subordinated relationship with the authoritative extra 'parenting' of the prison. Lauren refers to the 'disciplinary gaze' (Foucault, 1976) of prison officers and the imposition of 'expert' advice, guidance and assistance. Fisher (2008) notes that resistance to such authoritative knowledge is often developed within the private sphere, however, under constant scrutiny Lauren lacks access to a private sphere within which to construct her own understandings. In prison compliance is fundamental to success and resisting guidance that is deemed authoritative may therefore be interpreted as disobedience and risk exposing Lauren as an inadequate mother. Therefore, whilst Lauren may have accepted and followed advice given, again this was not done uncritically.

Lauren's story illustrates the way in which the imposition of guidance and surveillance from within Prison was negotiated in order to enable a successful return to 'normative' mothering upon release that would prioritise individual knowledge. For other mothers uncertainty of the future was sometimes expressed, as permanent disruption to the mothering role was feared. Changing responsibilities and relationships posed a significant threat to the women's mothering identities. Sally drew on significant rites of passage in her daughter's life, such as her first bra fitting, cervical cancer immunisation, starting her periods and deciding upon GCSE options, to illustrate her sense of exclusion and sense of loss of her mothering role;

'I felt that I'd lost my role as a mother really..., I felt that I had no control over what was happening with her, I felt that the decisions were being made without actually consulting me..., I just felt as if, that, I should be doing all those things, that they're the jobs that as a mother you should be knowing..., you know, all those things, they, I just wasn't in control of, I wasn't, I felt as if, you know, decisions were being made without, you know..., when I rang home she said "I've started my period"..., I found that quite hard, yeah cos that's my job, you know, puberty, that's something a mother should be doing.'

The gendered nature of major transitions within her daughter's life appeared to carry great significance for Sally. The relationship between mother and daughter has received much attention in academic literature (Russell and Saebel, 1997), with particular attention being paid to, amongst other areas, this relationship during adolescence (Bassoff, 1987; Apter, 1990). Embedded within this literature is the assumption that the mother and daughter relationship is closely defined by their sameness, which in turn creates a distinctly different type of relationship which is considered to be deeply informative in young women's socialisation (Russell and Saebel, 1997). Therefore, a culturally significant element of mothering daughters is

the facilitation of the transition from girl to woman. Sally's inability to participate in this element of mothering generated immense sadness and posed a direct threat to her sense of being a 'good' mother.

As with findings from previous research (see Enos, 2001; Berry and Eigenberg, 2003), the women indicated that they were missing out on the pleasures of mothering. The women drew upon the absence of the 'little things' that represented the 'normality' of mothering in order to highlight their disruption. Penny talked of hugging and bathing her children as being 'the littlest things' that she 'really, really missed'. As detailed in the quotes below, the loss of the ordinary day to day mothering represented a significant threat to the women's sense of good mothering;

'I can't give them bathed or cook for them, have nice for them, now I feeling that, I'm in jail, and I miss, I very miss..., every second it's in my heart, in my think, in my brain, about my children' (Renata).

'Just little things, you know..., like little things, not knowing what he likes or..., I don't even know what my child likes, you know?..., [and] you don't need to pull his pants up, he's doing it himself, you don't need to take him to toilet, he just goes himself..., I've missed out..., and even if I had ten more kids, I've missed out on that' (Anita).

'it's the little things, erm, like..., [at daughter's school] they've got a winter uniform and a summer uniform, "you need to get the summer uniform out and you, she doesn't wear a tie, she doesn't have to wear that and she", it may seem simple to someone else but it isn't when you've always got it ready and she's always had someone do it for her' (Sally).

'if something else has happened, or how he's feeling and, you know, "what are you looking forward to?"..., "how was school today?" or "what did you do?"..., and I'm just thinking to myself "I'm missing out on that, I'm missing out on all of that, I'm missing out on the homework, the ironing of the school uniform",

something as simple as that, do you know what I mean' (Celia).

These narratives indicate that the inability to participate in the 'little things' is profoundly disruptive to the mothering identity. The sadness and disruption expressed in missing 'the little things' often evolved into guilt at not being available to their children.

Managing guilt is challenging for many mothers (Barnes et al, 1997; Vallido et al, 2010). However, for women with a threatened mothering identity, guilt can be particularly burdensome (Vallido et al, 2010). Strong feelings of guilt were suggested owing to internalised mothering ideologies being transgressed, representing a threat to their mothering identity (Santora and Hays, 1998; Kielty, 2008; Vallido et al, 2010). Lauren suggested that having her baby in prison made her 'feel bad and guilty'. Anne expressed her profound sense of guilt for the disruption caused to her daughter;

'it was so-so difficult, so difficult because the guilt I felt was horrendous, I still feel it to this day, this whole time, the guilt that I was feeling, I was trying to keep it together, my heart, I felt it crack a thousand times, I just felt so bad inside, as a person, as a mum..., I'll always feel that element of guilt.'

Fi also expressed profound guilt about the impact of her absence on her daughter;

'When she came to [visit], she kept going "Mum", "Mummy", "Mum", every time I said to her "what?", she said "nothing", she said "I just miss saying "Mum", she said "I don't get to say it", you know, them little things, and I said "do you?, say it as much as you want", she said "when I hear my friends say "Mummy", I want to say it.'

The guilt expressed within the women's stories represented a profound sense of failure in their mothering role. As with the findings of Shami and Kockhal (2008),

failure was often constructed as the most significant threat to their sense of being a good mother.

Celia's sense of failure emerged from parenting within a mother and baby unit and the consequent separation of her two children;

'I think this has definitely been the lowest point in my life, I think because I feel like I've not been a good Mother, I've got one baby in prison with me and another one outside..., and I just feel proper guilty, proper, proper guilty..., I remember when [sighs] obviously the baby was going to be born in prison, he was like "oh Mum can't I come?" I was like "baby you're too big, you're too old", you know, "you've got to stay at home and look after Daddy and Mummy's got to look after this baby" but I don't know if a part of him feels like I chose the baby over him in that sense' (Celia).

Celia's story attends to her guilt over her perceptions of her son's sense of abandonment. As explored in Chapter Two, guilt is particularly problematic for mothers in prison as they have limited opportunity for reparation. For Celia guilt was acutely difficult as she had to negotiate very different mothering roles and responsibilities between her two children. Renata's sense of failure was derived from her physical unavailability to her daughter;

'my daughter, the little one..., she no see me after five, four months and when she see me she asking, "Mum please can I have "dudu", 'breast' and I say "no, I can't", so she ask me again "please can I have dudu"..., and I want to ask them can I give it her or not but ..., no I can't.'

Even in the proximity of visits, the authority of the prison preventing Renata from breastfeeding served to illustrate the magnitude of her physical separation from her children. This represented an on-going sense of guilt inhibiting Renata's ability to move beyond and reconstruct the narrative of pain and separation.

Pain and separation function to demonstrate a commitment to 'good' mothering and are central to the narrative of the wounded mother. Although the mothering identity may be privileged within the wounded mother, the narrative of pain and separation leaves women engulfed in guilt and ensuing negative self-evaluations. It may be argued that dominant ideologies of good mothering that pervade penal regimes prevent imprisoned women from being able to construct narratives beyond one of pain and separation. Whilst the narrative of pain and separation requires the reader to bear witness to the difficulties of the teller's situation, to remain embedded within the emotional turmoil is symbolic of remaining committed to good mothering.

Biographical reconstruction: reclaiming good mothering

When biographical disruption occurs, social identities are threatened and need to be reclaimed (Reissman, 2002). Reclaiming good mothering was a central element of biographical reconstruction within the narrative of the wounded mother. Confronting the changes and challenges posed to mothering was fundamental to this process. Previous research has identified how facing up to the challenges of uncertainty and loss of control is considered essential 'in the health-illness-rehabilitation process' and is a fundamental part of 'the struggle to be a good parent' when illness occurs (Elmberger et al, 2000:490). In highlighting the disruptive and chaotic impact of imprisonment, the narrative of the wounded mother goes on to demonstrate how challenges were faced in order to regain a sense of control and mothering autonomy. Anita's quote is illustrative of this concept as she reflects upon a conversation with a fellow mother in prison to illustrate her determined 'fight';

'If you cry you're going to do your sentence, if you don't cry you're going to do it, if you try and kill yourself, you're going to do it..., no matter what you do.'

Anne also told of facing up to the pain of imprisonment in order to be a 'good mother'; 'I've been sad, I've been upset, I've felt angry but I've dealt with it all'.

Drawing upon a narrative of pain and separation the 'wounded mother' sets the context to illustrate the effort exerted in maintaining their relationships with their children and their mothering identity. It could therefore be argued that a sense of biographical reinforcement (Carricaburu and Pierret, 1995) rather than disruption (Bury, 1982) is constructed, as imprisonment brings to the forefront their mothering identity. However, the women's accounts are characterised by ruptures and constant threats to (Wilson, 2007), rather than the sense of continuity that is characteristic of, biographical reinforcement. Therefore, whilst the identity of mother is heightened throughout imprisonment, it is also deeply disrupted and a continual and iterative process of reconstruction ensues.

For the wounded mother the adaptive process of biographical re-construction (Williams, 1984) emphasises the women's 'abilities' as mothers rather than the 'impairment' imposed by imprisonment (Reeve, 2002). The women's sense of being a 'good mother' was often demonstrated by their expressed 'difference' to other mothers, their fight to be involved in their children's lives and continued self-sacrifice in protecting their children. However, the reconstructed role is often 'difficult to reconcile with the normal contingencies and experiences of human life' (Fisher and Goodley, 2007:74), transporting the teller back to a narrative of pain and separation. Therefore, for the wounded mother, biographical reconstruction is on-going and never complete.

The wounded mother often made a claim to good mothering by distancing themselves from other women in prison. Distancing is a significant element of

identity talk for individuals who may have a threatened identity (Snow and Anderson, 1987). In order to claim a particular identity one has to highlight the differences between them and those with whom they do not want to be associated (Anderson, 1976). 'Distancing' most frequently related to the women's difference to other mothers. Anne talks of the 'unbreakable' and 'solid' bond she has with her daughter and how this has been maintained throughout her long sentence because of the effort exerted from both herself and her daughter. In describing the bond, Anne highlights the differences between her relationship with her daughter and that of other mothers in prison and their children;

'I've seen first-hand how other women in here are going through terrible times with their kids and they're, you know, they're not as close.'

Penny also implied that her bond with her children was different to that of the other women in prison;

'every visit what I ever had with any of the children, erm, they used to, as soon as they saw me, they'd coming running up and shouting "Mummy, Mummy" and other girls used to say "God I wish my kids'd do that.'

As noted in Chapters Three and Four, stories are used to construct self-identities and stories of the 'other' are an integral part of this process (Kerby, 1991). Listening to how the women constructed differences to other prisoners in the context of their relationships with their children served to illustrate how the women differentiated themselves from other potentially 'bad' [m]others.

Narratives were used to claim 'good mothering' whilst emphasising their autonomy in achieving this. In fighting for control the women met the challenges posed to their

mothering through imprisonment head on, pushing the boundaries of prison policy and practice and challenging relationships to maximise their role as mothers. In challenging others the women aim to prioritise their own knowledge, skills and expertise as mothers. The question of who will care for their children is an immediate challenge presented to mothers in prison (Enos, 2001). The availability of child-care options varied considerably between the women within this study. Consistent with Enos (2001), this study illustrated that, with restricted choices and opportunities to participate in mothering, stories of arranging child-care provided an opportunity for the women to demonstrate their fight for mothering autonomy, with attempts to exert control and authority. Anne told of how she managed her daughter's care arrangements whilst in prison for almost fourteen years. Fi told of how her children were being cared for by her close friend, as her own mother's older age made it difficult for her to care for her three young children. In demonstrating their assessment of child-care possibilities, the stories served to demonstrate the women's awareness of and participation in 'good mothering'.

Frustration, hopelessness and a sense of uselessness characterised Anita's initial story of managing her son's care. Amid external fractions between her son's father, grandparents, aunt and family friend, Anita suggested that she felt powerless;

'you're in a place that you know in yourself you can't do anything about anything, there's nothing you can do, you know, you feel hopeless..., and I know, I can say whatever I want to say but at the end of the day whosoever is out there they're going to do.'

Anita's quote indicates that imprisonment had stripped her of her authority as a mother. Anita detailed how available childcare options represented diminished involvement in her son's life and how all her waking moments were pre-occupied with thoughts and anxieties around her son's care;

'I were like "how am I going to get out of this place? I need to go look after my baby", and I look and sit at night in the cell and I look at them fencing, I thought "just forget it because there's no way I can jump that high", you know, I'm just thinking "I need to get out of here; I really need to get out of here...", I thought "I'm going to go crazy now" ..., I were just walking up and down..., I said "I feel useless, I can't do anything" ..., all kinds of emotion in your head, every, you think of everything, you think until you thank God for night, you're thinking 'thank God I can sleep so I can switch off.'

In illustrating her 'fight' Anita goes on to demonstrate how she challenged these anxieties and fought to regain mothering control amidst the chaos and confusion;

'I'm thinking "there's no way, you've taken everything from me" you know..., and I said "you're not taking this away from me", I were like "no way", you know, I said "I'm locked up but I'm not dead..., I want to be a part of his life..., yeah, I'm in prison but I'm his Mum, you know?"

Losing responsibility for her son's childcare represented total loss of mothering identity and therefore maintaining this responsibility for her son, for Anita, was a way of mitigating the pain and loss of imprisonment.

Anne had been in prison for around thirteen years when interviewed, therefore negotiating care for her daughter had been an iterative process, with care being provided by a combination of family, friends and local authority throughout her sentence. As with Anita, Anne described a sense of exclusion over initial decisions made regarding her daughter's care;

'they had a kind of crisis family meeting, erm behind my back, my family..., they had a meeting trying to decide what was best for [daughter], I felt a bit hurt by that cos I wasn't involved, I didn't even know it was going ahead'.

Anne talked of her emotional response at having limited influence in the arrangements for her daughter's care; 'I went through a really bad breakdown myself, erm, I just hit rock bottom and I just could not pick myself up'. Anne's description of losing authority over her child's care as being at 'rock bottom' indicates that this represented the most significant pain of her imprisonment. Anne then went on to describe her determination to re-gain control and be involved in the process;

'I managed through a lot of sheer hard work and determination, I managed to get meetings held in the prison, because I was adamant that I wanted to be a part of them..., no matter what, I was in prison but I was still at every key stage involved.'

Commitment to the mothering role can make it particularly difficult to surrender child-care responsibilities in the face of disruption (Davies and Allen, 2007). For mothers in prison, child-care responsibilities are forcibly suspended and an ensuing sense of powerlessness was evident within many of the stories told. Striving to be involved in the organisation and management of, even if not directly responsible for delivering, child-care, presented an opportunity to illustrate commitment to their mothering role and exercise their mothering identity.

Mothers within the MBU¹⁷ are encouraged to allow their children to go out into the community to spend time with friends and family. Such contact helps to prepare both mother and child for potential separation and also facilitates the child's social integration. The visits can often incorporate overnight and weekend stays. Amy talked of her son leaving the prison at weekends. Amy suggested that it 'was quite hard at first but got used to it, it's supposed to happen, you know'. Amy's suggestion that home visits were 'supposed to happen' indicates that the 'regimes of truth'

¹⁷ Mother and Baby Unit

(Foucault, 1976) imposed by the authoritative knowledge and expertise within the prison MBU, relating to what constituted 'good mothering' led her to regulate her parenting. However, as Amy continued she goes on to describe the visits as being 'too much'. Amy's apparent discomfort with these visits suggests that her compliance was as a result of the expectations of prison policy and not her own choice.

For Lauren the potential of releasing her son from the MBU for the weekend represented a direct threat to her mothering identity and she resisted this expectation in order to reclaim control. Lauren told of how she refused such visits, suggesting;

'I couldn't do that because I felt, because he's been born in there with me, he's my companion in there, I need him in there with me, so not even for a weekend can I hand him out'.

It may be that the threat imprisonment posed to Lauren's mothering identity had led to a strong need to be physically close to her baby at all times, to the exclusion of others. For Lauren motherhood may have presented a way of resisting the painful meaning of imprisonment and appeasing associations with a more negative prisoner identity. Lauren explicitly resisted the authoritative knowledge of the prison yet her narrative remained embedded within the discourse of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) and a desire to be with her child. However, laying claim to her own needs, Lauren makes no explicit claims that her decision is in the best interests of her child. As will be discussed later within this chapter, remaining selfless and prioritising children's needs at the expense of their own was a consistent narrative strategy in which the wounded mother demonstrated 'good mothering'. Lauren's narrative account of her decision not to allow her son home leave is therefore quite unique.

Keeping their children close and maximising contact was a significant strategy in reclaiming the mothering role of the wounded mother. Previous research conducted

by Shamai and Kockhal (2008:328) has also identified how the struggle of mothers in prison to maintain contact with their children was a 'means of preserving their mothering identity'. Penny discussed how she worked with the prison to maximise the frequency of visits; 'in all honesty I've gone above and beyond what they've allowed me to do really with my children'. Fi also discussed how she worked with prison staff to maximise visiting potential; 'so I've asked [prison officer] if, can I do that [extended visit]...', he said..., "you don't half put us through our paces", you know, "but we'll try and organise it". Both Fi and Penny draw upon their relationships with staff to show how they have pushed the boundaries to maximise their contact. The quotes illustrate that the maximisation of visits was a reciprocal process between the women and the prison. In highlighting the support from the prison the women identify themselves as 'worthy'. However, in doing so, the women embedded their sense of 'good mothering' within the evaluation of authoritative knowledge and expertise. The wounded mother functions to prioritise the women's knowledge, skills and expertise in their mothering role. Drawing upon the evaluation of 'authoritative' others appears to represent a discontinuity in sense of self. However, accessing this narrative of support has a utilitarian value, representing increased autonomy and access to their children, as Anita's quote illustrates;

'G Wing was the Enhanced Wing. You're not locked in there, you've got your own key and you just, like a big cabin and stuff..., you can walk around till ten o'clock, hear me "I need to be up there"..., I said "what is it that me to do?" you know, in eight weeks I was up there, I were like, I'd never stopped and I were like "what do I need to do to be Enhanced?" you know what I mean? But it was easy for me because I wasn't a naughty person or a..., you know what I mean?..., because I'm in their hands and there's nothing I can do about it, I never forget".

Anita's quote is representative of Foucault's (1975) production of 'docile bodies' and the process of subjectification. Through a process of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, Anita's behaviour was regulated (Foucault, 1975). The prospect of becoming 'enhanced' had led Anita to behave in a way deemed appropriate and desirable by the prison. However, Anita's compliance does not represent passivity; it has a utilitarian value facilitating her enhancement forming part of a larger strategy to access open conditions. This quote is therefore illustrative of the way in which power relations are rarely fixed or linear; the wounded mother negotiates passivity and compliance as a form of resistance to maximise autonomy and agency.

In reclaiming good motherhood, narrating contact shifted from focusing upon the overwhelming emotional turmoil to constructing visitation as a tool to maintain physical and emotional bonds and as a means to 'keep check' on their children's well-being. Research in relation to mothering disrupted by ill health suggests that fatigue and debilitation can often leave mothers unable to engage in 'quality time' with their children (Backman et al, 2007) and can reduce mothering to the 'doing' of practical tasks (Montomery et al, 2006). In contrast, the restriction imposed by imprisonment leaves mothers unable to perform the practical tasks associated with mothering. 'Quality time', through familial contact, is therefore utilised to engage in 'good mothering'. Whilst visits remained painful, they represented a way of actively participating in mothering.

For Celia, visits represented maintaining a physical presence in her son's life to ensure that she was not 'just a voice at the other end of the phone'. Anne told of the strong emotional bond with her daughter; 'all we've ever had is communication....,

I've not physically been there but I've emotionally been there all these years'. This sentiment was echoed in many of the mothers' stories. Renata expressed how this emotional availability was unique to the role of mothering and not replicable by anyone else; 'I can give that feel, that proper mum, mum is mum, they can have ten thousand mum, but mum is mum, she can give that feel'. Sally also placed great emphasis on the exclusivity of the emotional connection with her daughter;

'he [father] can't read her and I can read her when she has had a bit of an upset day, you know and I can, you know, if she's fed up, I can tell..., he won't even notice'.

In identifying the uniqueness of this element of mothering, the significance of the mothering role is highlighted and constructed as irreplaceable (Enos, 2001). The identification also represents continuity in their role in that, despite disruption to their participation in mothering, the significance of their contribution remains.

Emotional connection with their children was also used to demonstrate knowledge of their children's well-being. The mothers went to great pains to stress how well adjusted their children were. Penny suggested that her daughter was a 'strong kid' and had adapted to her new circumstances. Sally highlighted her daughter's continuing academic achievement to demonstrate continuity and Anne highlighted her daughter's resiliencies;

'she didn't go down the road of turning to drink and drugs which she could easily have done, to drown her sorrows, she's, erm, she's doing really well, and I'm really, really proud of her, really am proud of her'.

Whilst these stories functioned to illustrate the mothers' role in protecting their children's well-being, mothers also demonstrated responsible parenting by showing that they were aware of the challenges faced by their children. The women often told

of their children's emotional suffering, as highlighted by Celia; 'I thought he'd be alright but, he's not, he needs his Mum, he needs his Mum, he wants his Mum'. Highlighting the children's suffering, the wounded mother lays claim to the significance of their mothering role. Consistent with research by Enos (2001:88), claiming their children remained attached to and in need of them, 'reinforced a claim to motherhood'. Acknowledging these difficulties demonstrated the women's fitness to mother by being aware of and assessing the 'well-being of their children' (Enos, 2001:88).

Anne talked of how she recognised that her daughter's 'vulnerabilities' had led her into abusive relationships. Anne suggested that she used her own therapeutic experiences gained inside prison to help her daughter;

'I've sat down and done some work with her and I talk to her a lot about, she understand why she's a bit insecure, she understands why she gets angry, so it's and it's understanding why you feel these things that helps.'

Emotional availability was a significant means of illustrating that, despite their restrictive circumstances, the mothers were able to actively participate in mothering and that their role was both valued and required. However, emotional availability was often punctured by the iterative narrative of pain and separation as tensions emerged between the women's perceived emotional availability and their physical unavailability. Whilst Anne's story illustrates a consistent role of emotional support, her physical unavailability to her daughter during her relationship difficulties represented a sense of failure, as Anne suggested, 'I felt my hands were just tied, I felt sick'. Similarly, Fi demonstrated emotional availability to her children by suggesting 'I do try to talk to them as much as I can..., I think you have to keep

talking'. However, referring to an incident at her son's school, Fi went on to suggest; 'them are the things, you're not there to support them when they are going through these..., you know, it's erm hard.'

Despite constructing visits as a means of maintaining a connection with their children, they were continually characterised as emotionally challenging throughout, representing repeated disruption. However, in highlighting the difficulty of visits, the women demonstrated their continued emotional self-sacrifice for the sake of their children. As highlighted in Chapters Two and Three, notions of caring, nurturing and self-sacrifice are central to constructions of good mothering. Many of the women talked of wearing 'masks' during visitation to protect their children and families from their own pain;

'I see them, I'm just happy, I'm trying to no cry, trying to be strong, try and make my children happy when they come' (Renata).

'it's just so hard Kelly because all through what I went through or going through, I'm still going through, you've still got to be strong for them, you've still got to sort of bury something what I'm feeling just to put this lovely picture outside, you know?' (Anita).

'you have to try and stay strong for your family, you feel that if they don't see you coping then they're not coping, if you're like happy, as happy as you can be then they're alright..., but it's like once your family kind of hear that you're having a down day it kind of puts them on a downer because they can't do anything about it, you're stuck in here and there's nothing they can do about it' (Celia).

'[husband] would say "what's wrong with you", because I didn't want to say in front of [daughter]..., because she would worry, so I used to say to my husband in Punjabi' (Sally).

'I tried not get upset on the visits..., [I would] mask my feelings to hide what was really going on erm to pretend everything was ok' (Anne).

In times of disrupted mothering, women often describe putting on a brave face for the sake of their children (Elmerger et al, 2000:2008; Montgomery et al, 2006; Shamaï and Kockhal, 2008). This strategy of 'masking' affirmed the women's identities as 'good mothers', demonstrating their emotional self-sacrifice and commitment to 'good' mothering by subverting their own needs for the sake of their children's (Montgomery, 2006). Dominant mothering ideologies are integral to prison discourses and are often used to demonstrate women's rehabilitation (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three). Being a measure of rehabilitation within prison may heighten the need for imprisoned women to demonstrate this feature of 'good mothering'.

Physical sacrifices were also drawn upon to demonstrate good mothering. Celia talked of saving her money to ensure she had phone credit to maintain contact within her son;

'trying to maintain the contact, then making sure you had enough money on your Canteen so you could phone..., still making sacrifices as you do.'

Celia explicitly makes reference to 'making sacrifices'. In suggesting this is something she is 'still' doing Celia constructs continuity in her mothering role despite her circumstances. By suggesting that sacrifices are something that 'you' do, I felt that Celia was drawing on a shared understanding, of what it meant to be a 'good mother'.

Anne also told of the sacrifices she made for her daughter;

'I save all year..., and I'll go without..., because I can't treat her all through the year but at least on her birthday and at Christmas I can give her something'.

Illustrating the prioritisation of their children's needs was a consistent strategy within the narrative of the wounded mother. However, it also appeared to silence recognition of the women's own needs or aspirations. Rowe (2011:579) noted that 'not all self-meanings associated with imprisonment were negative'. Yet, for the wounded mother, acknowledgement of personal growth was limited as this may acknowledge a betrayal of their narrative of pain and separation that was indicative of their commitment to dominant mothering ideologies. Whilst Fi acknowledged the potential for personal growth in prison, she struggled to reconcile this with the narrative of pain and separation;

'she [Governor] makes you do education, she makes you..., which I'd never done, hated doing stuff, so I think "well if I'm gonna be away from the kids I wanna do something positive" and she, you know, she said that at the beginning..., "you're gonna have to use this time wisely because it's been taken out of your hands...", I thought, "I don't wanna go into education and do this", but thank God I did, because you know, hopefully it'll help us in the future, you know, well I'm hoping that, I can do something with it'.

Overall Fi's narrative appears positive and as part of a linear narrative aimed at a successful reunification with her children. On further analysis, Fi constructs her education as compliance rather than choice in that she was 'forced' into education. She even indicates that the choice of course was not her own by suggesting that she enrolled on courses of subjects that she hated. By suggesting that her time had 'been taken out of her hands' Fi appears to be actively negating any accountability

for her personal growth. It appears that Fi is only able to accommodate personal growth into her narrative when it is to the benefit of her children. This was echoed by Louise who suggested; 'I've done loads [courses]...., cos I know when I leave here I've got to go and prove myself to get my kids back.' For Louise, demonstrating personal growth was an act of compliance and an essential strategy in demonstrating good mothering. As with women in the community (as was discussed in Chapter Two), the needs and well-being of women in prison are often only voiced in relation to the positive impact on their mothering. Therefore, it may be that the dominant discourse of 'good' mothering underpinning the narrative of the wounded mother prevents the teller emerging as a subject with her own needs beyond those associated with her mothering role.

As with many other parents serving a custodial sentence, the mothers suggested that they were acutely ashamed of being in prison (Boudin, 1998). The mothers suggested that they aimed to conceal their imprisonment from their children in order to protect them from the associated stigma. Montgomery et al (2006:24) suggest that such acts of 'censoring speech' function to provide 'a relative veneer of safety from others' scrutiny'. Managing the secret of stigmatised conditions was also a strategy of individuals with conditions such as mental illness or HIV (Carricaburu and Pierret, 1995:72; Montgomery et al, 2006; Shambley-Ebron and Boyle, 2006). Fi highlights the potential social ramifications for her daughter of having a mother in prison;

'that always worries me as well, the stereotyping, you know..., "oh Mum and Dad's been in prison, what do you expect from that child", you know..., and if parents say "oh I don't want my little girl playing with her because her parents have been in prison'.

Owing to the associated stigma, imprisonment was sometimes concealed from their children, with the mothers claiming that they were 'working away'. Yet this secrecy often evoked tensions as the mothers remained anxious that their children would discover the truth; Anita suggested 'God forbid if he ever asks me'. Lauren also remained anxious as she aimed to conceal her imprisonment from her son, 'it makes me feel funny like, I still think "are people going to say, is somebody going to slip up to him one day and say "oh you was born in Prison"'.

Concealing imprisonment often requires a co-constructed narrative by the mothers and those around them to maintain the secret. Co-narrators included family members, prison staff and occasionally the children themselves. Fi suggested 'we've never actually said the word "prison"....' but later went on to suggest 'I think they probably know'. In censoring her speech Fi claims an identity as a good mother, suggesting that she is protecting her children. However, denying the children's knowledge prevents both mother and child confronting impact of the situation. In doing so, Fi also protects herself from the scrutiny of her children. Yet as identified, censoring speech led to consequences as Fi's secrecy inhibited her emotional availability to her children which was central to her re-constructed identity as mother.

Often the maturity of the child or the profile of the offence made it difficult to hide imprisonment. Anne's offence was documented within the media making it difficult to conceal from her daughter. Equally, Sally explained how her husband told their twelve-year-old daughter of her offence and imprisonment; 'I've had to explain to [daughter] where you are, what you've done'. When imprisonment could not be concealed the mothers tended to take ownership of the disclosure, framing it as responsible parenting. Penny's daughter used the internet to find information relating to her offence and imprisonment. Therefore, Penny had limited control in the

disclosure, yet framed this positively suggesting it facilitated her ability to provide on-going emotional support;

‘I’ve been very open with [daughter] and I’ve told the truth, some people say they don’t want to tell their children..., she [daughter] went on the internet and found out anyway, what had happened, so I couldn’t, but I had no intention of not telling her the truth, I told her what happened and I told her where I was because I thought that was the best thing for her and in light of things it is the best, it was the best thing for her because it did go in the papers and school, people at school knew, so she was fully prepared and fully supported, I couldn’t have handled it if she’d’ve heard it from somebody else and then I think that would have been worse for her’.

Both disclosures and non-disclosures of imprisonment were constructed as ‘in the best interests of the child’, supporting the women’s claims to good mothering and allowing them the opportunity to manage the situation.

Demonstrating knowledge of and interest in their children’s lives was also used as an indicator of the women’s continued commitment to mothering (Enos, 2001). Anita showed interest in her son’s schooling, suggesting that when on home leave; ‘I just go in [to school] and have a word and I make time to go and see his book and his work’. Similarly, Emma told of ensuring regular contact with her daughter’s school teacher when on home leave. Anne told of how nightly phone calls kept her abreast of her daughter’s life; ‘phone calls every night to say “good night”, er, “what have you been doing at school?, how are you?”, erm “how are your friends?”’. Sally demonstrated how she remained involved in supporting her daughter through puberty, an element of her daughter’s life that was central to her notion of being a

good mother; 'I'll say to her "have you come on your period", "yes today", so I'll put it on my calendar, so I'll remind [father] and I'll remind her as well'.

The ability to 'keep check' was often informed by the mother's relationship with the children's carer. Most of the women had positive relationships with their children's carer. This facilitated an ease of continued participation and involvement. Where children were being cared for by the fathers with whom the mothers were still in a relationship, the ability to 'keep check' was eased. Yet, for Anita and Fi, an element of caution was identified in 'keeping check' as their appreciation of the effort and continued commitment of their children's carers led them to be tentative in their role, lacking confidence to assert themselves as mothers. For mothers such as Penny, fractured relationships with the father of her children led to restricted options to 'keep check'. However, Penny maintained involvement in her children's schooling, suggesting; 'I still speak with their teachers, I don't know whether I'm supposed to or not but I do'.

Looking to the future

The narrative of the wounded mother is future orientated. The here and now of mothering is maximised but only as a means to ensure successful reunification. The conclusion to the wounded mother plot is, therefore, successful reunification with their children. Talk of reunification in the future provided the women with a sense of hope and demonstrated the centrality of their on-going role in their children's lives, as Penny repeatedly stressed;

'[daughter's] already made it very clear that she will be living with me [upon her release]..., she made it

very clear that she wants to live with me..., she's already said she wants to live with me'.

Despite the positivity for release, the future was often filled with apprehension. Unlike chronic illness, which often requires a gradual process of adjustment, release from prison represented a further and immediate disruption. Some of the mothers remained consumed with guilt over 'lost mothering' (Barnes, 2008) with future plans informed by reparation. Anita suggested 'I say to my daughter "I'll make it up to you"'. Fi also suggested that her release plans focused on 'making it up' to her children;

'try and make up for lost time with the children, you know..., I'm just hoping I can get things back to normal..., just try and get life back, you know, some normality'.

Fi also talked of wanting to re-claim lost mothering;

'In here it's like everything stops still, I keep thinking..., I'll go outside and everything'll be the way it was before and [son] will still be, you know, my little boy'.

For others such as Sally and Celia, fear remained regarding the uncertainty and the vulnerability of their mothering role. Their children's ability to remain in their own homes, cared for by their fathers, brought them great comfort, as Celia suggested; 'I am happy and I'm grateful that he [partner] was there and that [son] weren't disrupted any more than what he was'. Yet the minimised disruption to their children served to further threaten their mothering identities as Celia suggested; 'I don't see how I'm going to slot back in..., I think I feel that I've been made redundant in that sense'. Therefore, whilst the women were able to reconstruct their mothering roles in

order to participate in mothering, imprisonment represented a profound and more permanent threat to the continuity of their mothering identities.

Summary

This chapter has presented the narrative of the wounded mother, the first of three narrative findings from this research. Within this chapter I have signified that the wounded mother was the most dominant narrative of this study. For the 'wounded mother' imprisonment represents a major biographical disruption (Bury, 1982), characterised by stories of the pain and trauma of separation. Whilst the narrative embodies biographical disruption, it also represents biographical reinforcement, with the mothering identity being heightened throughout imprisonment. The reconstruction of the mothering role is characterised by the women's fight to maintain contact with their children and a participative role in mothering throughout their sentence.

Chapter Eight

The unbecoming mother: prison as biographical validation

'prison's to help people, it don't make you a bad person cos you've been in prison, we've all had bad pasts, things have happened' (Lyndsey).

The unbecoming mother: introduction

The narrative of the wounded mother (Chapter Seven) asks the reader to bear witness to the difficulty and disruption of imprisonment for both the mother and her children. Constructing imprisonment as biographical validation, the narrative of the unbecoming mother makes no such requests. The narrative tells the story of a life and motherhood fractured prior to sentence and of the consequent attempts to repair the self and motherhood through imprisonment. Therefore, the narrative of the unbecoming mother tells the story of reform. The 'unbecoming mother' is an expression taken from Gustafson (2005). Gustafson (2005) noted that mothers who have seemingly abandoned or surrendered their children are often the most stigmatized women in society. Whilst the narrative of the unbecoming mother tells the story of the literal act of unbecoming a mother, it is also heavily orientated toward validating this position within a narrative of victimisation in order to appease societal condemnation. Validation is realised for the women by demonstrating the need for rehabilitation. A positive sense of self is derived from their subsequent rehabilitative success.

Whilst the narrative of the wounded mother constructs prison as biographical disruption, the narrative of the unbecoming mother is symbolic of biographical disruption as imprisonment. From this perspective imprisonment is not perceived as a biographical disruption, rather it is the series of disruptive events in their lives that

has led to imprisonment. The wounded mother is predicated on a 'good mothering' ideology (Hays, 1996), shifting from a 'normal' (intensive mothering) to an 'altered' state of mothering through imprisonment, characterised by pain and separation. However, for the unbecoming mother, 'normal' mothering is founded upon disruption and separation. Therefore, whilst the wounded mother constructs imprisonment as a direct threat to the mothering identity, for the unbecoming mother imprisonment presents an opportunity for repair and therefore reinforces a more positive sense of being a mother. Whilst the wounded mother is narrated primarily through the voice of the woman as mother, the unbecoming mother is primarily told through the voice of the woman as prisoner.

The most pervasive image of women prisoners available in contemporary narratives is that of the 'victim' (Bosworth, 1999). This image permeates academic literature, popular media culture and Criminal Justice policy (see Chapter Three). Whilst the image of the 'bad' female offender occasionally occurs, particularly within the media, the most durable images are that of the 'mad' and the 'sad'. The victim narrative is plotted around the idea of the broken woman being rescued and re-socialised into good womanhood through imprisonment (Snider, 2003). Many prison policies and programmes are centred on this narrative; therefore prisoners may learn how to story their offending trajectories within this available narrative. It is this narrative structure that underpins the unbecoming mother.

In Chapter Seven I suggest that the wounded mother was the story most expected to be heard and told. Yet, women who have transgressed the boundaries of 'good mothering' prior to imprisonment often do not have access to this narrative. The 'victim' narrative can, therefore, represent a useful tool in managing shame and guilt and in resisting the demonising identities of the 'bad mother' and 'offender'.

Engaging with this dominant narrative may be indicative of subjectification (Foucault, 1976; see pages 36-42), conforming to institutional expectations of rehabilitation and the 'becoming' of a good mother. However, I contend that this narrative is open to agentive interpretation and is adopted as a defence against the pain of imprisonment, negating the detrimental meanings associated with a chaotic pre-prison self. By embracing rehabilitation and the goals of imprisonment, the women are able to construct more positive self-meanings associated with recovery and growth, enabling a positive meaning to emerge from potentially negative circumstances.

Whilst motherhood is a feature of this narrative, it by no means dominates it. Unlike the narrative of the wounded mother, which represents stability of the self (both as mother and moral being), this narrative demonstrates transformation and views imprisonment as a site for personal growth. From this perspective the narrative of the unbecoming mother reflects Frank's (1995) quest narrative (see page 93), and the ability to rise to the opportunities disruption presents. However, more consistent with the restitution narrative (see page 92), the unbecoming mother remains passive in her rehabilitation, telling the story of being repaired, rather than of repairing oneself. Despite telling the story of rehabilitation and repair, the narrative is ultimately disempowering as it does not take ownership of the repair, with responsibility for being repaired placed with the prison. The unbecoming mother tells of on-going 'repair' rather than being 'repaired'. There is, therefore, a sense that what is considered to be good mothering is and continues to be out of their reach.

Prison as biographical validation

Spiralling out of control

For wounded mothers separation from their children through imprisonment represented a significant biographical disruption. For the unbecoming mother, separation is often situated within a narrative of repeated disruptions. This tends to be accompanied by a 'spiralling out of control' narrative, incorporating voluntary or involuntary separation from their children prior to imprisonment. In describing her chaotic pre-prison life Lyndsey's story illustrates this. Lyndsey told of how her parents came to be the main carers of her two older children;

'I got married when I were young, my parents kicked me out, got married when I were sixteen, bloke were a heroin addict, didn't know at the time, he used to go out having sex with prostitutes, come back, beat me up badly..., so got marks all over my body, he raped me, his family did..., so mum and dad had 'kids really.'

The narrative of 'spiralling out of control' is characterised by an increasingly disruptive flow of events, actions and circumstances prior to imprisonment. However, unlike 'biographical flow' (Faircloth, 2004) which highlights the continuity of mundanity in the face of disruption, 'spiralling out of control' emphasises the increased frequency and ferocity of a multiplicity of disruptions. Therefore, for the unbecoming mother, maternal separation is often not the most significant disruption in their life, rather it melts into a series of assaults upon their sense of self. Lyndsey goes on to tell of the detrimental impact of the multiple disruptions on her sense of self;

'after that [separation from her children] relationship after bad relationship, not having, trusting anyone, not liking myself, my appearance, my looks, you know, just went downhill..., I had a breakdown..., just got in a mess..., I turned into an alcoholic.'

Lyndsey explicitly attributes her alcoholism, which she later also associates with her offending and consequent imprisonment, with her fractured sense of self.

Suzette also constructed a 'spiralling out of control' narrative with an increasingly disruptive flow of events including bereavement and alcoholism. Suzette talked of how she 'turned to alcohol..., to cover the 'pain' of 'losing' her dad. Suzette claimed that alcohol made her feel 'stronger' and spoke of being violent and aggressive when 'totally blitzed by alcohol'. This led to her mother seeking a residency order for her daughter. As with Lyndsey, Suzette uses her narrative to account for her separation from her daughter. Although both women suggested that the separation was not ideal, it was constructed as a positive contribution to good mothering in that it was in the best interests of their children. This sentiment was expressed by Suzette; 'I didn't want to fight that [the residency order] cos she [daughter] were safe'.

Rose's pre-prison narrative is characterised as a 'vicious circle' of isolation, loneliness and alcohol. The 'vicious circle' becomes a downward spiral of addiction, separation, crime and imprisonment. Rose indicates a sense of isolation fuelled by the restrictions posed by her mothering role. This was illustrated by the recurring image of being 'stuck in the house'. Rose talked of being 'in the house all week' whilst her husband was at work or socialising. Rose suggests that her relationship with alcohol was a 'confidence thing really to start with' because she was 'lonely' and goes on to suggest that it 'just got out of hand'.

In his critical assessment of 'biographical disruption' Williams (2000) asked for greater consideration of the role of biographical disruption in the creation of chronic illness, as opposed to chronic illness as biographical disruption (see page 74).

Although this study endeavours to explore the potentially disruptive impact of imprisonment on mothering, Rose's story highlights the possibility of 'motherhood' as biographical disruption and as a contributory factor to her isolation and alcoholism which led to her imprisonment. Yet Rose appears quick to defend this possibility. Rose briefly mentioned that she suffered with post natal depression but went on to say 'but like I got over that, was on medication and everything, everything was fine'. Similarly, as Rose talked of her sense of isolation and being 'stuck in the house' she suggested that she was 'bored' but immediately retracted this by stating 'not so much bored 'cos I, there was always something to do'. This illustrates the complexity of the discourses surrounding motherhood and what can and cannot be told. Rose's words signify a reluctance to indicate being unfulfilled in her mothering role. The cultural dominance and expectation of 'good mother' narratives can often restrict women's opportunity and ability to describe non-normative mothering situations or experiences (Miller, 2005). It may be, for Rose that addiction provided a more acceptable separation trajectory than being unfulfilled with her mothering role.

The effects of addiction were described to account for the women's unavailability to their children. Downward directional phrases, informed by an internalised understanding of addiction and its ability to take over their lives (Green et al, 2006), were frequently used. Evocative metaphors of 'bodily dys-appearance' (Harris, 2009) were drawn upon to illustrate the power of addiction to take over women's bodies, leading them to feel out of control. Bodily dys-appearance is a term coined by Leder (1990; cited in Harris, 2009:1035) to indicate the 'way in which the body demands attention, or comes to awareness, in times of pain, illness and dysfunction'.

Terms such as ‘rattling’ and ‘shakes’ were used to illustrate the debilitating effects of substance withdrawal and the impact upon their ability to physically or mentally participate in mothering. Lyndsey suggested ‘she [daughter] thinks when I don’t see her that I don’t love her but that was because I wa’ on alcohol or not on alcohol and rattling¹⁸. Rose also illustrated how she was mentally consumed by addiction by demonstrating her ambivalence to her children at this point; ‘I didn’t even think about the kids it, it was a bit mad really, I just didn’t, I just didn’t’. From this perspective addiction is viewed as disabling their normal or desired mothering. Therefore, although desired mothering is restricted, the unbecoming mother is able to lay claim to an understanding of and commitment to broader values of ‘good mothering’. Prioritising children’s needs is inherent in intensive mothering and therefore a taken for granted element of mothering narratives. On reflection Rose is able to acknowledge her indifference to her children during the height of her addiction. Not only does a narrative of addiction help to account for her separation but it creates an opportunity to express sentiments that may otherwise be prohibited within available mothering narratives.

For the unbecoming mother, addiction often appeared to be associated with mental illness. Despite disproportionate numbers of women in prison experiencing one or more mental illnesses (Home Office, 2007), stories of such conditions were restricted to the narrative of the unbecoming mother. Having a serious mental illness can have detrimental consequences for any mother (Mowbray et al, 2001) and is often difficult to reconcile with dominant understandings of good mothering (Davies and Allen, 2007). The disproportionate lack of stories of mental illness across participants in this study may indicate that, even within prison where mental illness is a recognised

¹⁸ Physical symptoms of drug withdrawal

crimeogenic factor and potential legitimisation for incarceration and consequent maternal separation, mental illness remains largely untellable in relation to mothering. Therefore, even in a prison environment, mental illness remains a stigma in relation to mothering. Yet for women who have transgressed the boundaries of 'good mothering' prior to imprisonment, stories of mental illness were used to account for their situation, possibly in order to manage the shame and guilt of separation.

Mental illness is told in complex and often contradictory ways. Although Rose was quick to dismiss the significance of her post-natal depression, it is mental illness that is explicitly drawn upon to account for her separation from her children for a second time;

'So my head ended up going again and that's when I went, I said "d'you know what, I can't cope with any of this anymore" and then I lost the plot again. Then I ended up going on the railway lines..., anyway I got dragged off them and then they carted us straight to [psychiatric hospital], and then I was in there for about a month'.

Lyndsey and Suzette more frequently and explicitly drew upon mental illness to account for their situations. Lyndsey suggested;

'I know I've been a bad mum, I've got problems, I've got a mental illness, you know what I mean, I've been through a lot of things..., I've got a mental illness of depression and panic attacks'.

Similarly, Suzette claimed 'I do suffer wi' depression so it'll affect my mental health and I'll, and that's another reason, you know, I'll drink'. Mental illness is explicitly cited as having a contributory impact upon their addiction and mothering capacity. Presser (2008:108) describes mental illness along with 'addiction' as the "usual suspects" from contemporary lay discourses about what causes crime'. Although

Presser (2008) terms these 'lay' discourses, such understandings of 'offending behaviour' are integral to both prison and probation programmes, providing prisoners with an understanding and a language within which to narrate (McIntosh and McKeganey, 2000; Green et al, 2006) their stories. This can impose a schema and a context for narrative that 'removes individual agency from both the narration and its meaning' (Waldram, 2008:422), suffocating the voice of the narrator (Frank, 1995). It is argued that this leaves limited ability for individuals to influence the effect of the dominant discourses upon themselves. This mirrors Foucault's (1975) concept of 'governmentality' and the way in which dominant discourses are internalised and inform individual subjectivity and identity (Lemke, 2001; Miller, 2008; Taylor, 2011), to the extent that individuals believe themselves to be 'the author of the ideology or discourse' (Bergstrom and Knights, 2006:354). However, the complexity of the stories of the mental illness and addiction of the unbecoming mother illustrate that such dominant discourses remain open to agentive intervention with individuals actively negotiating the utility of the discourse at any given time. For mothers outside of the context of imprisonment, mental illness is something that is denied and disguised (Vallido et al, 2010). However, for the unbecoming mother, narratives of mental illness and addiction are used to account for mothering transgressions.

Swimming against the tide

Spatial orientation metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) are repeatedly adopted within the women's stories of addiction and mental illness. Such metaphors are culturally and socially founded. References to being 'up' and going 'forward' relate to personal well-being and success encompassing notions of 'goodness', 'virtue' and 'rationality', whilst references to being 'down' and going 'backwards' relate to being unwell and a sense of failure (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Rose talked of being 'up

and down', 'I was sorting misell out and I was back down, sorting misell out'. Similarly, Lyndsey suggested 'I was backwards and forwards..., one minute I'm up there and the next I'm down again', and 'I was up and down'. Such metaphors illustrate the chaotic nature of the women's pre-prison lives with all of the women portraying their lives as being out of their control. They also function to set the context within which to illustrate that they did not give up on their children or surrender their mothering role easily.

The women identify several barriers to maintaining active participation in mothering prior to imprisonment. The purpose of the narrative appears to be to ask the reader or listener to bear witness to the difficulties faced and the effort exerted in trying to do their 'best'. Clare talked of battling with depression and, despite several attempts to manage her excessive drinking, found that she reverted to alcohol in an attempt to forget her past of sexual abuse and sense of abandonment throughout a childhood in local authority care. Clare cited her difficult upbringing as the main barrier to normative mothering. After telling of a turbulent childhood Clare went on to suggest; 'I didn't always know how to read stories to her at bedtime, I didn't always know how to be with her but I tried my hardest'. Similarly, whilst Anne suggested that she was 'a good mum', she recognised that her volatile relationship with her partner impeded this on occasion;

'unfortunately I got involved in another relationship which wasn't healthy, and although you're still trying to balance being a good mum I now know from the experience of that that children do see things that go on and hear things that go on that can ultimately affect them. I used to try to not involve my daughter in anything that was going on but they can see the change in you and feel the difference in you..., up until I came to prison I did the best I could for my daughter.'

Whilst the wounded mother talks of unproblematic mothering prior to imprisonment, the narrative of the unbecoming mother enables the women to voice the difficulties and problems encountered.

Rose told of how she did not give up on her children easily, making several attempts to re-build fractured relationships. Rose suggested 'everything was fine, we were like, I was on Methadone, I wasn't bothering with anyone, I was building up with the kids'. As Rose talks of these attempts she more frequently adopts the voice of 'I'. Through the use of 'I' Rose amplifies herself as an active agent, placing herself at the centre of her own recovery. Rose then goes on to talk of her response to continuing arguments with her children's father; 'I lost the plot again'. For Rose, 'losing the plot' appears to be inextricably linked to an understanding of not being able to cope, which she internalises as going 'backwards'. Rose relates her separation from her children with her inability to cope. Being able to 'cope' is a central component of 'intensive [good] mothering' (Hays, 1996), with mothers' own needs de-prioritised for the sake of their children. Offenders' inability to cope with difficult life circumstances is also central to the individualised understandings of offending behaviour that much of prison policy and practice is based upon. Such understandings are built upon modernist conceptions of the rational [hu]man. Whilst explicitly suggesting that she was unable to cope may appear to be at odds with 'good mothering', it also functions to illustrate a trajectory of change; from being broken and unable to cope to being repaired and therefore able to cope. This, in turn, validates imprisonment and enables positive meanings to be derived from the experience of imprisonment, helping the teller to make sense of imprisonment.

Lyndsey also demonstrated how she fought to be involved in her daughter's life throughout her 'turbulent' period;

‘she were eight when she went to her dad, he got custody, I had to fight in court for her, took about three year properly..., first I used to see her with my dad, then I got a parental rights, overnight stays, but then I kept drinking all my life, I’ve had about five breakdowns, so then it’d be back to court..., but obviously places I stay, the environment is no good’.

In telling of gaining parental rights at court, Lyndsey positions herself as victor. In doing so she defends accusations of being a ‘bad mother’ by highlighting legal and professional support for her continued mothering role. In claiming she ‘had to fight’ for parental rights, Lyndsey amplifies an agentic self; yet agency is quickly negated as Lyndsey refers to addiction and the impact of external forces to communicate her inability to participate in the role that she fought for. Yet by citing her inappropriate environment as a rationale for ‘surrendering’ her visitation rights, Lyndsey is able to defend her position as a good mother by claiming she was acting in the best interests of her daughter. As noted by O’Connor (2000:39), narrators’ personal agency may shift throughout their telling and therefore narrators position themselves ‘within a multi-layered participation framework’.

Suzette also demonstrated how she fought to participate in her daughter’s life. Suzette storied her inability to achieve this as a result of external factors; a lack of emotional support from her family, inappropriate practical support and the negative influence of friends;

‘I went and stayed in a B and B¹⁹ near where mi mum lived so I could see ma little girl, er..., I started to get a grip of my drinking..., after a month of getting help and taking two steps forward, mi mum wouldn’t have me back..., so I ended up in a hostel and it were really bad and I couldn’t sleep at night, so I

¹⁹ Bed and Breakfast

started drinking again..., it were 'wrong people that I were around.'

In stating the practical steps she has taken to take control of her life, Suzette appears to take responsibility for her situation. However, there is a continuing sense of powerlessness as Suzette appears unable to negotiate the complex relationships in her life to maintain her recovery.

Crime as a symptom

The unbecoming mother situates offending within the narrative of a 'spiralling out of control' and as symptomatic of the complexity and chaotic nature of their pre-prison lives and indicative of their need for support, as indicated within these quotes;

'I just went back downhill again..., loads of different things had happened and then I just, I was using the gear²⁰, I was drinking and that again, and then it was just, that was just what led to this robbery, just one night. And then coming to prison' (Rose).

'I got, I got desperate like for drink, cos I'd spend mi money on drink and then I'd do stupid stuff to get food, and I were like, I committed two burglaries, I started shop lifting first as well' (Suzette).

'I was on alcohol, living with random people, homeless..., just struggling, it were just..., just got in a mess, then I ended up wi' friends, all alcoholics, you know, just getting myself in a mess, I turned into an alcoholic..., first time I got caught in a public area ..., but I weren't supposed to be in that area drunk..., and then I got arrested and then it just carried on from there..., I got jail for a, stuff like criminal damage..., drunk in a public area, I've got done for burglary..., I've been done for racism...'. (Lyndsey).

Framing criminality within a narrative of 'spiralling out of control' embraces dominant discourses of the broken woman. However, actively positioning this within a trajectory of change facilitates the continued need to validate their imprisonment and

²⁰ Heroin

draw positive meaning from their experience, defending their projected view of themselves as essentially 'good at heart' (Green et al, 2006) but in need of help.

Within a narrative of 'spiralling out of control', the unbecoming mother situates offending in a continuous flow of increasingly disruptive events that serves to illustrate the depth of their chaos. Criminality is therefore constructed as being symptomatic of their victimised position. Therefore, as noted by Steffensmeier and Allan (1996), women's offending is often tied up in relationships with others and is considered a relational act rather than a direct violation of law. Suzette claims that her offences were 'a cry for help'. Suzette was arrested for burglary at the homes of two family friends, which she claimed served to demonstrate her desperation; '[it] was a cry for help because I wanted them to know, I wanted her to know..., I wanted her to know how desperate I wa' and what a situation I were in'. As with Reeve's (2010) concept of 'fracture and flow' (see page 74), Suzette's offence is constructed as a resource mobilised in order to restore the flow of her pre-addiction life and regain the support of her family and friends which had previously been central to her sense of self. It may be argued that, in doing so, Suzette minimises her sense of responsibility for her offending. As discussed by Presser (2004), an offender who lays blame with his or her victim does not take full responsibility for their actions or the consequences of their actions. However, Suzette's words suggest that she does accept accountability for her actions and their consequences as she suggests, 'I feel awful for what I did, really awful, cos she's lovely'. Yet, as argued by Steffensmeier and Allen (1996) and as illustrated in Chapter Seven, for many women their offending and its consequences are often considered in the context of their relationships with and responsibilities to others.

Lyndsey constructed her offending as 'retribution for harm' caused to her (Presser, 2004:810);

'I've been done for racism, I went wi' a bloke for six months, I found him in bed with me best mate, erm I kicked off and all his family like, I'm not racist but they were loads coming out of mi house, taxis shining lights in mi window, like, different times, I went and fired bricks through their window'.

Discussing a further offence Lyndsey suggested;

'I've got done for burglary, a man led me on that I could be his cleaner but he were just taking advantage of me, confided in him, made a complete joke of me in front of his mates, I went in, put his window through, went in and I nicked all his beer.'

And for a further offence suggested;

'I've been done for assault, someone were saying, sommat about when mi daughter, said that I were an unfit mother and then they used to call my daughter, said that my daughter were a whore, so I slapped her but I marked her face'.

Lyndsey grounds her acts of violence in narratives of resistance, constructing her offences as retribution to those who have victimised her. Within these quotes, Lyndsey positions herself as the victim of infidelity, harassment, slander and deception. Lyndsey's offences are each in the context of her emotional relationships with others. Despite acknowledging her own acts of violence, Lyndsey maintains a position of victim within the context of these relations and offences.

Both Lyndsey and Suzette attributed their imprisonment to their inability to adhere to the unrealistic and unhelpful rules and expectations of court orders rather than owing to criminal activity;

'I've been locked up mainly for breaching err..., breaching ASBOs²¹ a couple of times and being on a probation order and not being able to follow it...' (Lyndsey).

'I got erm, I got a tag for erm, shoplifting, and I breached that a lot cos of my situation..., and stuff so I breached mi tag loads..., and I ended up here' (Suzette).

Lyndsey highlights the paradoxical process of her criminalisation. Resisting the identity of offender, crime as 'behaviour' is rejected and recognised as a political process of social control (McLaughlin et al, 2004). Lyndsey supports this claim by drawing on the evaluation of her support worker who, she claims, suggested 'an alcoholic should not be on an ASBO'. This 'condemnation of the condemners' (Scott and Lyman, 1968) was a common neutralisation technique within the women's accounts. However, the expressed difficulty in adhering to the orders was reflective of the high number of women entering prison under an immediate custodial sentence for breach of a court order (Prison Reform Trust, 2012).

Unlike the narrative of the wounded mother (Chapter Seven), offence, arrest and sentence are afforded little attention in the narrative of the unbecoming mother. Offending was often framed as insignificant and as a symptom of their chaotic circumstances and victimisation rather than as a criminal act. Constructed as normalised events of their 'spiralling out of control' narrative, arrest and sentence did not appear to represent biographical disruption, instead were 'lost in a sea of multiple disruptions' (Harris, 2009:1036). For many of these women it is often a multiplicity of

²¹ Anti-social Behaviour Order

biographical disruptions that has led to imprisonment, rather than imprisonment presenting as a biographical disruption.

Prison as an opportunity for recovery and repair

Investing heavily in the notion of the woman offender as a broken woman, imprisonment represents the opportunity for recovery, repair and personal growth. In stories of illness 'restitution narratives' (see page 92) are informed by societal need to be seen to be working toward recovery (Whitehead, 2006). Public institutions and media networks provide the frameworks within which these stories are expected to be told (Frank, 1995; Whitehead, 2006). Illness restitution narratives are anticipated to follow a plot from disrupted to normal state. Restitution narratives within a criminal justice context are also orientated toward the demonstration of change. The plot maps the change from 'dysfunctional' to 'functioning' individuals. The emphasis is on the individual to demonstrate change, yet the desired change is determined within an involuntary setting defined by the institution (Trotter, 2006). Prison programme and policy, along with social and media demands for reform provide the language and conceptual understandings of change (Green et al, 2006) within which prisoners should illustrate their recovery. Whilst these frameworks are often confining, the unbecoming mother illustrates how they also function as a narrative resource enabling a positive meaning to be attributed to the experience of imprisonment. The wounded mother challenges dominant notions of female passivity and the notion of the broken woman. However, the unbecoming mother re-interprets these negative associations with imprisonment to enable a meaningful life to be constructed from experiences along with a sense that a positive ending may emerge to the prison journey.

Rose constructed imprisonment as representing access to scarce drug rehabilitation programming. In doing so Rose positioned prison as her saviour, suggesting 'prison has been good for us'. Rose had previously cited lack of access to such services as one of her main barriers to participating in mothering;

'I was just coming and going, in like, but in-between trying t'us build a relationship up with mi kids..., I was waiting to go into rehab..., but the bed wasn't ready..., but like it was just like..., just like a waiting game, it just seemed like it and then every time summat was cropping up like "oh you're going next week" and then "oh no" you're just knocked back again..., I ended up, I started like slipping back..., then I was giving up'.

As Rose goes on to talk about entering prison there is a sense of an immediate 'breaking off' (Locock et al, 2009) from her pre-prison self. Whilst, in the work of Locock et al (2009), this 'breaking off' represents a negative ending of the previous self, for Rose it represented a positive disruption to the previously fractured self as she instantaneously engaged with a process of repair. Rose goes on to discuss her attempts to regain access to her children and her attempts to re-build relationships with them, 'I was wanting to speak to the kids; I kept phoning mi Mam and I was like crying and I was like "Mam what, I need to speak to the kids'. From this perspective prison is constructed as providing the momentum to change.

Lyndsey draws heavily on the notion of prison as a 'community of victims' (Bosworth, 1999:120). For Lyndsey, prison represented a place of safety. Safety or lack of safety is a key theme throughout Lyndsey's narrative;

'They said it were best to keep me in [prison] for my own safety..., prison's to help people, it don't make you a bad person cos you've been in prison, we've all had bad pasts, things have happened.'

Lyndsey's understandings of being safe may be linked to her history of addiction, homelessness and abusive relationships, as she relates being safe with having shelter and protection from 'something happening'. Lyndsey's words indicate that she feels completely powerless in keeping herself safe or managing her own safety. For Lyndsey, imprisonment meant that her everyday needs were being met, which in turn reduced her anxieties about safety, as she indicates;

'it's just not good is it being in jail, but some people see it as their homes don't they..., you haven't got to worry, debt, and things like that..., I look forward to a letter me, letter that's all me, letter, canteen, mi smokes, tea, everything..., friends'.

Imprisonment can remove prisoners' individual responsibility for themselves. This is often considered one of the main pains of imprisonment (Goffman, 1961). As noted by Rowe (2011), the lack of responsibility prisoners have for their lives can leave them with a sense that their status as an adult is denied. Yet for women who have previously struggled to manage the complexity of their lives prior to imprisonment, the removal of responsibility can represent a protective force, providing security.

The relative safety from violence and homelessness provided by imprisonment represented a reduced need to drink. Finding stability and safety, Lyndsey also constructs prison as a safe haven; 'I think it's safer for me in here really, I never want to leave..., they only time I don't drink is when I'm in here'. Removing the chaos of everyday life on the outside provided Lyndsey with the stability and safety she desired. However, as discussed later in this chapter, this narrative retains Lyndsey in the position of victim in need of rescuing, problematising her biographical reconstruction of repair and growth.

Lyndsey's concept of safety appears to be embedded in literary narratives of romantic fantasy in which she attributes being safe with being rescued, either by a male partner or the prison itself. This is demonstrated as Lyndsey talks about her previous release from prison; 'he's got me safe..., he's my boyfriend and he were getting me somewhere safe'. However, Lyndsey's story indicates that she feels repeatedly let down and abandoned by men, in particular her male partners. The relationship between men as abusers and women as victims reappears throughout Lyndsey's narrative. Lyndsey draws on visual representations associated with male aggression, violence, strength and physical power to construct men as abusers as she talks about her husband; 'right big, hard, big hands, fighter, like Jack the lad'. Lyndsey then draws upon the image of women as 'weak' and 'vulnerable', referring to herself as 'liddle' and as being 'taken advantage of' by men.

The image of women as victims, particularly as victims of male oppression, resonate heavily within Western cultures (Anderson, 2008). Such clear images serve to legitimise the unbecoming mother's status as a victim in need of rescuing. However, accommodating this construction of female victimisation can be particularly problematic for women in prison, reinforcing passivity, negating agency and any meaningful possibility of change (Anderson, 2008). As Lyndsey's story indicates, this can often leave women feeling powerless within their own lives and unable to make or sustain changes without the help and support of others. Lyndsey recognises that she is repeatedly let down by the men in her life, yet unreliable men were often the only sources of support available to her.

Lyndsey's narration of her own aggression and violence disrupts the dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' that she attributes to men and women. Talking of an altercation with a fellow prisoner, Lyndsey says 'I thought one more and I'm just

gonna smash her head in against the wall'. Lyndsey has a tendency to 'gloss over' her own actions of violence and aggression (Squire, 1994) by legitimising them in retaliation and self-protection against the 'bad' other, mainly men.

Suzette's construction of imprisonment also represented a place of safety. However, unlike Lyndsey's narrative that situated prison in the role of the rescuing prince, Suzette positions prison as the nurturing parent. Throughout Suzette's story there is a distinct absence of her daughter and her role as mother. When asked about her relationship with her daughter during the early stages of imprisonment, Suzette responded; 'oh sorry, that's what's it's all [the interview's] about innit'. This is not to suggest that Suzette did not attach great importance to her relationship with her daughter but it is the ruptures in her own role as daughter rather than as mother that posed the most significant threat to Suzette's sense of self. Suzette illustrates a perceived shift from a 'good' to a 'bad' daughter; 'don't get me wrong, I'm far from perfect but at 'end o' day, I 'a'n't always been a bad daughter'. Yet despite limited talk of her daughter, Suzette suggests continuity as a mother; 'my relationship's always been good with [daughter]'.

Having a residency order for her daughter, Suzette's mother holds the key to Suzette's contact. Therefore the prioritisation of her relationship with her mother may be seen to demonstrate her commitment to facilitate a relationship with her daughter. Equally, it may be that Suzette attributes her imprisonment to her fractured relationship with her mother and this relationship is therefore prioritised within her story to account for her situation. However, Suzette's story remains pre-occupied with the loss of support from her mother which led to her feeling out of control;

'I just want some support from her cos it's hard on your own and I didn't, I weren't on mi own till I were

29, and I know it sounds daft but I were always been looked after, I'm not used to not been looked after..., I always had support from mi mum and mi family..., I need, I need, I need, I didn't just need help financially, I needed help morally, supportingly, emotional support, I need that, emotional support.'

Suzette positions herself in a childlike role, in need of guidance, support and reassurance. The boundaries provided by being 'parented' gave Suzette the plot by which to live her life, with certainties and expectations. In removing these boundaries Suzette's plot is lost and her life spirals out of control. Her relationship with her mother appears to define who she is and her position in the social world; her ruptured relationship with her mother leads to a diminished sense of self.

The boundaries, expectations and certainties required to maintain Suzette's plot and therefore sense of self, lost through her relationship with her mother, appear to be restored through imprisonment. This is demonstrated within Suzette's relationship with prison staff, who she constructs as being caring and nurturing;

'When I first come in and I were on a ACCT²², I did get checked on once every half hour and they'd ask if I were alright and which were good cos it showed they care.'

When telling of positive feedback from a prison officer Suzette suggested;

'like my personal officer as well, other, other morning, I came out mi cell and he came, he just went "[Suzette], your file and your" and he stuck his thumbs up like that and I were like "oh right, cheers" and it made me feel right good cos I thought for one he cares and two he's taking notice that I'm being good'.

²² Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork. This is a care planning system for monitoring prisoners' and engaging them in reducing their problems and helping them to build up their own sources of support (Offenders' Families Helpline, no date).

Similarly, Suzette draws upon affirmation from a prison officer to confirm her sense of self-worth;

‘There were an officer, err, Mrs Oakley²³ and she were really, really nice and she were, when I felt like doing misen in, err, cos mi head weren’t straight, you know, and I were talking like that..., that were really nice that, so I did feel a lot better after talking to her.’

Observation is a key technique of regulation within prisons (Foucault, 1975) and is practiced in both explicit and implicit ways. Foucault’s later understandings of observation (1984; 1988) referred to ‘pastoral power’ as an implicit disciplinary observation technique. Pastoral observation relies on the establishment of social relationships ‘and the practices of ‘talking and listening’ (Peckover, 1998:146). Utilising social relationships as a technique of observation can result in the conflation of caring ‘for’ with caring ‘about’ (see page 45) and although such techniques are non-coercive they can encourage ‘clients’ to offer information and inadvertently be complicit in their own observation. Suzette’s relationships with prison staff appear to mirror this form of observation. However, in drawing upon the Listening Guide particular attention is paid to how this interpersonal relationship is narrated. Therefore, this analysis highlights the way in which these observations and consequent evaluations embedded in social relationships provide Suzette with the boundaries and expectations to re-construct a more positive sense of self.

Suzette also draws upon the structure of the prison as providing her with an official role as a ‘server’ in the catering department;

‘I’ve got a good job and it’s a trusted job what I’ve got, which is nice as well, cos it..., I know it’s daft for in prison but it’s like probably second best job you can have, erm, and like I say it’s trusted but it’s nice

²³ Pseudonym

that you're seen as a better person sometime, you know, cos there's people who they just would not put in there, you know what I mean, so that's really nice'.

Suzette draws upon the credibility of her position to construct herself as a 'trusted' and 'better' person, illustrating that she derives her sense of self from her relationships with others. Her position serves to elevate her sense of self by highlighting her difference to the 'other' prisoners (Anderson, 1976) but primarily functions to illustrate being deserving of the support and recognition of the prison officials. Suzette's sense of self is therefore embedded within interpersonal relationships. As previously discussed, Suzette's sense of self was gained from being a 'good daughter' and therefore deserving of her family's continued support. Suzette's relationship with the prison as 'parent' serves to restore a sense of purpose and continuity to her life and prevent further disruption (Reeve, 2010).

In relation to biographical disruption incurred through illness, its impact may be dependent upon not only its physical attributes but also on the positive or negative meanings attached to the illness within a specific set of social or ideological relationships (Bury, 1991). Different illnesses are associated with unique imagery, connotations and stigma (Goffman, 1963; Bury, 1991). Therefore, the experience of diagnosis of an illness may be influenced by patients' perceptions of societal attitudes toward themselves as individuals who bear that diagnosis (Bury, 1982; 1991). Primarily negative meanings tend to be attached to a prison sentence and the individual as a prisoner, particularly to women and mothers in prison. However, by placing stories within a trajectory of growth and recovery, the unbecoming mother is able to construct a more positive sense of self and a more positive relationship with her experience of imprisonment. However, whilst the telling and sharing of these

stories may be considered to be an act of agency in reconstructing a more positive sense of self, they may equally diminish notions of agency by reinforcing the idea that women are passive in their own recovery, negating any form of accountability (Anderson, 2008).

The self in recovery?

The narrative of 'prison as opportunity' serves to illustrate a process of recovery. Imprisonment is constructed as an opportunity to reflect, prompting the motivation for recovery and repair. In order to demonstrate this expression a coherent narrative is required (Maruna, 2001) with change being central to this process. The demonstration of change emphasises the distance travelled between the way in which the women perceive themselves prior to imprisonment and the way in which they perceive themselves now. Although motherhood forms a part of this, it is by no means the central element of the repair narrative. The process of recovery enables the unbecoming mother to separate the identity of motherhood from womanhood. As detailed in the previous section (Prison as an opportunity), the unbecoming mother demonstrates a clear understanding of her own needs and requirements separate to those associated with her role as mother. This can involve medical treatment, emotional and psychological support and a sense of being safe. As noted by Rowe (2011), imprisonment is often indicative of larger crises in women's lives. It is often only when these crises are addressed that women can reintegrate their roles as mothers into the reality of their lives.

Having engaged in a process of drug rehabilitation, motherhood was central to Rose's reconstructed sense of her repaired self. Rose suggested that she did not think of her children during her turbulent pre-prison period but suggests that she now

wants to 'start being a Mum again'. In illustrating this shift Rose adopts a more positive and determined tone and language. Her previously narrated self was characterised with non-agentive language such as 'I ended up' and 'things had happened', facilitating the construction of events and circumstances as occurring without intention or plan. Upon imprisonment this is immediately replaced with a more agentive language illustrating the mobilisation of resources to re-plot her biography.

Recognising how fragmented her relationship with her family and children had become prior to imprisonment, Rose illustrates how she has worked with her family and the prison service to negotiate access to her children and re-build relationships;

'it was a full year before I seen them..., every week I would write or send a card to them without failure..., I would write or, you know I would draw them pictures and send pictures home, without fail really..., gradually I was allowed to phone, so I would phone them..., it was just horrible because every time I was having a visit, like with mi Mum or mi Dad or with any family it was like, all we talked about was the kids..., I would always be in tears 'cause it'd be like "oh I just miss them, I wanna see them" it was like I was begging them to try and change Paul's²⁴ mind, but he was having none of it..., I started speaking to him briefly on the phone..., then eventually [he] agreed to come up and see us, I don't think he could believe how well I looked and I'd said to him "what d'you think will you let them come?" and he was like "no, no", so it got to the point where I thought I'm gonna have to do summat, so I said to Paul "I'm going to see me Solicitor about it"..., it went on for about a good six month'.

Having gained contact with her children, Rose goes on to detail the more difficult process of rebuilding relationships with her daughter, who was a baby at the time of

²⁴ Pseudonym

her departure from the family home and with whom she had had no contact for eighteen months;

[She] wouldn't come to us..., so then [she] would come [to the prison] on her own with mi Mam..., so I could build up with her a bit..., but, if she wanted the toilet or if she wanted anything mi Mam had to do it..., I used to think "I wonder what she actually thinks, she doesn't really know us"..., she was really quiet, but she started coming every Friday, she seemed to get better but it still wasn't right..., but she's loads better now, she's really good'.

This shift in Rose's narrative is central to her recovery and re-constructed self as a good mother. It provides an opportunity to present herself and her life in a more positive way and adds meaning to both her previous struggle and to her current achievements. Rose's narrative is ultimately optimistic, with the hope for a successful reunification with her children and family on release.

The unbecoming mother is a narrative of transition and is told in the context of on-going repair and often does not tell of a repaired self. Whilst, as illustrated with Rose's story, motherhood is part of this repair narrative, it is often constructed as the optimum goal of recovery. In line with the societal and institutional expectations, the narrative of the unbecoming mother therefore serves to illustrate that the women are working toward active participation in motherhood, yet illustrates that there are often more immediate concerns and threats to their sense of self and process of recovery that still need to be addressed before this can be achieved.

Suzette went to great lengths to demonstrate her personal growth. For Suzette this related to gaining skills to manage situations, which, she suggests, may previously have led her to turn to alcohol or crime. On talking of an altercation Suzette indicated;

‘when I didn’t get angry and do sommat stupid, I knew then that I’d taken a big step because I knew then that I had that in my mind ‘don’t do that Suzette because you know what’ll happen’, you know, so I were proud of myself..., I’ve dealt with that in a perfect way, really’.

Suzette also demonstrates change and growth as she reflects on her past offending behaviour;

‘being in here has made me think to myself, well it’s made me think twice..., that, no matter how desperate you get, don’t turn to crime..., there’s other channels of help’.

Suzette’s evaluation of her repair is indicative of Foucault’s concept of subjectification, in that Suzette has engaged in a process of self-regulation (Taunton, 2008). Suzette recognises and appreciates her own personal growth, however, her sense of self remains embedded in relation to the support of others. Suzette indicates that she needs the moral support and acceptance of her mother to maintain her recovery and this is central to her aspirations for her future;

‘I’m hoping, I’m hoping that, I’m still, I still have dreams, I have weird dreams like, mi mum being really supportive when I get out and stuff and I still have that little bit of hope that she will be, but when I think that she won’t be I feel like my hearts sunk into mi stomach, you know, I get, I just feel really, really crap when I think like that, so I always have to think that there is a little chance, you know..., I’m scared..., I will be completely alone erm, and I’m scared, I’m scared o’ being on mi own, but I’m gonna try mi best to do mi best in this hostel, get every bit of help I can from the people there erm, that run it and wi’ housing and things like that and take on board things that they say, listen to ‘em, accept their help and in every way..., I need that, that moral support.’

Suzette positions herself as a responsive prisoner, stressing the helpfulness of services and interventions. This is representative of Foucault's concept of 'punishing the soul' and the way in which power and authoritative knowledge is used as a specific technique to dominate and supervise (Sargiacomo, 2009). However, it is the acceptance of her mother that appears to have the most significant power, as without this support, Suzette remains fearful of further ruptures to her sense of self and her continued recovery, as this poem suggests;

'I'm really alone
I am really scared
[how] I'll make it
[if] I will make it in life
I'm scared
I aren't strong
I never have been,
I were so scared,
I were shaking,
I cried that much
I'm, I'm scared
I'm scared,
I will be completely alone
I'm scared,
I'm scared o' being on mi own,
I'm scared
I'm not strong
I don't think I am strong
I worry easy
I let it bother me
I'm not strong

I'm scared you see
I'm not strong
I'm scared
I'm not gonna be able to take, take it'.

The method of constructing 'I' poems (see Chapter Five, page 136-137) has been slightly adapted here to draw upon 'I' statements across the transcript in order to illustrate Suzette's consistent construction of herself as 'weak' and in need of guidance and support. Therefore, despite recognition of growth, Suzette's sense of self remains embedded in relationships that perpetuate a sense of a non-agentic self. The maintenance of a non-agentic self may reflect the possibility that this is the only identity that Suzette has had or may ever have, indicating a sense that she remains powerless to maintain personal growth or repair in isolation from on-going support. It must be noted that, on telling her story, Suzette's release was imminent. She was awaiting confirmation of being released on HDC²⁵, commonly referred to as 'tagging'. At this point Suzette had not been given a date but was told that her release could potentially be any day soon. This uncertainty may have led to the intensity of her expressed anxieties and, had I talked with her at a different stage in her sentence, a different narrative may have emerged.

Whilst demonstrating a commitment to working toward repair and recovery is often the primary focus of the narrative of the unbecoming mother, there is often a realisation that achieving a repaired state is unlikely. From this perspective change is difficult to demonstrate and therefore a continued commitment to the on-going effort of achieving change becomes the focus of the narrative. Lyndsey's narrative of repair is heavily orientated toward repairing the relationship with her children;

²⁵ Home Detention Curfew

'I've actually said "sorry", I'm not a person to say "sorry" but my daughter's always said "sorry" means a lot, so I've said "sorry"... I am trying my best, you know what I mean, I've done mi granddaughter drawings and wrote her a poem that my daughter can put on the wall'.

Lyndsey talked of her aspirations for motherhood and being able to provide a place in which she and her daughter could spend quality time. Lyndsey suggested she wanted to;

'get mi head sorted to be a proper mum so mi kids aren't totally embarrassed about me..., I need a place where she can come and I can, d'you know what I want more that ought is to make her sommat to eat, like come wi' her friends and get her head down in the room for a night..., she wants her mam, they all want mum's don't they at the end of the day, if only I could see her a couple of hours and then back home to her dad's on a bus..., to have the quality time with her for a bit, I wouldn't mind a place where I could see her'.

As also illustrated in the wounded mother, this quote draws similar attention to the uniqueness of the mothering role and the maternal relationship. However, after telling of her aspirations and ambitions, Lyndsey went on to say; 'alright saying it, you've gotta do it'. This illustrated an awareness of the disparity between what she wanted to achieve and her perceived ability to do this. Reflecting on her previous discharges from prison, Lyndsey indicates that her mothering ambitions may be unachievable;

'when you come out [of prison] and you're in clothes like this and prison pumps and a discharge grant of forty odd quid..., I'm thinking "well I've got nought, I've got nowhere to live"... I felt messed up..., then I wish I were back in'.

Therefore, whilst imprisonment gave Lyndsey the language and the template to construct the anticipated narrative of repair and recovery, Lyndsey held an awareness that what she tells of and aspires to may not be in relation to the reality of her life circumstances and chances.

The narrative of the unbecoming mother can be empowering, enabling mothers to separate their own needs as women from those of their role as mother. Yet, the self in recovery (and therefore still in need of repair), central to the women's sense of self, is reliant upon the notion of the broken self. The realisation, and maybe the fear, of not being able to gain the status of repaired self with the expectation of 'good mothering' can often constrain the opportunity for the emergence of a recovered and therefore autonomous self. This maintains the prioritisation of the self as broken or only partially recovered.

Summary

This chapter has presented the narrative of the unbecoming mother. For the 'unbecoming mother' imprisonment represents a biographical validation in that it affirms the already fractured self and provides an opportunity for repair. This narrative has highlighted that not all meaning associated with imprisonment represented pain. Although the adoption of a victimised identity can ultimately be disempowering for the unbecoming mother, it enabled the negotiation of other, more problematic, identities with a more positive sense of self emerging from the success in rehabilitation.

Chapter Nine

The suspended mother: prison as biographical fracture

'the more I was seeing them, the more it was breaking mi back, they were coming all the time and it were doing mi head in, it were cracking me up, it were doing mi head in..., you find your way of dealing with it' (Kelly).

The suspended mother: introduction

The narratives of both the wounded and the unbecoming mother, as detailed in Chapters Seven and Eight, are linear stories telling of repair and restitution. These are cohesive narratives within which the mothers tell their stories and make sense of their imprisonment, offering hope and possibility. The suspended mother differs in that it imagines mothering life whilst in prison as being crushed, without hope of it getting any better. Unlike the wounded mother in Chapter Seven, the suspended mother comes to prison with an already vulnerable and stigmatised mothering identity, often owing to addiction and social services intervention; yet unlike the unbecoming mother, this narrative does not construct imprisonment as a site of growth but rather a place of increased disruption and stigmatisation. Often accepting responsibility for imprisonment, the suspended mother is overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and shame. Imprisonment and mothering are considered irreconcilable and the mothering role is 'suspended' in order to manage the distress and emotional pain for both herself and her children. Whilst the suspended mother often represents the literal act of suspending the mothering role, it also represents being narratively 'suspended' without an adequate framework to draw upon to tell their stories.

The narrative of the suspended mother is often reflective of a chaos narrative (Frank, 1995), characterised by loss of hope and absence of any narrative order. The suspended mother is overwhelmed by the pain and guilt of separation and imprisonment. Chaos and control are often constructed in opposition (Frank, 1995). However, I contend that narrated chaos can often represent control in the form of resistance. Constrained by despair and disruption the narrative of the suspended mother is similar to the wounded mother yet it does not offer the comfort and protection of restitution. It therefore calls the listener to bear witness to the teller's anxiety and fear and be present with and acknowledge their own discomfort with hearing these stories. In times of disruption, the role of the individual is to be repaired, yet their role as storyteller is often as protector, shielding the listener from hearing the chaos of their disruption (Frank, 1995). The suspended mother does not claim this role.

In times of disruption and in attempting to regain control, explanations for chaos are often sought (Russell, 2012). Stories of restitution and repair help the narrator to regain this control, offering hope and possibility, orientating both the teller and the listener to a more positive future. Consistent with this idea, Chapters Seven and Eight tell of overcoming disruption; yet the suspended mother tells of being overwhelmed and annihilated by it. This narrative is, therefore, often difficult to hear as it holds the listener with this fear and anxiety. Owing to the pressure to conform to dominant cultural and organisational narratives, the narrative of the suspended mother is the story least told, yet, it contributed toward many of the women's stories to varying extents and at differing stages. Whilst I suggest that the suspended mother narrative is most reflective of Frank's (1995) chaos narrative, it also illustrates personal agency. Whilst the suspended mother talks of surrendering the

role of mother, if only temporarily, she positions herself as an agent within this act, asserting herself as both a mother and a woman. However, as will become apparent throughout this chapter, 'suspended' mothering is often constructed from a position of relative powerlessness.

Prison as biographical fracture

The wounded mother talks of imprisonment as a disturbance to the mothering role, yet a disturbance that can be managed through continuous 'good mothering'. The suspended mother conveys a sense of fracture. In many respects this is similar to the concept of biographical abruption, originating in the work of Locock et al (2009) and their exploration of narratives of Motor Neurone Disease. Abruption conveys 'a sudden ending... a 'death sentence', that individuals had been denied a future' (Locock et al, 2009:1047). The narrative of the suspended mother relates to a temporary ending and therefore differs slightly. To illustrate this I use the metaphor of a fractured bone. When a fracture occurs, most often the bone itself remains intact but a break is created in the continuity of the bone. To facilitate repair, the bone is isolated, frequently in a plaster cast, restricting its normal movement and utility to enable recovery. Similarly, the suspended mother does not represent a complete breaking off or ending of mothering, as biographical abruption may indicate, it represents a break in continuity. Owing to a chaotic pre-prison life and an already vulnerable and stigmatised mothering identity, unlike the wounded mother, the suspended mother does not have the resources or the capacity to challenge or manage the imposed disruption in order to maintain continuity. To protect motherhood from complete disintegration and to enable continuity to be restored upon release, 'motherhood' is isolated from imprisonment and the role is 'suspended' until the normality of the role can be restored.

Motherhood as repair: deviant [m]others

As illustrated in Chapter Seven, the wounded mother draws upon the positivity of pre-prison mothering identities in the past to reconstruct the mothering role whilst in prison. However, the suspended mother comes to imprisonment with an already vulnerable and stigmatised mothering identity. For the suspended mother, the transition to first time motherhood served as a positive disruption to an otherwise chaotic pre-prison life of addiction and criminal activity. Motherhood was often constructed as the only positive thing in the women's lives, as noted by Clare; 'she [daughter] was the only thing that I really knew to be good in my life'. Unlike the unbecoming mother who represents motherhood as being disrupted through a chaotic life, for the suspended mother motherhood served as an impetus to change an already chaotic life, offering a meaningful role and a positive identity, prior to prison.

Demonstrating change for the sake of motherhood prior to imprisonment was a consistent feature of the narrative of the suspended mother. To illustrate change the suspended mother creates distance from the person they were prior to motherhood to the person that they have become. Histories of criminal activity and consequent prison sentences prior to motherhood were often drawn upon. Kelly talked of previous criminal activity and a prison sentence. Evaluating this time Kelly suggested; 'them days it were just about blagging it, you know, so you didn't get sent to prison..., it were a long time ago when I were in [prison], 23 years ago'. The suspended mother indicates that having children served as an incentive to make lifestyle changes with motherhood providing a sense of purpose and meaning to their lives. This was illustrated by Louise who suggested; 'since I've had kids I've not been in trouble for five year, till this'. Highlighting this change often served to illustrate the

profound impact of their current prison sentences upon their mothering identity. For the suspended mother imprisonment was often constructed as representing their failure to maintain repair for their children, as illustrated by Kelly who goes on to suggest;

‘didn’t commit crime, didn’t do nothing..., never been in trouble, never been in trouble with the police since I had mi children..., and I haven’t been to prison since [first sentence] and then when I had my kids, fucking hell, I’m here, do you know what I mean’.

Reconciled as an anticipated event within their chaotic lifestyle, imprisonment prior to motherhood was often constructed as biographically congruent. This was noted by Louise who suggested that her previous prison sentence ‘were just mi lifestyle and drugs and everything else’. For Kelly, imprisonment prior to motherhood was not only biographically congruent but ‘biographically progressive’ in that peers provided the required skills to continue and even progress a criminal lifestyle upon release;

‘five years I were in [prison], I’ve come out of prison [the first time], learnt more in prison, I learnt more in there, how to do certain things, how to be a dipper, everything, dip men on ‘streets, learn more honestly, you know’.

As such, imprisonment presented little threat to the sense of self. However, the women’s stories suggest that imprisonment was more difficult to reconcile with their sense of self as mothers. This was illustrated by Kelly who when going on to tell of her current sentence suggested; ‘where more, now it’s real’. Similarly, in comparing her two sentences Louise suggested;

‘but it were just different, I didn’t have visits, I didn’t have mi kids then, I didn’t have much worries, so I just got on with it, an’ [this sentence] it’s just been horrible’.

Therefore imprisonment as a mother represented a severely disruptive event in which the mothering role from which they had previously derived a positive sense of self was disrupted.

Change and repair in relation to substance use were also illustrated within the narrative of the suspended mother to demonstrate a commitment to motherhood. Unlike the narratives presented in the work of Dunlap et al (2006), the suspended mother constructs substance addiction as incompatible with 'good' mothering. This was often achieved by constructing motherhood as outside of their anticipated life course trajectory. Owing to her lifestyle, Kelly suggested, 'I never wanted kids in my younger days cos of the life I led..., I was a heroin addict, I was a prostitute'. By evaluating her lifestyle as incompatible with motherhood, Kelly situates herself within the potential remit of a 'bad mother', yet, in doing so she illustrates her understanding of and demonstrates an allegiance to dominant 'good' mothering ideologies.

Constructing pregnancy as an accident or claiming a lack of awareness of pregnancies in the early stages was a common narrative strategy adopted to mitigate claims of 'bad mothering'. Louise suggested 'I were caning it, I were having a lot of drugs at the time..., I didn't find out till I wa' 7 and a half months'. Similarly, Amy suggested;

'I didn't want a baby yet, and it just happened, it was a shock really..., I was about, [em] four and a half month before I found out I was pregnant, that was a bit of a shock..., I thought I was only about ten weeks [but she said I was] nineteen..., I was still on [em] having my periods and that it was just like, I kept on having [em] weird [em] infections and I thought "summat's not right" so I took the test and it was came off positive'.

In making moral claims around the incompatibility between motherhood and addiction, a significant proportion of the narrative of the suspended mother's pre-prison story is dedicated to demonstrating the changes made to accommodate motherhood into their lives. From this perspective motherhood represents biographical repair, providing a meaningful role and identity. Illustrating her commitment to mothering Kelly tells of how she started to take control of her life on finding out she was pregnant;

'I was on everything [drugs]..., I stopped working the streets [as a prostitute], obviously, anyway..., then my doctor found out, sent me to erm, [hospital]..., gave me a methadone script, which that was really helpful to me..., no social work involvement..., always stuck to my methadone script'.

In illustrating the changes made to her life Kelly demonstrates her level of commitment to and investment in her role and identity as a mother.

Demonstrating the way in which addiction was negotiated around mothering was another significant strategy in constructing a positive mothering identity for the suspended mother. Unlike the unbecoming mother where addiction was all consuming and controlling, the narrative of the suspended mothering constructs addiction as being controlled and managed within their lives around motherhood. For the suspended mother the ability and commitment to manage addiction was central to the constructed identity as a good mother. Amy told of how she immediately reduced her drug consumption; 'I was just like smoking, you know, loads and loads, and then I just cut down and then I stopped, as much as I could'. For Kelly managing her heroin addiction was her primary concern as a good mother. Being on a

methadone programme enabled Kelly to negotiate her previous negative identity as a drug addict. The use of other drugs was not as problematic to Kelly's sense of being a good mother;

'I didn't take heroin, I wasn't an addict but at the time, I had crack or I had a bit of coke, which as a Mum yeah it is bad, I used to do it of a night time, I used to think that was the right way about to do it'.

Kelly begins this statement by laying claim to what she is not, namely a 'heroin addict'. This serves to then mitigate the impact of her use of 'crack' or 'a bit of coke'. Kelly appears to create a substance hierarchy that she is able to reconcile with mothering. As Kelly reflects she indicates that her consumption remains inconsistent with dominant good mothering ideologies by suggesting that it was 'bad' but negates this by setting it against the greater indictments of potential heroin use. Consistent with findings offered by Enos (2001), Kelly maintains a moral claim for herself by suggesting that her drug use was contained to when her children were not present.

Clare also spoke of her attempts to manage her addictions for the sake of motherhood;

'I'd always been a big drinker..., like since I was about twelve I started..., I was drinking..., I was taking speed at one point again, just silly little things like I always had to have a habit, like smoke weed or I'd take speed or I'd drink..., I've tried gear²⁶, I took it once..., I used to ping²⁷ speed, I used to ping gear'.

For Clare managing her addictions was an on-going battle and her story was peppered with accounts of her repeated attempts to manage her addictions and regain control of her life;

²⁶ Heroin

²⁷ Inject

'I stopped drinking, managed to stop drinking for like six weeks, I know it's not a long time, but when you're an alcoholic it is a long time.'

'I had to move cos basically my parties got out of hand and the neighbours were complaining and there was a wrecked car in the garden from like people coming who were actually coming to my house, they put [daughter's] kittens in the dryer and washer and threw them off the top of the building basically, erm, so I ended up complaining to council and saying that I needed another house cos it wasn't safe for [daughter], which judging what they did to her animals I knew it wasn't..., so council gave me my move, a fresh start that I needed and I bollocksed my other fresh start up as well..., basically started drinking again at the new house'.

Clare's pre-prison life was constructed as chaotic yet, unlike the overpowering chaos illustrated in the unbecoming mother, Clare's quote indicates that, for the suspended mother, chaos is orientated toward demonstrating repeated attempts of repair in order to protect motherhood. However, stories of repair within the suspended mother were complex as repeated attempts of repair were symptomatic of repeated repair failures, as illustrated by Clare's statement above in which she states she 'bollocksed' her fresh start up again. Similarly, in telling of being pregnant with her second child Kelly suggested; '

'I always said, once I had [my first child], once I first got pregnant, if I ever touched heroin again, I'd never bring another [child] into the world, cos if I didn't do it with my first, I'm never gonna do it with any, do you know what I mean, unfortunately I found out when I was five and a half months pregnant [with second child]..., I wouldn't change him for the world and I'm glad he's here but that's what I said to myself, you know, if I can't do it with my first, but anyway I've done it now'.

Whilst mothering provided a sense of purpose and continuity to otherwise chaotic lives, stories of repair equally illustrated repeated threats to the mothering identity when repair was not fully realised in the way in which the women had anticipated.

Unlike the unbecoming mother who drew upon their chaotic histories in order to validate their imprisonment and their need for help, the suspended mother is overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and shame. The narrative of the suspended mother is a 'painful self-scrutiny' incorporating negative self-evaluations and 'feelings of worthlessness' (Probyn, 2005:45) leading to a sense of deviant mothering (as illustrated in Chapter Two, page 57).

With histories of addiction and chaotic lives, the suspended mother often attracted increased surveillance from authorities, including health care services and social services (Banwell and Bammer, 2006). As referred to on pages 40-43, the social regulation of mothering often imposes 'normalcy' through authoritative surveillance (Foucault, 1975). Normalising judgement served to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' mothering and therefore increased surveillance was often constructed as problematic as it led to an enhanced sense of stigmatisation. However, talk of such surveillance was also often drawn upon in order to evaluate and measure their successful mothering. Kelly talked of heightened surveillance owing to her previous substance misuses;

'social workers have to get involved for the first eight weeks I think it was, they come round, see how you are, speak to the midwife, see how you've been, they said I'd been good, I went home in two days me, erm then they come and visit, and they can do random visits, if they wa'..feel, you know, then they come round do sommat like two core group sessions where they have to, anyway, they left then, we never had social work involvement again.'

In evaluating the outcome of this intervention Kelly lays claim to a good mother identity by indicating her successful compliance.

Clare also told of Social services intervention owing to her chaotic pre-prison lifestyle;

'I was getting visits off social services they were err monitored with [daughter], I only had two hours a week or I think it was two hours twice a week, I can't remember for sure..., and at the end of the day if a kid had been in any way neglected or abused there's no way she'd be the way she was with me, so social services took that on board..., they could obviously see that we did have a relationship and we were close'.

Despite indicating resentment of social services involvement, Clare's evaluation of the intervention enabled a positive construction of herself as a mother. However, increased surveillance could lead to further enforced sanctions. As illustrated by Clare this then resulted in stigmatised identities, illustrating the fluidity of the mothering identity for the suspended mother;

'[they] thought that I'd left her on her own and that's why social services thought it right they stepped in..., I nearly lost all of it through my stupidity but I just lost sight of her for a split second'.

With chaotic histories and on-going authoritative surveillance the suspended mother often struggled to lay claim to a positive mothering identity in the past. As will be illustrated later within this chapter, this often impeded the maintenance of the mothering role and a positive mothering identity in the present, during imprisonment.

Doing time and temporality

For both the wounded mother and the unbecoming mother there is a sense of temporality, with a clear attempt to either account for or question the validity of the present by drawing upon events in the past. The suspended mother makes no such attempts. I began all interviews by asking the women to tell the story of their transition to motherhood. This proved to be a useful way of learning something of the women's lives prior to imprisonment and initiating stories that tell of their life trajectory, whilst maintaining a focus upon mothering. As prompted, the suspended

mother tells these stories; however, there is an unremitting urgency to get to the present with an explicit dismissal of the past. In telling of her pre-prison life Kelly repeatedly used the phrase 'anyway'. Rapidly moving the story to the next stage, the use of 'anyway' privileges the present and dismisses the past, making no attempt to account for the present by events in the past.

On several occasions throughout the telling of Kelly's story she also used the phrase 'to cut a long story short'. This negates evaluation of events, relationships or sense of self in this trajectory. This phrase rejects the significance of the detail catapulting the story to the present. Whilst Frank (1995) argues that such narratives are chaotic and therefore in opposition to control, I contend that control is maintained as the voice of the narrator is honoured. It is Kelly who decides what is and is not important to her story and forces the listener to bear witness to her discomfort and therefore acknowledge their own discomfort.

More than a victim

Drawing upon chaotic backgrounds and histories of abuse, mental illness and addiction are frequent narrative strategies adopted by prisoners in their attempts to understand and account for their offending behaviour or prisoner status (Green et al, 2006: Presser, 2008). As noted in Chapters Three and Four, the link between chaotic histories and imprisonment, particularly in relation to women prisoners, is well established. It is also well embedded within associated discourses and prison policy and programming. As has also been explored in previous chapters, although these discourses can be disempowering they can also provide a means of managing the stigmatisation and negative identities associated with imprisonment. This was

illustrated by Anne who drew upon therapy that she had engaged with during her sentence to understand her imprisonment. Anne suggested;

‘I wasn’t balanced enough as a person..., there wasn’t any issues with alcohol or drugs or anything like that in my life but it was - I come from a broken home and erm the deep rooted insecurities in me stemmed from my childhood, I now know that through all the work I’ve done on myself’.

This organisational discourse provided Anne with a narrative template to understand and tell her story. Anne’s story illustrates Foucault’s concept of subjectification, in that Anne had internalised the authoritative explanations for her offending. However, for others this narrative proved inadequate. Yet, recognising the expectations of listeners, the suspended mother addresses these assumptions head on, as illustrated by Amy;

‘well on my erm, Pre-Sentence Report²⁸ he erm, Probation Officer who did it, he were like “oh she hasn’t got no hope in her life or anything” and like I, I thought “cheeky bugger”..., they was thinking that I didn’t care about my life..., I thought “cheers” (Amy).

Amy actively appears to question her Probation officer’s storied account of her life within the pre-sentence report. As Amy speaks of her life prior to imprisonment she challenges the construction of herself as having ‘no hope’ or ‘not caring’. By adopting her own framework to evaluate this time, as she suggests;

‘I went [to school] from Year Seven to Ten and I left when I were in Year Ten, when I left school everyone just like, everyone had babies and that..., but it was good, used to get stoned every day..., it was good..., go out with friends or something like that, or stay at home watch telly..., just used to get stoned every night and every day’.

²⁸ Pre-sentence report is a report submitted to a court by an appropriate officer, to help determine the most suitable method of dealing with an offender. (The Crown Prosecution Service, no date).

Amy constructs this period in her life as 'good'. It is not the intention of this analysis to ascertain if this was in fact a 'good' experience for Amy. However, this quote indicates Amy's resistance to and disruption of dominant norms embedded within prison discourses and idealised within society that are drawn upon by others to frame her life as being hopeless. In doing so Amy evaluates her life, events and choices within a framework which is rooted in her own social context and relationships (Bosworth, 1999). Within this quote Amy appears to challenge the expectation of dominant prison discourses that require socially 'unacceptable' choices relating to illegal substance use and truancy to be evaluated negatively, as she repeatedly evaluates this time as 'good'.

The association between chaotic or abusive childhoods and dysfunctional adulthood was also challenged. A chaotic childhood is often considered to be a prerequisite for both substance abuse and imprisonment (Dunlap et al, 2006; Green et al, 2006; Presser, 2008). Again for some this proved to be an inadequate narrative template within which to tell their stories. Those not evaluating their childhoods or trajectories in this way alluded to their disconnection to this narrative, as detailed by Amy; 'I was loved, my Mum and Dad..., I had a good childhood'. Similarly, Kelly evaluates her home life positively to negate any association between her family life and her addiction, offending and consequent imprisonment 'I had a good life, a good life, I had a lovely mum, a lovely family, I just got in with the wrong crowd'. Kelly continues by telling of the onset of her addiction;

'I like reggae, I like you know, this pub, people used to call it a black man's club, but cos it were reggae and things like that, and obviously people smoked cannabis and really that's what it was, I was attracted to that music and things like that, started going there, in them days it were a £5 wrap of heroin, me and my friends used to put £1.50 in, get a five pound wrap, a

few lines, then it got to like four weeks and we were having it every night, I realised that I had a habit..., got caught at school by the headmaster, got sent home, my mum was devastated, she were a foster mum..., and erm you know and then it were just, I were taking it...,¹⁷ I were in [prison]’.

Kelly acknowledges the positivity of her childhood. In doing so she does not make any claims of events in her past leading to her present. Although Kelly relates getting in with ‘the wrong crowd’ to the start of her addiction, her consistent use of ‘I’ and the telling of what ‘she’ liked and was attracted to focuses attention on herself as an active agent; she therefore does not seek to share responsibility for her addiction or her circumstances.

‘I know I’m a criminal’

The narrative of the suspended mother situates the teller the furthest along on a continuum of agency in relation to their offence, in comparison to the narratives presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. As noted by O’Connor (2001), agentic and non-agentic notions of criminality are often inadequate to understand the complexity of individual positioning toward offending within accounts. Both the wounded mother and the unbecoming mother use their accounts to negate their criminal identity and personal agency in their route to prison to protect the construction of themselves as moral agents and ultimately as ‘good’ mothers. For example, as illustrated on pages 189-192, the wounded mother often attributes imprisonment to the act of unjust sentencing and on pages 235-239, the unbecoming mother relates imprisonment to the need for help. The suspended mother differs in that a criminal identity is constructed, as indicated by Kelly who suggested ‘I know I’m a criminal’. Consequently, imprisonment is represented as being a direct result of their actions and limited mitigations are offered.

Louise told of the events leading to her arrest and imprisonment;

'I'd just gone out one night, me and my friend, and a girl were gonna rob her, so I beat her up, gone back to a friend's house, had a few more drinks and the girl's come knocking on my friend's door thinking I weren't there, so I got a knife and chased her with the knife and so that's why I got locked up' (Louise).

The use of 'I' within Louise's story does not necessarily position her offence further along the continuum of agency, as the use of 'I' can equally represent passivity. For example, the wounded mother often adopted phrases such as 'I ended up' which, although it includes the use of 'I', reflects passivity: 'ended up'. However, within this quote, although Louise suggests that she was defending her friend, she claims responsibility for the doing of the criminal act.

For others their sense of accountability in relation to their offence transpired within what was 'not' told. On introducing the research to the women who participated in the study, I explained the area of interest and that they could lead the direction of their stories, including and excluding as they decided. Each participant was given a copy of the interview prompts for consideration. One of the prompts asked the women to tell of the circumstances leading up to their imprisonment (see Appendix Five). To this invitation Anne responded, 'I don't really want to go into anything to do with my arrest or my offence'. Similarly, on agreeing to participate in the research Amy had requested, via her Probation officer, that we did not talk about her offence. For many of the women who participated in the study, accounting for their offence or imprisonment was central to their rejection of a criminal identity and to their claims to good mothering. Anne and Amy were the only two participants who requested not to discuss their offence. Despite their requests both women alluded to violent offences

throughout the telling of their stories. Fivush (2009:88) suggests that silence is a social construction and can represent both oppression and power; whilst being silenced represents oppression, silence can also be indicative of 'a form of power with the need to speak, to voice, representing a loss of power'. I interpreted Amy and Anne's silence as being representative of both power and oppression. My first interpretation of both women's silence was that it represented empowerment and their choice not to tell. On further analysis I began to recognise the women's struggles to narrate their stories in isolation from their offence. Anne and Amy's relative silence in relation to their offence may therefore have been indicative of the inadequacy of the available narrative templates within which to tell of their violent offences in relation to mothering. This lack of fit with dominant narratives is characteristic of the suspended mother. The wounded mother often negates responsibility for her offending and although the unbecoming mother accepts responsibility the offence is ultimately constructed as a 'cry for help'. Both of these narratives are constructed to facilitate a coherent narrative of a moral self and ultimately of 'good mothering'. For the suspended mother this is problematic as responsibility is largely accepted, yet violent offences remained the most irreconcilable with 'good mothering'.

Anne expressed disbelief and lack of understanding associated with her violent offence;

'When I was arrested er and I was not in the right state of mind to even consider anything, I was totally gone in my own mind, I wanted to die, I was extremely suicidal, I didn't wanna live anymore and even the love for my daughter could not keep me here, I just wanted to die, I could not accept the enormity of what I'd done, I couldn't, I couldn't live with it, couldn't live with myself and I just totally felt

dead inside, an there was no way out, there was no other way out than to take my own life’.

When an I poem is constructed from this quote Anne’s sense of hopelessness and helplessness emerges;

‘I was arrested
I was not in the right state of mind
I wanted to die
I was extremely suicidal
I didn’t wanna live anymore
I just wanted to die
I could not accept the enormity of what I’d done
I couldn’t live with it
I couldn’t live with myself
I just totally felt dead inside.’

The storied account of Anne’s response to her offence is the most indicative of Frank’s (1995) chaos narrative, characterised by a loss of hope and a sense of despair. Suggesting that not even for the love of her daughter could she find a way through this despair, Anne constructs the enormity of her offence as overpowering and suffocating her role as a mother. In suggesting that she felt ‘dead inside’, imprisonment represented a complete assault on her sense of self and the termination of mothering. Anne’s quote, as previously illustrated on page 267, illustrates that through her engagement with therapy she constructed an understanding of the relationship between her childhood and her offence enabling her to make sense of her consequent imprisonment. However, despite conveying such understandings, Anne remained far more veiled around her offence. Although silence may be empowering, for both Anne and Amy I would suggest it indicates

oppression. From this perspective I would suggest that their silence represents the inadequacy of dominant available narrative frameworks to reconcile their identities as mothers with their offence. Without a historical, cultural and social context to draw upon to tell their stories, Anne and Amy remain silenced and narratively 'suspended'.

As illustrated in the previous section within this chapter, 'Motherhood as repair', the suspended mother struggled to gain access to a consistent 'good mother' narrative in order to sustain mothering in the present. This section, 'Doing time and temporality' has equally illustrated the suspended mother's rejection of a victimised identity, consistent with dominant discourses of women in prison. Unable to draw upon dominant narrative frameworks to enable biographical reconstruction, the suspended mother is narratively 'suspended' and therefore remains constrained by the present.

From chaos to confusion

Bearing witness to the unbearable

Consistent with Frank's chaos narrative, the suspended mother constructs a sense of an 'incessant present' (Frank 1995:99). The past is inconsequential and there is no meaningful future worth envisaging as the future represents only the long term consequences of their imprisonment. Unable to mitigate the impact of imprisonment the suspended mother is suffocated with a sense of guilt and therefore constrained by the 'horror' of the present. The present is unbearable, with imprisonment and mothering being utterly irreconcilable. The mothering role is therefore 'suspended' in order to manage the distress and emotional pain for both themselves and their children.

Many of the women's stories throughout this research talked of 'suspending' mothering at different stages and to varying degrees. As illustrated in Chapter Seven (page 180), many women reflected upon episodes of despair and desperation when first entering prison. This was often accompanied with illustrations of helplessness and hopelessness. As the women evaluate such episodes they highlight their commitment to 'good mothering' by constructing imprisonment as incompatible with motherhood. In doing so, the women reflect on their intentions to 'suspend' mothering whilst in prison, as illustrated by Penny;

'first of all I said "I'm not having the children coming" cos I didn't want them coming into prison..., I didn't want the children to come..., I just didn't, I didn't want them coming into a prison..., I remember saying "there's no way I'm having my kids in the prison".

On telling of her preparations for prison Lauren also suggested;

'I did say to my Mum "if I do get sent to prison I'm going to give the baby to you", that's all I was bothered about.'

Motherhood is constructed as being held in high regard and is considered to be completely irreconcilable with imprisonment. Therefore, seeing or having their children in the prison environment was considered to be too painful and inconsistent with their ideas of 'good' mothering.

The narrative of the suspended mother is often adopted as a framework when telling of periods of transition, such as sentencing or reception into prison. Such episodes call for certainty, enabling meaning to be extracted, control to be regained and a reconstructed biography developed. These stories serve to illustrate that decisions about maintaining or suspending contact were not made lightly. Penny draws upon the evaluations of her family to validate her eventual decision to maintain contact;

'[they] said that it was selfish that they didn't come because I'm their mother and it's better they have their mother but I just didn't, I didn't want them coming into a prison..., my Mum said th.. it's, I'm being selfish, she said the children will adapt and whatever happens in the future they will adapt but if, they just don't see you then that's gonna be even worse for them than it is to see you in here, erm, so then I agreed that they could come and they came, erm, and in light of it it was the best thing really, it was right to see them, it definitely was right to see them because if I hadn't seen them at all that would have been really more hard for them I think'.

Penny concludes that not seeing her children would be selfish and have detrimental consequences for their well-being. Penny's words illustrates the complex nature of the negotiations of 'good mothering' for women in prison. Allowing her children to visit the prison was constructed as abhorrent to Penny's understanding of 'good mothering', yet accusations of 'selfishness' for not seeing them posed a greater threat to her identity as a mother. Whilst Penny constructs her decision to maintain contact as in the best interests of her children, she relies on the evaluations of others to validate this.

In regaining control of her narrative Penny draws upon her positive pre-prison mothering identity to construct a narrative identity of fighter. This enables a sense of determination to remain a central mothering figure to her children despite their separation. As noted by Fisher and Goodley (2007), embracing the notion of the self as a fighter can lead to an increased sense of personal agency. However, this notion can also be particularly difficult to reconcile with the constraints and complexities of prison life in which mothering autonomy is restricted. For many women mothering issues are beyond their control, leaving them unable to respond to or resolve them, reinstating a sense of chaos. As discussed on page 143, owing to a fractured relationship with her children's father, Penny had differing contact with her children

throughout her sentence. Penny indicated that, at times, she felt selfish for pursuing contact and her narrative often alternated between the wounded mother and the suspended mother in order to make sense of her story and maintain a sense of good mothering.

In order to transcend chaos, the wounded mother drew upon the positivity of pre-prison mothering identities, whilst the unbecoming mother drew upon the notion of the broken self in order to validate imprisonment. For the wounded mother good mothering meant managing the impact of their imprisonment upon their children and fighting to maintain a role in their children's lives at the expense of their own pain and well-being. The unbecoming mother talks of the positive impact of imprisonment upon relationships with their children. Both the wounded mother and the unbecoming mother are underpinned by linear narratives of repair and restitution. However, the suspended mother often challenges the assumptions underpinning these narratives. Rejecting a repair narrative, Kelly suggests, 'there's nothing good about coming to prison, it's fucking horrible'. The apparent inadequacy of these available dominant narrative frameworks leads to narrative wreckage in which the women's stories are constrained by chaos. The suspended mother narrative is therefore a 'counter narrative' (see page 98) (Somers, 1994; Frank, 1995:2010; Miller, 2005), protesting against the inadequacy of, or inadequate access to, the limited repertoire of publicly available narratives for women and mothers in prison (Somers, 1994; Watson, 2009).

Unable to transcend the chaos, the suspended mother remains constrained by the impact of imprisonment. Kelly became visibly upset as she talked of the impact of her imprisonment on her two sons;

'they're lost souls, [their dad] say's they're just lost of a night time, they're lost going to school, they're lost and it's heart breaking' (Kelly).

In telling her story Kelly jumped erratically between considering the short and the long term effects for her children. In focusing upon the impact of imprisonment upon her children, Kelly constructs her identity as a good mother. However, it also represented her inability to move beyond the 'chaos' of her situation to re-construct her role and identity as a mother whilst in prison. Considering her fears for the present she stated 'it's about here and now with mi kids' and then, focusing on the future, suggested;

'it's about the future..., my worst nightmare is..., is it going to affect them later on, it's alright people saying "no" but they don't know and that's my really big worry, is it going to affect my kids later on in life'.

Consistent with the wounded mother Kelly recognises the importance and significance of her role as a mother. However, her unrelenting sense of guilt restricts her ability to reconstruct her mothering role to accommodate imprisonment.

Relational disruption

The wounded mother's (Chapter Seven) sense of self as a fighter led to an increased sense of agency and faith in her own ability to minimise the impact of imprisonment upon her children. As discussed in Chapter Seven, this increased sense of agency often evolves from the positivity of pre-prison identities, lives and relationships. As noted by Carlen (2005), many women come to prison with chaotic histories and an already fractured sense of self, impeding the importation of positive pre-prison identities. Kelly's sense of the impact of imprisonment for herself and her children was exacerbated by her social positioning on the outside. This is illustrated as Kelly expresses concerns for her children;

'it's really affected him in school, really bad, [older son], I think he thinks it's clever..., it's just give 'em that mixed message, cos your mum's in prison, it has a really big impact on the kids, they can go either way, [younger son]'s been really naughty since I've come to prison, he won't do his work in school, he just won't talk to nobody..., we live on a council estate and it's just showed him the wrong impression and I think he really thinks that it's good, it's hard, he's only a baby, and I know that might sound some people silly, but when you come off an environment like off a council estate and he's hearing other kids and some kids do think that's clever an' cocky.'

Similarly, it was the relationship between Clare's history and her current imprisonment that generated the most anxiety for the impact of her imprisonment upon her daughter. Clare was removed from her birth mother at the age of four months and had spent her childhood in local authority care. She tells of an unhappy childhood in which she was sexually abused by her foster brother. For Clare imprisonment represented complete failure in her role as a mother to protect her daughter from having a similar childhood to her own;

'I felt like the world's worst mother in the world and I still kick myself every day for that, I go on like my mother was some bitch and I go and do exactly the same thing..., I didn't think once about how she'd be when she grew up or like I never worried about tomorrow's because I thought I'd take each day as it come with her, maybe I should have focused on being around for her when she did grow up..., I just worry that I'm, that I can't protect her'.

The expressed concerns challenge the arguments of writers such as Pound et al (1998), Ciambone (2001) and Faircloth et al (2004). Challenging the underlying assumption of a shift from a "normal" state of health to one of illness' (Williams, 2001:49), such writers suggest that biographical disruption may be an inappropriate analytical framework for exploring the impact of disruption to the lives of those who have existing chaos or disruption. For the suspended mother it is the compounding

impact of hardship and repeated disruptions, culminating in prison, that represent the most profound disruption to their mothering identities upon imprisonment.

Repeated disruptions

Owing to chaotic histories, the story of the suspended mother is often told in the context of on-going authoritative mothering surveillance, spanning both before and during imprisonment. As noted in the literature review, there is no one organisation that systematically organises or is responsible for the children of prisoners. Most of the women with whom I spoke throughout the course of this research had no intervention or support from any outside agency. Yet for mothers already engaged with authorities prior to imprisonment, surveillance was often heightened during their sentence, generating repeated disruptions to and assaults upon their identities, as articulated by Louise;

‘I think it’s cos we were on an interim care order, they were monitoring that, cos he [children’s father] were like, gone from double to single parent, do you know what I mean..., they were not supportive, she’ll come to your house, the Social Worker and the Guardian had been round and saying “oh you’re doing really well, you’re doing really well”, but then a week later, they took kids off him..., when that went to court and all that, it were a big shock for me as well, because I weren’t expecting it’.

On-going threats to the sense of self were also expressed by Clare who told of negotiating access with the authorities and her daughter’s father;

‘It was about eleven months [before I had a visit], social services brought her [daughter] after..., I went to court appealing like, not seeing her..., first time it was like, I was only allowed letter contact..., and then the judge at the second one said..., he basically said you can have contact, you can see her like once every two months, I think it was and he [daughter’s father] only stuck to it like three or four times..., it

took me two years of hell..., and there was a couple of times when he phoned to say that she was sick and that and didn't turn up'.

Clare's sense of powerlessness over contact is evident. As expressed by Clare, for the suspended mother it is often not imprisonment in isolation that poses the most significant threat to the mothering identity but the on-going battles and negotiations to maintain contact.

Suspending mothering

With limited access to a positive mothering identity in the past and in rejecting the victim identity inherent within the narrative of the unbecoming mother, the suspended mother is unable to move beyond the chaos of disruption. Smith and Sparkes (2005:1103) argue that 'chaos is a non-identity, with no hope to guide the self in any meaningful way'. As discussed on page 87, Somers (1994) argues that narrative provides the framework for not only understanding and making sense of situations but also for knowing what to do. Without a narrative template the suspended mother continues to internalise the notion that their mothering is, if only temporarily, over. Mothering is therefore suspended, as articulated by Kelly;

'I can have 'em [visits] every two weeks, but it were breaking my back, it was killing me, it was just too much..., it were just hurting me too much, seeing 'em, the more you see em, it's just hard and it just messes up their head too..., and the more I was seeing them, the more it was breaking my back..., cos they were coming all the time and it were doing my head in, I wanted to see 'em, I'd love to see 'em every day, but I was having one [visit] every week or every two week and it were cracking me up, it were doing my head in..., I just..., you find your way of dealing with it'.

The wounded mother draws upon dominant good mothering ideologies and the associated meaning of self-sacrifice to evaluate and manage prison visits. However,

for the suspended mother, visits served as painful reminders of their mothering failures and were therefore restricted.

Louise also talked of continued difficulties with visitation and the destructive impact for both herself and her children to account for her decision to suspend;

‘It’s just like at the end [of the visit], you know when you’ve got to come back they’ve got to go cos like even when I’m seeing the kids I get anxious and butterflies, you know before you go on the visit..., it’s even worse when I’m going cos I know what’s gonna come, ten minutes before and I’m looking at the clock, you know what time I’m going..., [daughter] she’ll just be like stuck to me asking me loads and loads of questions..., it’s upsetting for [son]..., they’d be going home crying, like when he’d [dad] be putting them to bed, they’d be like “but I want Mummy to put me to bed”..., they’re just crying’.

Clare also told of the ‘suspension’ of mothering. However, her story differed somewhat. As discussed on page 275 Clare had taken legal action to ensure contact with her daughter. After gaining legal support to continue visits, Clare told of on-going difficulties with her daughter’s father in maintaining contact;

‘I threatened that I was gonna go back to court and he said “well at least leave it until she’s old enough to decide for herself and if she wants to see you”, so I think I left it..., I gave him that chance to say, give her that chance, see if she wanted to come and I kept writing to her’.

Clare’s evaluation of her attempts to maintain visitation rights is more representative of the wounded mother and the construction of the self as a fighter. As Clare continues there is a resignation to the improbability of continued visitation and her narrative shifts to one of ‘suspending’ mothering. This shift in narration enables Clare to make sense of her current situation and frame it positively, protecting her mothering identity. Therefore, whilst the suspension of her mothering role may

indicate a sense of powerlessness, an agentic voice prevails, as Clare suggests 'I left it...., I gave him that chance'. This would suggest that Clare was an active agent in the suspension of contact. What is of interest to this analysis is not if Clare was in fact powerless but rather the way in which this shift is accounted for.

Whilst visits appear to represent on-going commitment to participation in motherhood within the narrative of the wounded mother; for the suspended mother contact represented a reminder of their mothering failures. For the suspended mother, the transition to first time motherhood represented the incentive and opportunities to make changes to an otherwise chaotic life. Using their stories to illustrate on-going commitment and attempts to repair their lives prior to imprisonment for the sake of their children, imprisonment is symbolic of their failure to achieve this. Whilst the suspended mother constructs herself as an active agent in the suspending of mothering during imprisonment, this decision is often defensively orientated from a position of relative powerlessness in order to make sense of and positively frame the limitations of their situation.

The in compliant mother?

The wounded mother negotiates the complexity of power relations within the prison to maximise participation in mothering. The unbecoming mother embraces prison programmes in order to facilitate repair. However, in taking ownership of their 'suspended mothering', this narrative serves to actively reject many prison programmes and facilities as inadequate and impeding mothering. Drawing on Foucault's (1975) imagery of the Panopticon (see page 35) and the imposition of a disciplinary gaze Clare told of being dissatisfied with the quality of contact and of a constrained sense of mothering suggesting; 'I didn't like be told that I wasn't allowed to take her to the toilet..., or like watching us, interacting together and playing

together'. Louise constructed the prison service as incompetent in managing visits and as having a detrimental impact upon the quality of her time with her children;

'they didn't give me a visiting slip, I were in the shower..., I were half undressed when they shout [me] to visits, do you know what I mean..., and then I'm calling 'em saying 'have I got a visit', cos I know when they're coming up, and they were saying 'ooh I don't know, I don't know', then 25 past one, they put a visiting slip though mi door, and I have to go at quarter to two, do you know what I mean, so by time I've been see kids it's been like quarter to ten to three, you know, and to me that's like an hour's visit gone..., I've had like an hour took off, just from these lot not knowing what they're doing, do you know what I mean'.

In talking of her frustration with the inadequacy of prison facilities for mothers, Kelly indicates what she would like to see;

'I think there should be more like, where kids should, you know, their mum, you know, there should be like a certain place where you can go and mum's can do homework with their kids..., I think there should, me, a lot more things mum can do in prison, you don't have to pay, I think they should be allowed, ten minutes, five minutes every day, d'you understand what I mean, where you have that call, or, you know, like someone goes round to your family, no one from, cos you see, what it is with a lot, they send social workers, straight away people shut down, it shouldn't be social workers' (Kelly).

As I discuss in Chapter Five, when I met Kelly she was shortly moving from a closed to an open prison. I told her of the different facilities at the particular prison she was moving to and how they may enable the more participative mothering role that she illustrated a desire for her. Kelly was quick to dismiss the possibilities, suggesting;

'I don't think I'd wanna do that ..., no I wouldn't want to bring my kids to the prison..., I just wanna go home, I just wanna go home'.

For Kelly any means of parenting from prison provided inadequate and constrained experiences of mothering and were therefore abandoned. Frank (1995) has suggested that those in chaos often reject help or care. If chaos is to be transcended the suspended mother may require the opportunity and support to recover and reclaim the mothering role and identity. However, as noted by Frank (1995:110), 'people can only be helped out when those who care are willing to become witnesses to the story'. Yet the dominant narrative templates available to both tell and hear the stories of women and mothers in prison are often restricting and controlling, meaning their stories cannot be told or heard. I recognised that my attempt to offer Kelly an alternative narrative was symptomatic of my own need, as part of a wider culture's preference, to hear a restitution story. In doing so I was denying Kelly's story and her reconstructed identity as a 'suspended mother'. As noted by Frank (1995:98) 'those who are truly living the chaos cannot tell in words' and therefore the suspended mother does illustrate a reflexive grasp. Therefore, although it may appear chaotic, the suspended mother functions to keep chaos at bay. Women's lives, voices and mothering 'must be affirmed as worth telling and thus worth living and reclaiming' (Smith and Sparkes, 2005:1103).

Summary

The suspended mother tells of being overwhelmed and annihilated by imprisonment and, therefore, constructs imprisonment as biographical fracture. For the suspended mother imprisonment represents the suspension of mothering that cannot be resumed within the confines of imprisonment. The narrative of the suspended mother is often reflective of a chaos narrative, characterised by loss of hope and absence of any narrative order. However, the suspended mother also represents a form of resistance. Constrained by despair and disruption the narrative of the suspended

mother calls the listener to bear witness to the teller's anxiety and fear. However, although the narrative of the suspended mother constructs the teller as an active agent, it is also often told from a position of relative powerlessness. Owing to the pressure to conform to dominant cultural and organisational narratives, the narrative of the suspended mother is least told as a primary narrative, yet, it contributed toward many of the women's stories to varying extents and at differing stages.

Chapter Ten

Concluding comments

Within Chapter One I detailed the aims of this research which were threefold; firstly to explore the meaning of motherhood for women in prison, secondly to explore the utility of biographical disruption as an analytical framework for criminological research and lastly to develop a narrative framework for understanding 'disrupted' mothering among women prisoners. By adopting and adapting biographical disruption within a narrative methodology and listening to the stories of mothers in prison to explore the way in which their narratives were constructed/ reconstructed and presented, the overall aims of this research have been met.

This chapter will consider the conclusions drawn from this research and the contributions to knowledge claimed. The conclusions are based on the narrative accounts of sixteen mothers in prison, as introduced in Chapter Five. Consideration of the women's narrative accounts facilitates further understanding of biographical disruption as an analytical framework; narrative as a methodology; feminist research methods within prison based research; understandings of motherhood and imprisonment; and the role of stories for prison practice. This chapter will begin by summarising the original contributions to knowledge gained by this research. I then go on to discuss the limitations of the study. After presenting the key findings from the study I then consider implications for practice and further research.

Contributions to knowledge

Biographical disruption

As illustrated in Chapters Two, Three and Four, as an analytical framework, biographical disruption has historically been used to explore the destructive impact of illness on identity (Wilson, 2007). In his original development of biographical disruption Bury (1982:169) claimed that chronic illness 'disrupts the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpin them, threatening identities'. This research claims to make original contributions to knowledge in two ways. Firstly, by replacing illness with imprisonment as a 'critical event' this research has highlighted the utility of biographical disruption as an analytical framework within criminological research. Secondly, by exploring not only the impact of disruption on identity but also the relationship between disruptive events and mothering identities, this research has, therefore, also contributed to sociological studies of mothering.

The adaptation of biographical disruption within this research has illustrated the transferability of the framework to consider other key identities and their relationship with imprisonment, such as, for example, cultural, paternal and work/career related identities. Equally, this research also indicates that biographical disruption is a useful concept with which to consider the narrative construction of mothering identities disrupted through other means, such as mental illness, asylum, migration, bereavement and parental divorce.

The findings of this research, as detailed in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, illustrate that biographical disruption is a useful analytic framework for exploring the impact of imprisonment upon the identity of mother. Most other research studies

adopting this framework focus upon the negative disruption to the sense of self; however, the causal relationship between a critical event and biographical disruption has been problematised within this research. As was introduced in Chapter Four and illustrated within the research findings within Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, the relationship between imprisonment and biographical disruption is multi-faceted. The narrative findings of this research have illustrated that the mothering identity of women can be fundamentally threatened by imprisonment. However, consistent with the influential work of Carricaburu and Pierret (1995) and illustrated in Chapter Seven, this research has illustrated that imprisonment can often reinforce the identity of mother, facilitating the continuity of the identity and promoting a positive sense of self-worth. This research also challenges the claims of writers such as Pound et al. (1998), Ciambone (2001) and Faircloth et al. (2004) who suggest that the framework is less relevant in exploring the meaning of critical events for people who have experienced hardship or whose lives are already disrupted (Wilson, 2007). From a criminological perspective this is significant considering the often complex and chaotic lives of prisoners.

As illustrated in Chapter Eight, this research has shown that imprisonment can be constructed as biographical validation, providing much needed affirmation of the already fragmented biographies and facilitating the opportunity to repair the fractured sense of self of women in prison. Equally, as seen in Chapter Nine, it is often the compounding impact of repeated disruptions, culminating in prison, which represents the most profound disruption to the mothering identities of women in prison. Therefore, as an analytical framework, this research has illustrated that, combined with a narrative methodology and the Listening Guide method of analysis,

biographical disruption remains a potentially valuable tool for exploring the most complex and chaotic narratives of prisoners.

With these considerations in mind it is pertinent to consider not only the role of imprisonment in biographical disruption but also the role of biographical disruption in imprisonment. One of the main criticisms of biographical disruption has been that it is often 'predicated, in large, on an adult-centred model of illness... denoting the shift, however gradual or imperceptible, from a "normal" state of health to one of illness' (Williams, 1984:50). Considerations of a shift from a 'normal' to an 'altered' state are particularly important for exploring the role of biographical disruption in imprisonment. As illustrated in Chapter Two, evident in much of criminological research, and reinforced by the findings of this research, it is often women's chaotic lives and already fractured identities that lead to imprisonment. From this perspective it is often existing biographical disruption that leads to imprisonment, rather than imprisonment leading to biographical disruption. Therefore, this research also supports the concept of biographical disruption as imprisonment.

This research has also furthered debate and critiqued accounts of biographical disruption that have tended to consider disruption as most problematic when it 'enters lives which have been relatively untouched by crisis' (Ciambone, 2001:537). As highlighted within the findings chapters of this thesis, this research has indicated that imprisonment (as a critical event) can be disruptive for many women in many different ways. However, considering the disruptive impact of prison to be greater for those who have had fewer crises in their lives prior to imprisonment may mask not only the compounding impact of imprisonment for women with multiple crises, but

also women's strength, agency and resilience in managing disruption. Whilst imprisonment was often constructed as a major biographical disruption, women who have led relatively unchaotic lives prior to imprisonment were often able to draw strength from their pre-prison lives and identities to mitigate the pain of imprisonment, constructing a continuing positive role and identity for themselves. By exploring the meaning of motherhood for women in prison within the context of their life course, this research has drawn attention to the need for a further focus upon the social context in which a 'disruptive event' is negotiated.

Feminist narrative criminology

As was seen in Chapter Two, women in prison remain a minority of the prison population. Consequently, there is a paucity of research specifically focusing upon motherhood and imprisonment. In particular there is a dearth of literature that explores the construction of mothering identities of women prisoners. As noted in Chapter Three, this research is embedded in the assumption that it is through narrative that we constitute our social identities (Somers, 1994:606) and it is these assumptions that informed my decision to adopt a narrative methodology.

Narrative is an area of growing interest in criminological research. However, as noted in Chapter Four, criminological approaches to narrative tend to be concerned primarily with issues of truth and validity of mainly male offenders' accounts. Drawing on feminist principles I have aimed to challenge the masculinist bias and positivistic traditions of mainstream criminology. I have aimed to explore the subjectivity, partiality and temporality of women prisoners' narratives and offer a more nuanced and gendered perspective on how women construct understandings of their imprisonment.

The marrying together of narrative and biographical disruption is not unique. However, the use of both biographical disruption and a narrative methodology within prison based research, specifically in relation to imprisoned mothers, make this study distinctive. Together this approach has emphasised the role of story in accounting for imprisonment as biographical disruption and the consequent impact upon mothering identities. The findings of this research, as illustrated in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, highlight that the meaning of motherhood for women in prison is understood and narrated in different ways; as noted by Stanley and Wise (1990:22) ‘the experience of “women” is ontologically fractured and complex because we do not share one single and unseamed material reality’.

Adopting a narrative methodology this research has highlighted that the identities of ‘mother’ for women in prison are constructed and reconstructed in relation to their biographies, their relationships, their social environment and the availability of dominant narratives. This research has illustrated that mothers in prison are both constrained and supported by available narrative frameworks as they actively engage with them in the telling of their own stories. Narrative is therefore a creative process accommodating agency and intentionality in which individuals create their own multiple and often contradictory realities (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

The adoption of a narrative methodology was not without its challenges. As discussed in Chapter Five, the lack of structure and direction of the narrative interviews left some women unsure about where to start from and how to structure their stories. The opportunities and challenges of adopting narrative interviewing

were discussed in Chapter Five. Some writers have argued that narrative interviewing may be inappropriate for the developmentally immature. The assumptions of identity brought to this research are premised upon the notion that a sense of self is constructed through narratives however problematic interpretation of those narratives may be. To consider narrative as inappropriate for those who may struggle to narrate their stories is to deny their identity and to deny them as agents of knowledge. Consequently, concerns that the subject of the traditional sociological sentence (Harding, 1987) was always assumed to be man could consequently be expanded to include only articulate and reflexive women. Therefore, I would suggest that greater attention be paid to developing methods that listen to what is and is not being told and what the teller is struggling to narrate. I conclude that, with its layered approach, the Listening Guide goes some way towards achieving this.

Listening to women's stories

To explore the narrative accounts of the women who participated in this study The Listening Guide method of analysis was used. The Listening Guide 'holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology' that views 'human beings as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998:125). The guide 'translate[s] this ontology into methodology' and methods of analysis through a process of four separate readings. The guide is therefore a methodological approach that adopts a relational approach to narrative in order to combine a reflexive and multi-layered analysis (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

The use of the guide was a positive contribution to the research. The structured approach was comforting and I embraced the inbuilt reflexive element within the guide. The four different readings, as detailed in Chapter Five, 'intertwine reflexively constituted narratives, relational narrated subjects, and constructed and critical

subjects' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008:405). This method proved to be an effective approach to listening to the accounts of mothers in prison. The four readings facilitated the exploration of the women's stories in relation to their social relationships; dominant public narratives and social practices; and their biographical life course.

The founders of the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) advocate a flexible approach to the number, types and order of readings, depending on the nature of the research. Whilst some scholars have only adopted some of the readings (see Edwards and Weller, 2012), my approach incorporated all of the original four readings, as illustrated in Chapter Five. The intertwining relationality of the guide led me to conclude that these readings are intrinsically linked and analysis is benefited from the combined readings. Although additional readings may add value and depth to analysis, I maintain that the principles of the four original readings should remain. For example, it was the reading for 'I' that first brought my attention to the Listening Guide. As noted by Doucet and Mauthner (2008:406), this reading 'centres our attention on the active 'I' who is telling the story, amplifying the terms in which the respondent sees and presents her/himself'. Doucet and Mauthner (2008:406) also suggest that 'reading for 'I' gives us access to this emerging narrated self'. However, I would suggest that by reading for 'I' in isolation, an essentialist 'I' may be presumed. I would argue that it is only when the 'I' is considered in relation to the other three readings that the narrated self emerges. In keeping with the informing relational ontology and epistemology, I would encourage all four readings to remain to enable the emergence of the relational narrated subject.

Central to the Listening Guide is reflexivity and a practical guide for the 'doing [of] reflexivity' is suggested (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). The practical approach to reflexivity offered by the Listening Guide was very reassuring. However, the original approach isolates reflexivity within a singular reading. I found this to be too constraining. The challenging of my own assumptions and views emerged as the four different readings progressed. The originators of the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) advocate reflexivity within the first reading, advising the 'reflexive reading of narrative'; as my own analysis continued I began to incorporate a reflexive element into each of the individual readings, therefore developing a reflexive reading of 'I' and so on. This generated a deeper and more relational reflexive approach to the research.

Breaking in and breaking out: feminist research in prisons?

The notion of an exclusive feminist method or set of methods has long been refuted, yet feminist researchers remain concerned with the 'dilemmas of methods used in feminist research' (Wincup, 2002:96). Consequently, feminist debate continues to be insightful and helpful in dealing with some of the practical dilemmas of the doing of research with women (Bosworth, 1999). Many of these explorations deal with questions of power and reducing hierarchical research relationships. However, for feminist criminologists, this remains problematic when engaging with research within an environment that is predicated upon power, control and hierarchy. Whilst feminist criminological debate has aimed to render the lives of women visible within the theorising of crime and criminal justice (Chesney-Lind, 2012), it has provided limited engagement with debates around feminist research methods.

Addressing the hierarchical concerns of feminist research within a prison environment remains problematic. Such difficulties are often beyond the control of the researcher. The negotiation of power within the context of ethical prison research was of significant concern when conducting this research. As with many other studies, this research involved a complex negotiation of power relations but these relationships were three fold, between me as researcher, the women as participants and the prison as both gate-keeper and host. There was often a clash between the feminist aims and values of the research and the preoccupations of control and compliance within the prison environment.

The recruitment process within the prison was also problematic at times. As noted by other researchers (see Hewison and Haines, 2006), the approach to recruitment had a direct impact upon participation levels within this research. The self-selection approach to recruitment resulted in low levels of interest shown by potential participants. As discussed on pages 110-111, I also recognised a distortion in participation (Miller and Boulton, 2007). This finding was consistent with other researchers, who have found that self-disclosure is often perceived as risky, especially for marginalised groups (Miller, 2000:51). This often leads to an over-representation of white, middle class participants (Miller, 2004; Fisher, 2012). For imprisoned mothers the risk is heightened as they are often perceived as 'bad' and 'neglectful' mothers (Jaffe et al, 1997; Boudin, 1998; Shamaï and Kochal, 2008).

There was a distinct lack of diversity amongst the women who initially volunteered to participate in the study, in terms of sentence length, number of sentences served and social circumstances prior to imprisonment. I feared that the most marginalised of women in prison were remaining unheard. Whilst non-participation may be viewed as an act of agency and should be respected, 'refusal to participate ... is often

defensively orientated from a position of social disadvantage' (Fisher, 2012:3). It appeared that my pre-occupation with promoting a self-selecting approach to recruitment in order to reduce potential coercion was perpetuating the continued marginalisation of the least powerful.

As discussed on pages 112-113, I revised my approach to recruitment and utilised the expertise, experience and skills of staff and practitioners to identify and introduce the research to individual women. This revised approach was also an attempt to engage with the most marginalised and potentially 'vulnerable' imprisoned women. Whilst it remains imperative to recognise that participation may induce unanticipated anguish, it is also important to understand the potential benefits for individual well-being from research participation (Blackwell, 1997; Rowe, 2011; Fisher, 2012 see page 113). Working collaboratively with prison staff enabled a more holistic approach to recruiting marginalised women whilst promoting the well-being of 'vulnerable' women.

Concerns relating to the ethics of anonymity were also generated by this research. Whilst pseudonyms are commonly used throughout research, little consideration is often given to the assumptions that underpin this decision. Within my application to the University ethics panel I had indicated that pseudonyms would be used within my thesis and any published articles generated from this study. The women were curious about this process. Most of the women chose their own pseudonyms. However, some interesting questions were raised about the process and as detailed on page 120-121, I recognised that I had not considered the assumptions that privilege anonymity and the consequences for this particular study. Ethical codes of practice assume that anonymity is desirable. Yet for women in prison this may not

always be the case. Identifiable stories of women in prison are regularly constructed and made public by others, through the media, within their local communities and in the courtroom. Within these stories the individual women often remain silent. Attaching a pseudonym to personal narratives may facilitate a continued sense of silencing and a loss of ownership of the stories they tell (Grinyer, 2002) potentially contributing to the deprivations of imprisonment (Goffman, 1961). However, facilitating the use of personal names may equally have repercussions for the women themselves, the prisons involved and the families of participants. Therefore, this remains an area fraught with complexities.

Limitations of the study

Before going on to consider the narrative findings of this research there are a number of limitations to the study to be addressed. Some of these limitations have been described throughout the thesis; however, others have become more apparent as I reflect on the work as a whole. Paradoxically, one of the main limitations of the research was also one of its greatest advantages. There are currently 13 prisons in England and Wales for women. Only two of these prisons are open prisons, with a combined operational capacity of just over 200. This represents around 5% of the overall women's prison population. Yet, half of the women who participated in this study were currently at or shortly released from an open prison. Recruiting participants from an open prison had many advantages. The daily regime, policies and practices of open and closed prisons differ greatly. The open prison provided greater freedom for both me and the women in when and how the research was conducted. However, whilst all women who reach an open prison have spent time in a closed establishment, only a minority of women in closed conditions reach an open prison. Whilst this study makes no claims of generalisability, the relational narrative

methodology adopted assumes that narratives are constructed within particular social settings and that these have their own repertoire of discourses. Consideration of the context of in which narratives are constructed is, therefore, imperative.

The regime of open prisons is focused upon resettlement with the women working toward spending increasing amounts of time 'outside' of the prison in terms of work, education and family life (Rowe, 2011). This facilitates greater contact opportunities with their children and a more participatory role in their children's lives. It may be argued that this regime and focus upon resettlement and release facilitates hope and a sense of possibility. In part this may contribute to the dominance of the wounded mother narrative (as offered in Chapter Seven). Equally, all women who access open conditions have been assessed as being at low-risk of causing harm to themselves and others or of absconding. These assessments are based upon an actuarial system; however, anecdotally I heard of 'nice ladies' being 'hand-picked' for open conditions. It is therefore possible that the majority of women who access open conditions are those with the least chaotic and disrupted backgrounds. However, as represented within the findings of this research, it is often women's already fractured sense of self that leads to their imprisonment. This in turn may restrict their ability to import positive identities from outside of prison. This may have impacted on the narratives constructed within this research. Had greater diversity been achieved within the participants from open and closed prisons different narratives may have emerged.

The meaning of mothering from the inside

This research has identified three dominant narratives within the stories told by mothers in prison. The narratives offered are types of stories told and not

representative of different types of women or mothers (Frank, 2010). The differing narratives were drawn upon to narrate different events throughout the telling of their stories, shifting with the needs of the teller and the requirements of the listener. However, the women's stories tended to be dominated by one of the primary narratives.²⁹

When the mothers within this research told their stories, they were accounting for their situations. Women in prison are over represented by marginalised populations with complex histories of crisis and victimisation. However, often seen by society as giving up on or abandoning their children, women in prison tend to invoke less empathy or tolerance than women whose mothering is disrupted through illness or other means. Therefore, the women's stories were predominantly used to defend against accusations of being a bad mother.

Whilst this research has inevitably touched upon many of the pains of imprisonment for mothers in prison, the primary concern of this research has related to 'meaning' and how this meaning is constructed within narratives. This has enabled greater understanding of women prisoners' agency and resistance to oppressive meanings associated with imprisonment.

The wounded mother

The 'wounded mother' was the most dominant narrative within this research. The narrative of the 'wounded mother' constructs imprisonment as a major biographical disruption (Bury, 1982), characterised by stories of pain and the trauma and injustice of both imprisonment and the separation from their children. Imprisonment is therefore represented as a largely unanticipated event within their life course. Whilst

²⁹ See Appendix Ten for an illustration.

this narrative embodies biographical disruption, it also represents biographical reinforcement, with the mothering identity heightened throughout imprisonment. The narrative of the wounded mother promotes the teller's sense of agency, embodying a sense of 'mother knows best'. Complex power relationships are negotiated in order to maximise their mothering autonomy and protect their mothering identity. For the wounded mother dramatic or drastic acts of resistance are uncommon, with their autonomy and agency being derived from the positivity of their pre-prison (particularly) mothering identities. The wounded mother constructs herself as an active agent in order to promote a sense of self that is consistent with dominant mothering ideologies. Congruent with findings from previous research exploring disrupted mothering, this research has highlighted the way in which women in prison construct the subversion of their own needs in order to promote their identities as good mothers.

The unbecoming mother

The narrative of the unbecoming mother is symptomatic of biographical disruption as imprisonment, with imprisonment being embedded within a series of disruptive events in their lives. For the unbecoming mother imprisonment represents biographical validation in that it affirms their need for help and support and tells the story of repairing the self and motherhood through imprisonment. Therefore, the narrative of the unbecoming mother tells the story of reform. Whilst the narrative of the unbecoming mother tells of the literal act of unbecoming a mother, it is also heavily orientated toward validating this position within a narrative of victimisation in order to appease societal condemnation. Validation is realised for the women by demonstrating their need for rehabilitation. A positive sense of self is then derived from their subsequent rehabilitative success. Therefore, whilst the wounded mother

constructs imprisonment as a direct threat to the mothering identity, for the unbecoming mother imprisonment presents an opportunity for repair and therefore reinforces a more positive sense of being or becoming a 'good' mother.

From this perspective the narrative of the unbecoming mother can be empowering, providing a means to negate otherwise negative associations with imprisonment. Yet, the self in recovery (and therefore still in need of repair), which is central to the women's sense of self, is reliant upon the notion of the broken self. Fear of not being able to gain the status of repaired self with the expectation of 'good mothering' can often constrain the emergence of a recovered and therefore autonomous self. This maintains the prioritisation of the self as broken or only partially recovered.

The suspended mother

The narrative of the suspended mother offers a different perspective on mothering and imprisonment. Whilst the wounded mother and the unbecoming mother tell of overcoming disruption, the suspended mother tells of being overwhelmed and annihilated by it. Characterised by loss of hope and absence of dominant narrative order the suspended mother is often reflective of Frank's (1995) chaos narrative. The suspended mother illustrates an awareness and critical appraisal of the dominant cultural narratives that inform the stories by and about women in prison. It rejects dominant restitution narratives (Frank, 1995) that strive to find a way forward. Equally it does not free the teller to reconcile motherhood and imprisonment in any workable way. For the suspended mother imprisonment represents biographical fracture with mothering unmanageable within the confines of imprisonment and, therefore, mothering is suspended for the duration of the prison sentence.

Constrained by despair and disruption the narrative of the suspended mother calls the listener to bear witness to the teller's anxiety and fear in the present. The narrative of the suspended mother is often, therefore, difficult to hear as it holds the listener with this fear and anxiety. The suspended mother talks of surrendering the role of mother, if only temporarily, however, it positions the mother as an agent within this act, asserting herself as both a mother and a woman. Owing to the pressure to conform to dominant cultural and organisational narratives, the narrative of the suspended mother is least told as a primary narrative yet it contributed towards many of the women's stories to varying extents and at differing stages.

Discussion: disrupted mothering

The narrative findings of this research have illustrated that women in prison construct their mothering identity and the meaning of both motherhood and imprisonment differently. Therefore, mothers in prison should not be considered or treated as a homogenous group. As noted by Ciambrone (2001:535), such homogenisations are neither 'desirable nor theoretically helpful'. Whilst mothers in prison often told of common difficulties, their access to both narrative and practical resources to address these difficulties differed greatly. The wounded mother drew upon the positivity of pre-prison identities, often accompanied with greater levels of practical support from family and friends; yet resources for both the unbecoming mother and the suspended mother were often limited. Therefore, assuming a shared experience or a unified response will ultimately impede women's ability to reconstruct their disrupted biographies. It thus remains important to attend to respondents' individual narratives.

Informed by feminist criminology (as discussed in Chapter Three), this research has considered women as relational beings. Whilst the focus of prison policy and practice may be to consider women as prisoners and offenders first and foremost, this

research has highlighted that women in prison often (yet not always) consider themselves as mothers first. The women used their stories to account for their disrupted mothering. All of the mothers suggested that being separated from their children, either before prison or because of their imprisonment was unimagined within their anticipated mothering trajectories. Equally, all of the mothers envisaged a future role within their children's lives; however, the extent of that role varied. Most of the women anticipated resuming their role as full time carer of their children; however, for others there appeared to be recognition that this was unlikely or would be an on-going battle or pursuit.

Many of the women used their narratives to defend against a bad mother identity and to claim recognition of their mothering status. The women's stories offered many examples of their constructed identities as good mothers in the light of imprisonment and the associated shame and restrictions, constructing a continued moral narrative to justify their continued role in their children's lives. This research has highlighted that moral discourses surrounding motherhood often restricted women's ability to consider their own needs. However, most significantly, this research has highlighted that, even within the most confined and constrained circumstances, women in prison were able to re-negotiate 'good mothering'. Therefore, women's lives, voices and mothering 'must be affirmed as worth telling and thus worth living and reclaiming' (Smith and Sparkes, 2005:1103).

Recommendations for further research, policy and practice

In exploring the ways in which this research differs from previous studies of imprisonment and mothering and reflecting on the potential impact of the research,

this section will continue by considering the implications and recommendations for further research and policy and practice.

Further research

1. Biographical disruption has proved a useful analytical framework for exploring the accounts of prisoners. Therefore, further research adopting biographical disruption to explore imprisonment as a critical event is recommended to develop this as a criminological framework.
2. The findings from this research have identified biographical disruption as a useful analytical framework for exploring disrupted mothering. Further research is recommended adopting biographical disruption to explore mothering disrupted through other means such as asylum, immigration, bereavement, parental divorce and domestic violence, to enable development of this framework.
3. This research has highlighted the contextual nature in which women's stories are told; therefore, a longitudinal study exploring the narratives of mothers in prison would be beneficial. A longitudinal study would enable consideration of narrative trajectories and a greater understanding of a shifting sense of self through transitions within the prison sentence and beyond. This would facilitate the collection and analysis of narratives over time and consideration of how narratives may change throughout the prison sentence and beyond. Such research would form the foundation for the development of practice and services to support mothers in prison and their children.
4. This research has highlighted the complexities of using pseudonyms within social research. The use of pseudonyms is a particularly salient issue in

relation to criminological research where participants' names are often replaced with 'codes' and 'numbers' in the context of the criminal justice system. This research has highlighted the complex nature of using pseudonyms with prisoners within social research. Therefore, in order to minimise participant alienation, the findings of this research support the need for further research to explore the assumptions that privilege anonymity.

Policy and practice

Together, the literature review and the empirical research help to raise awareness and understanding of motherhood and imprisonment which, as illustrated in Chapter One, is an area of limited academic attention or policy recognition. Exploring the ways in which women negotiate and narrate their mothering identity in the context of a prison sentence has led to some recommendations for policy and practice.

Through the gates: information and support

The narrative findings of this research have highlighted certain events in the criminal justice process as being particularly disruptive. These events relate to the point of sentence; early stages of the prison sentence; contact events; and preparation for release. The women's stories suggested that, owing to feelings of shock, shame, guilt and fear, they were often unable to register, comprehend and maintain information where given. Women also told of finding visits incredibly painful. As noted earlier within this thesis, women often story their lives in an ethic of care based on interpersonal relationships (Presser, 2008). The findings of this research therefore support recommendations within the Corston Report (Home Office, 2007) calling for a more gendered approach to working with women in the transition to and from prison, an approach that is more sensitised to their roles and identities as mothers.

Based on the findings of this research I would recommend;

1. Tailored support in courts for mothers in the immediacy of sentence being passed. Such support would incorporate;
 - Training for staff to offer emotional support.
 - Contact with child[ren] and/or carer where possible to assist with childcare preparations.
2. Tailored support for mothers in prison reception to ascertain women's immediate mothering needs in order to ease transitions.
3. More accessible information and support for mothers, in the format of mentors, counselling opportunities and 'listeners'³⁰. This would enable greater opportunity for the women to discuss their immediate fears and concerns about their children and their roles as mothers.
4. A more structured approach to support for mothers in prison both before and after visits.
5. 'Through the gate' holistic resettlement casework and support for women and mothers being released from prison. Whilst this would help with women's immediate practical needs, including housing, it would also provide emotional support through the transition.

A place for 'story' within prison intervention

Theorists of biographical disruption assert that narrative is a 'tool which enables individuals to 'actively shape and account for biographical disruption' (Reissman, 1990:1196). Women who have seemingly abandoned, surrendered or disregarded their children or their mothering role are often the most stigmatised women in

³⁰ The Listeners are Samaritan trained peer support volunteers within prisons.

society. By virtue of their imprisonment, women in prison are considered 'bad mothers' (Home Office, 2007). Narrative provides an opportunity to resist such stigmatisation. The mothers in prison who participated in this research often used their narratives to account for imprisonment and the consequent separation from their children. For Brown and Gilligan (1990:45) resistance 'is the ability to act in the face of conflict'. For women in prison their ability to resist dominant narratives can often be restricted by their relative powerlessness. Prisoners' accounts are often treated with suspicion. Writers such as Forsythe (2003) remain concerned with the correlation between women's accounts of and the reality of 'mothering'. However, this research has highlighted the role of stories for mothers in prison in making sense of their situation. Therefore, I would call for more emphasis on the role, rather than the content, of prisoners' stories, with greater consideration given to both the complexity and the implications of stories told.

Currently, the focus of much prison intervention is on cognitive behavioural programmes in the form of enhanced thinking skills. Such programmes encourage prisoners to modify their 'thinking' and therefore tell and enact different stories. Prisoners' resistance to the principles of these programmes is often assessed as problematic. However, these programmes often aim to 'treat' prisoners and the stories they tell in isolation from their social environment. As this research illustrates, stories are socially constituted and enacted. Limited attention is given to the co-constructed nature of these stories and the roles and requirements of both the listener and the teller in their production.

From a practice perspective, a more reflexive and relational approach to work with prisoners' stories would encourage prisoners to appraise the stories they tell, consider what role they perform and what those stories enable and constrain.

Encouraging mothers to consider the constraints of their stories may promote a reflexive approach to recognising their own needs both within and beyond the prison gates. Equally, whilst responding to the constraints of the stories told, a greater understanding of the role and power of stories by those working with prisoners may enable the construction of a more fulfilling, powerful or hopeful narrative to accommodate [good] mothering from the inside.

'I just not want to hear that

I'm losing my children

I not want to hear that

I want my children

I'm there mum

I can give that feel

I'm not a bad person

I born my children

I be fight for them

I'll be out one day, give them everything' **Renata**

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Appendix One

Literature review

A four strand search strategy was used to identify all relevant literature. This search incorporated organisation and review of my own existing literature database; a keyword search of electronic databases; a search of grey literature from relevant organisations and an 'author' based search grounded in my knowledge of key writers in this area.

As I have been exploring this subject area for five years I have built up a substantial database of relevant literature that was incorporated into the review. A search was then conducted to identify further relevant literature. This search focused upon women and mothers in prison; prison and identity; biographical disruption and narrative. Accessible databases including IngentaConnect, Web of Knowledge, Google Scholar, Social Care Online and JSTOR were searched. To identify relevant literature keyword searches were conducted. Key words included: mothers, prison, mothering identity, mothering narratives, prisoners' narratives, offender narratives, disrupted mothering and biographical disruption. I also used my knowledge of relevant organisations holding 'grey' literature to add to the review. Organisations included charitable organisations such as The Fawcett Society and Women in Prison; advocacy organisations including The Prison Reform Trust and statutory organisations such as The Home Office, The Prison Service and The Probation Trust. These searches were supported by an author based search. This search utilised existing knowledge of the key authors within the subject area to perform an 'author' based search of relevant literature.

Appendix Two

Consent form

CONSENT FORM: INTERVIEWS

Title of Project: Mothering from the Inside: Narratives of imprisoned mothers

Researcher: Kelly Lockwood, University of Huddersfield.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research.		
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.		
I understand that participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time and at any stage of the project, without giving reason.		
I give my permission for my interview to be audio recorded.		
I give permission to be quoted (by use of false name).		
I am happy to participate in the research study.		

Name.....

Date.....

Researcher.....

Date.....

Appendix Three

Information leaflet

Can I say no?

If you decide to take part in this study, you can withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason. If you decide not to participate that is fine and you will not be penalised in any way.

Expressing an interest!

If you are interested in taking part in this study or would like any further information you can contact me using the details on the back page of this leaflet. Alternatively, you can let an Evolve worker know you are interested in the study and I will contact you. We will then be able to discuss the project further and you will be able to ask any questions you may have.

Please be assured that expressing an interest does not mean that you have agreed or committed to take part and you are free to withdraw at any stage.

Me



My name is Kelly Lockwood and I am a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield.

I am undertaking a research project funded by the Economic and social research council

My contact details are:

Kelly Lockwood
University of Huddersfield

Tel: 01484 471429
(24hr answerphone)

Email: k.lockwood@hud.ac.uk

**Are you a mum?
Have you spent
time in prison?
Could you help?**



'Mothering from the Inside'
Kelly Lockwood
University of Huddersfield



**E.S.R.C.
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL**

The Study

Reasons for the study:

At present there is very little research available that focuses upon the experience of women in prison who are also mothers. To ensure that services and facilities are developed that best support positive outcomes for mothers and their children, it is important that we learn more about their experiences.

Aims of the study:

The main aim of this study is to explore how imprisoned women experience motherhood, practise mothering and negotiate their mothering identity whilst in prison.

Who can be involved?

All mums who have served a prison sentence are invited to participate. The only criteria is that you were a mum at the time you went to prison.

What does the study involve?

If you agree to take part in this project I would like to interview you.

The length of the interview will be completely up to you. I imagine it will probably last between 1 and 2 hours.

The interview will take place at the Women's Centre, at a time that is convenient for you.

The interview will be informal and will focus on your story of being a mum in prison. You will be free to tell your story in your own words, in your own time.

I would like to record the interview so that I don't forget anything.

What happens to the information that I share?

The information you share with me will be used for this project. It may also be used in any publications or conference presentations that are undertaken as part of this project. However, your iden-

tity will be concealed at all times.

Confidentiality!

Your right to confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project. This means that all data collected as a result of your participation in the study will be treated with the strictest of confidence. No person other than myself or my supervisory team will have access to the data.

All data will be stored securely in a location at the University of Huddersfield.

Anonymity!

If you agree to take part in this project please be assured that your anonymity will be protected. This will be done by allocating a false name to each participant. This means that none of the information you provide will be used in a way that would identify you as a participant.

Appendix Four

Recruitment poster

Do you have children?



If so, I would really like to hear about your experiences of being a mum and being in prison!

My name is Kelly Lockwood and I am a research student at the University of Huddersfield. I am undertaking a research project seeking to interview mums and explore their experiences of being in prison.

If you are interested in taking part or would like more information, please let Linda Bailey in the Acorn Centre know. I will then arrange for us to meet and we can discuss the research further.

Please be assured that expressing an interest does not mean that you have agreed or committed to taking part in the research study.



Appendix Five

Prompts for discussion

1. General introductory prompt for discussion around the participant's child[ren],
Numbers, age, gender, school.
2. Prompt participant to recount their story of being a mum before imprisonment.
3. Prompt participant to recount the story of their journey through the criminal justice system.
4. Prompt participant to recount their story of being a mum throughout their prison sentence.
5. (a-Mothers in prison) Prompt participant to discuss their plans for release.
(b-Mothers released from prison) Prompt the participant to discuss their story of being released from prison.

Appendix Six

Transcription: confidentiality agreement

By signing this statement, I am indicating that I understand my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following: -

1. I will access data only for the Agreed Duties defined below for which I am authorised explicitly. On no occasion will I use this data, including personal or confidential information, for my personal interest or advantage, or for any other business purposes.
2. I will maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all accessible data and understand that unauthorised disclosure of personal/confidential data is an invasion of privacy and may result in steps being taken against me by Huddersfield University with immediate effect to terminate the service being provided to Huddersfield University, plus civil and/or criminal actions against me.
3. I understand that where I have been given access to confidential information I am under a duty of confidence and would be liable under common law for any inappropriate breach of confidence in terms of disclosure to third parties and also for invasion of privacy if I were to access more information than that for which I have been given approval or for which consent is in place.
4. I will not disclose confidential or personal data or information to anyone other than those to whom I am authorised to do so.
5. All personal or confidential information will be kept secure while in my custody and no copies or notes containing personal identifiable information will be retained by me on completion of the Agreed Duties.
6. I understand that my name will be recorded on official Huddersfield University records in connection with access to personal data held by Huddersfield University.
7. I agree to notify Huddersfield University immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or a situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.
8. If in doubt about any aspect of handling confidential or personal information, I will check with the nominated Huddersfield University Supervisor.
9. Should my work in relation to the Agreed Duties discontinue for any reason, I understand that I will continue to be bound by this signed Confidentiality Agreement.

I have read and understood the conditions and undertake to comply with them when accessing personal and confidential information.

Signature: _____

Date: 10/05/ 2011

Name: _____ EILEEN GOODALL _____

(A copy of this signed sheet should be kept by the individual and the original saved on file)

Appendix Seven

The Listening Guide: Reading One-part two (Reflexive worksheet)

<p>Yeah I really enjoyed it, at first I did quite well because I was getting nine and ten and stuff and I was attending every lesson, but then eventually when it started wearing me out and I couldn't like, because eventually I had to like walk to College and stuff and it's like the other side of [redacted] there from [redacted] to like [inaudible] Road, so it's like the other side of [redacted] and I was walking to get there and stuff because I didn't have the money to get on the bus or nothing, so eventually it wore me out and I started missing lessons whereas if you miss a lesson with the EMA you don't get paid the next week</p> <p>I: Oh right.</p> <p>P: so then the next week I went off and no money at all so it was all just getting me down eventually.</p>	<p>She is trying her hardest to abide by cultural/social norms, education</p> <p>everything is against her, I sense her frustration</p> <p>Heroic struggle??</p>
--	--

I: Yeah. So then what, how did, what happened then?

P: Well basically I've always known like, [pause] a lot of people and like my family, when I was thirteen and I was in school my family was like people on the street that's who I turned to, and, I felt desperate enough to turn to them to make money because I didn't have any really, so, I seen that as the only way as making money as fast as what I needed it, because I was getting in Housing arrears, Council Tax arrears, which I've still got both, I couldn't buy food, I couldn't pay my bills, I couldn't do nothing really, so.

I: And you weren't getting, was there not any like support or nothing?

P: Nothing, I had the Housing Support Worker from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but we couldn't find nothing. So I was caught in a loophole,

She is setting the scene, offering context to her offence, it wasn't her fault, everything was working against her, but I don't sense that she sees herself as a 'victim', she doesn't feel sorry for herself, that is just the way it was, she had a problem and she dealt with it.

She is a victim of the state??, no support, this could have been avoided.

catch twenty-two.

I: [Affirmative noise]. So can you tell me a little bit about when you were, when you were arrested?

P: Yeah, I'd been selling drugs for about six weeks, the first time I got money I paid off my Housing arrears, the next time I paid off my Council Tax arrears but I was obviously [interaction with child]. As time was passing by the arrears was still building even though I was paying them off, they was still building [inaudible]. Yes so basically I was doing it to pay off my debts and stuff and to try and live, just not even like live an extravagant life just to try and

I: Just getting by.

P: live day-to-day life. Yeah. So then it come to a weekend and where I lived, I lived in a high-rise block and it was full of like Smack and Crackheads and, everyone was getting arrested and stuff, so I refused to basically go and sell

Six weeks!, not a long time, she wasn't a long time drug dealer, is she creating a 'novice' persona, she is fighting a losing battle, it is like she feels like drug dealing was inevitable, selling drugs was for survival not greed for a lavish lifestyle, she was doing it to eat.

'Smack and crack heads', emotive language, creating a sense of difference 'us and them', a hierarchy of drug users

he put the pressure on her, it wasn't her need or greed, she did it for someone else, again she is laying responsibility with others

the drugs, and then, I think it was a Saturday, he was ringing me, he must have rung me about fifty times and he was begging me just to go do this one last person, and eventually I gave in, so I've come out of my flat, and I've gone right to the Foyer bit where you catch the lifts from, I'm pressing a lift, and the lift weren't coming but when you looked down the glass you can see the lift's at the bottom because they only lived at the second floor and they was both there, so I thought of, my instincts was telling me something was going on, something really dodgy is going on and I didn't listen to them, and I thought 'I won't get the lift down I will walk up the stairs instead' and as I've walked up the stairs I've gone past about four or five males stood there, and then my friend lived, I did, I knew that they was Police

Out smarting the police, she is quite street wise, she knows the game

Appendix Eight

The Listening Guide: Reading One-part two (Sample of Reflexive Reading)

During our meeting Lauren told of college and her struggles to stay at college owing to the break down in the relationship with her family and on-going financial difficulties. My immediate response was a maternal one. Her interest in dance, music and performing arts and her younger age reminded me of my own daughter. I was mindful of an overly paternalistic approach to our encounter.

I felt that Lauren was a 'tough cookie'. She was 'street wise' and pragmatic and never spoke of emotions whilst telling of difficult experiences. As I reflected on this initial response I attempted to situate myself socially in relation to Lauren in order to question why I felt that she was a 'tough cookie'. I felt that elements of Lauren's story, background and experiences were reminiscent of my own and felt an identification with her social location. Lauren spoke of her family life mentioning that she had grown up on a council estate, had a strained relationship with her mother and her family had always struggled financially. From this information I had visualised Lauren's childhood similar to my own; growing up on council estate in an underprivileged household. I therefore felt an emotional and social identification of working or even under class childhood in which I had experienced women and girls having to 'toughen up'. Recognition of this response encouraged me to look further at Lauren's story and see an emerging vulnerability beyond the tough exterior.

Lauren continued by telling her experiences of childbirth and the way in which she experienced both prison officers and hospital staff during this time. She spoke of being in labour and having to wait inside an ambulance between two sets of prison gates for almost an hour whilst a prison officer could be 'convinced' to escort her to hospital. She also told of being handcuffed whilst being taken to hospital and having prison officers present whilst she tried to breastfeed and whilst having a bath after giving birth. She spoke of hospital staff withholding vital information and treating her like she 'wasn't there'. My initial response to Lauren's story was emotional. I felt extreme sadness that Lauren's experience of becoming a mum was tarnished in this way and that women and mothers could be treated in this way. This sadness was accompanied with anger and outrage at a system that instigates and facilitates this.

Appendix Nine

I poems

Anne

I managed

I managed

I was adamant

I wanted to be a part of them

I was in prison

I was still at every key stage involved

Suzette

I just want some support

I weren't on mi own till I were 29

I know it sounds daft

I were always been looked after

I'm not used to not been looked after

I always had support

I need,

I need,

I need,

I didn't just need help financially

I needed help morally, supportingly, emotional support

I need that

Lauren

I burst into tears

I don't know

I didn't feel like a mum

I didn't want the attention

I see it as advice

I'm thinking they're prison officers

I'm in that room with them

I'm thinking to do it

I don't know, it just felt like

I weren't in control

Renata

I been sentenced for sixteen year,

I've appealed

I'm not guilty

how can I prove?

Suzette

I suppose

I aren't a strong person

I don't think I am a strong person,

I don't think I am a strong person,

I suppose I'd be punishing myself really,

so I

I don't,

I have actually done quite well,
when I think about it
I didn't know,
I didn't know I had that,
I must have that kind of strength
I'm really proud of that

Renata

I very, very happy
I see them
I can touch him
I can give him hug
I been scared
I see them
I been crying
I see them
I been feeling a numb
I can't to explain

Anita

I were like 'how am I going to get out of this place?'
I need to go look after my baby
I look and sit at night in the cell
I look at them fencing
I thought 'just forget it'
I'm just thinking

'I need to get out of here,
I really need to get out of here'
I thought 'I'm going to go crazy'
I were just walking up and down
I feel useless
I can't do anything
you think of everything
you think until you thank God for night
you're thinking 'thank God
I can sleep,
I can switch off.'

Penny

I said "I'm not having the children coming"
I didn't want them coming into prison
I didn't want the children to come
I just didn't
I didn't want them coming into a prison

Fi

I thought
'I can't take',
I had a panic attack,
I've never had a panic attack
I was like

I just couldn't breathe,
I've never experienced,
I thought I was gonna die,
I've never,
I was sat there,
I didn't,
I was just so disorientated
I just couldn't think where the children were,
I can't,
I can't live
I thought
I just couldn't breathe,
I don't even think
I was getting my words out right

Celia

I'm going to go to prison
I knew
I think they were hoping
I knew
I'd been on the website
I'd been looking into it
I knew
I remember
I just felt I had to
I felt
I had to be the one
I had come to it

I had to

Renata

I can't give them

I feeling

I'm in jail

I miss

I very miss

Celia

I think this has definitely been the lowest point in my life

I think because

I feel like I've not been a good Mother

I've got one baby in prison with me and another one outside

I just feel proper guilty, proper, proper guilty...

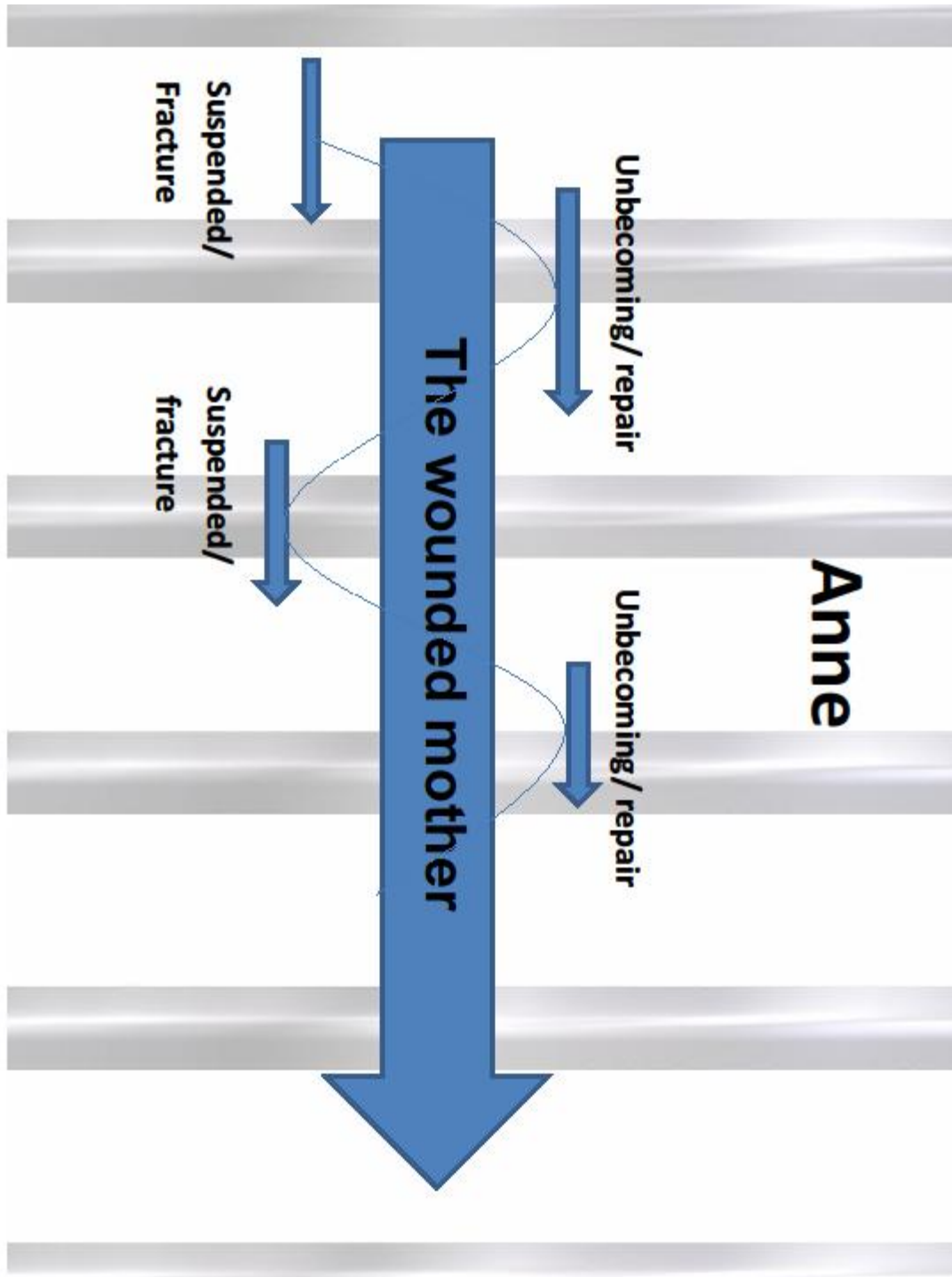
I remember

I don't know if a part of him feels like

I chose the baby over him in that sense

Appendix Ten

Illustration of primary narrative



Appendix Eleven

Lauren: summarised narrative

Lauren's narrative highlights a consistent and salient fight for maternal recognition and authority. Despite a positive anticipatory mothering narrative (Miller, 2000) and a confidence in her mothering ability, a disparity between Lauren's expectations and experiences of pregnancy, giving birth and mothering and a lack of recognition of or support for her role as a mother disrupts her mothering identity.

Lauren constructs a consistently positive anticipatory mothering narrative (Miller, 2000), suggesting her pregnancy was unplanned but welcomed. In order to maintain this positive narrative Lauren has isolated her anticipated mothering role from her pending imprisonment, preventing prison from impacting her maternal identity.

Lauren is therefore perturbed by the reaction of her mother;

'I was over the moon that I was pregnant, but it was like, it seemed that there was only me that was happy, that I was pregnant, nobody else seemed to experience what I was experiencing'

However, even when telling of her mother's concerns over her pregnancy Lauren maintains the isolation. Lauren says that her mother was concerned about the suitability of her (pre-prison) accommodation for a child and doesn't think that she has the right 'mentality' to be a mum. This suggests that Lauren felt that her mother's concerns relate to her inability to meet her criteria of mothering, instantly threatening Lauren's mothering identity. However, Lauren defends this identity by constructing an opposing mothering ideology to that of her mother in which the only criteria is love;

‘But I weren’t bothered no matter what people said....., I knew that this was a blessing to me, and I knew that no matter what, I’d always just, I don’t know, love him...’

Lauren’s expectations of pregnancy and birth are informed by the lay narratives of her family members and from television. Lauren draws on these stories to make sense of the negative discrepancy in her expectations and experiences;

‘The Midwife’s still not like explaining nothing to us like, just basically letting me do what I’m doing, even though like I have watched these ‘One Born Every Minute’s’ and, you’re not supposed to push at certain times, and you’re supposed to breathe through this and do that, but there was like, not even like in the room with me like, explaining what’s happening like’

‘I think the Midwives felt not funny but, felt like, obviously because I was a Prisoner and they didn’t know what I was in there for they felt like they couldn’t just come in and treat me like a normal Patient because I’m with Prison Officers and they don’t know if I’m at risk to do something to them or, I don’t know, it just didn’t seem like when my Aunties and my cousins have had babies, they’ve never treat like that or nothing.’

Lauren concludes that her differential treatment is owing to her status as a prisoner. However, Lauren appears to be caught between two voices which articulate different and often opposing positions (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). One voice reflects Lauren’s expectations and an assertive self, prepared to challenge and fight for her maternal authority;

‘I had to start saying “are you not supposed to check his heartbeat?” and “are you not so supposed to do this? That’s what was happening on the out” and this, that and the other, and that’s when they had to start, that’s when they started doing it when I started saying.’

However, there is a contrasting voice that represents a more subordinate position, accepting of the differential treatment;

‘But it was alright so to speak but, it weren’t how it’s supposed to be but, I was in Prison so I didn’t think there was anything wrong with that.’

‘Yeah. And my Mum, my Mum did say to put complaints in but, because I was a Prisoner obviously I thought that’s how it went.’

‘I felt like I’d been treated like dirt as it was so I didn’t really, but I thought that’s how a prisoner gets treated so I didn’t really take that’

The two opposing voices represent a struggle with identity. Lauren’s assertive voice aims to affirm a mothering identity; however, the constant recognition of authority reaffirms Lauren’s subordinate status, giving emphasis to her prisoner identity. This acceptance forms part of a larger narrative of a moral self, in which Lauren consistently aims to construct herself as co-operative.

Lauren’s awareness of her subordinate position as a prisoner has a direct impact on her mothering role. Lauren sees the prison as restricting her mothering role on both a structural and personal level. For Lauren her personal relationships with prison staff are both reassuring and stifling. Lauren refers to the fact that advice, guidance and assistance were readily available to her from within the prison. However, Lauren felt that advice was often imposed rather than sought and, owing to the power dynamics of the relationships, felt obliged to follow instructions given. The ‘I’ poem below highlights the impact of the constant authoritative scrutiny on Lauren’s maternal identity;

‘I hadn’t been alone
Since I had my baby
I burst into tears
I don’t know
I didn’t feel like a mum
I was still in hospital

I didn't want the attention
I see it as advice
I'm thinking they're prison officers
I'm in that room with them
I'm thinking to do it
I don't know it just felt like I weren't in control'.

Within Lauren's story there is a clear sense that she felt that the structural regime within the prison constrained her mothering role. As Lauren says in the previous extract 'I weren't in control' and there is a continuing awareness of her lack of mothering autonomy. Lauren recognises that her maternal authority is restricted, with the prison acting as a surrogate parent eliminating her authority, as the extract below highlights;

'.....at [prison] if the babies was poorly the Nursery Nurses would watch him while you, because [prison]'s a working Prison, you have to go to work, there's no two ways about it, if you don't go to work you have to stay behind your door. So basically if your baby were poorly and you weren't, you had to go to work you didn't get the chance to like, like you would at home you didn't get the chance to stay back and look after your baby.....'

The 'I' poem below highlights Lauren's discomfort in her lack of choice at having to leave her baby at the prison nursery with 'strangers', with the use of 'couldn't' 'wouldn't' and 'can't' emphasising her sense of restriction;

'I won't choose them to look after my son

I can't say that

I can't say

I know them now

I've got to know them

I mustn't have took him to nursery for like a week

I felt that they were strangers

I had to get to know them

I did take him to nursery

I couldn't leave him

I couldn't leave him'

On Lauren's release from prison her lack of mothering autonomy continues. In order to meet the condition of early release on 'tag' Lauren concedes that she will live with her mum. However, throughout Lauren's story she has constructed her relationship with her mum as constraining and feels that this choice is restricted and is primarily informed by a narrative of shame and a need to conceal her imprisonment from her son, as the extract below details;

'now when I first had Morgan³¹ it was Christmas and his first birthday that...that's why I got my tag, if he would have been one after August I wouldn't have got my tag.., I would have just done the rest of the four month inside, but because he was one within that tagging time I thought 'no I need to be out there for his first birthday to take pictures out there...' because I think when he looks at pictures he's going to be like 'oh so where was I there mummy..., even though you can't see HMP...but it will still make me feel funny like, I still think...is somebody going to slip up to him one day and say 'oh you was born in prison'.

On release from prison Lauren's mothering autonomy continues to be threatened as she sees her mother's presence as a continuation of the restrictive role of the prison;

'it was always like not one hundred per cent your responsibility and I've come out now and I feel like it's still not one hundred per cent my responsibility because obviously I live back with my Mum, and like my Mum [slight laugh] she's very controlling, she likes, it's rather not her way or the highway but it's her way or you have to fight for your way, so it's very,

³¹ Pseudonym

it's very difficult still to do, not what I want but how I
want to do things with Morgan'

As Lauren looks to her future she is striving for independence. As she says 'I want to raise my son the way I'm going to raise my son', in order to assert herself without the scrutiny and control of others.

Appendix Twelve

Transcript example: Anita

I: So when you first went to [prison] how did you kind of arrange it, who would look after [son]?

P: Prior to that my daughter was living at home with me, anyway so it's just happened that she happened to just be in the house and stay there and, it was hard because after a few months, I can't remember exactly how much, my friend was saying she wants to foster him, ah well, well I flipped [slight laugh] I were like "foster him? Why does she want to do that?" and I spoke to her and then my other friend mentioned it, then my sister-in-law was saying "no, no way that's not happening" and then I had his grandparent in, not my parents, his grandparents from his Dad's side saying "oh they want him", it's like my friends, one of my friends in that corner saying she'll have him [claps hands] the gran, the dad and the grandmother said "oh no" they'll have him, my daughter saying "oh no, she's not, he's not leaving, he's my brother" and whatever, oh God I was so confused.

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: I looked and I'm thinking 'oh I need to make a decision here' and I was quite adamant that no-one's going to take this or whatever like I'm his Mother you know, you know?

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: You're in a place that you know in yourself you can't do anything about anything, there's nothing you can do, you know, you feel hopeless, you know but I'm thinking 'there's no-one, you've taken everything from me' [laughs] you know?

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: And I said "you're not taking this away from me" I were like 'no way', you know? And I got angry with my friend I were like, "this is all I've got" I felt like, I'm not being horrible because I know that my daughter was at that stage I know, I never thought, thinking how is she going to cope sort of thing because I always been there for her, I kind of worried more about my son, you know, and I'm thinking 'she's just had a baby as well so she's got her daughter to think about and now there's my son' and so I think the decision that I came to I thought 'oh I'll just let him go to his Dad' because that's next, the next parent. So when it come down to it now I'm thinking 'but I won't see him again' you know?

I: **[Affirmative noise].**

P: And that's what I look forward to every week, you know, every week and I didn't care about what happened or what I had to go through during the week, on a weekend I'm thinking 'oh God I'm going to see my son, I'm going to see my kids'

I: **[Affirmative noise].**

P: you know, and I'm thinking 'what am I going to do when he goes, you know? He's my baby, he's my baby you know? So I remember phoning him and said "oh I'm sorry I've changed my mind, you know" I said "I can't do it", and he were saying "what [daughter] needs is support and needs the help, you know, I should be looking after him" and he was saying all the right things, "she needs the break, she's a young child, she's got her own" and this, this point he start crying, I were like "I just don't know" you know? And I sort of put my hand up and said "you know whatever happen happens because what can I do?" you know, I can say whatever I want to say but at the end of the day whosoever is out there they're going to do, you know, the best [inaudible] whatever so I just put my hand up and I didn't phone home or anything I thought 'just do whatever, you know, I've got to find'.

I: **Yeah.**

P: I said “I’ve got to find a way to get through this”, you know, I thought ‘oh just whatever happens’, so I just put my hand up, so after a while [slight laugh] I thought ‘no I’ve got to phone home’

I: **[Inaudible].**

P: [laughs] thank you [laughs].

I: **[Laughs].**

P: it’s alright. But I didn’t want him to go to [friend’s] because [friend’s] had six, she’s got six girls, so I was saying to her, she hasn’t been very supportive, in a sense yeah I know she didn’t visit me but it’s not a place that you force people to “oh come and visit me”, I’d never, and I’ve never done it, you know, “come and visit me” or whatever, everyone’s got their views and their morals and who am I to change that? But in myself I’m thinking we’re close enough that I thought no barriers or bar would ever change the friendship that we had, and then I started thinking ‘oh you should have loads of friends’ you could have thought all kinds of emotion in your head, every, you think of everything, you think until you thank God for night, you’re thinking ‘thank God I can sleep so I can switch off’ you know and she, I remember phoning home once and [daughter] said “oh he’s up at [friend’s]” it was in Summer holiday. And in three weeks I’ve been phoning every day and he’s been up there like four weeks and all she did was making plans to just keep him, and then she wrote me a letter and said “I don’t think it’s doing my son any good coming to see you every week” oh my God, [inaudible] [whispers] I thought ‘no I’m going to go crazy now’ I just couldn’t, I thought ‘no’ I were just walking up and down. Like I can’t, I said “I feel useless I can’t do anything” and then I could phone my daughter, oh my God I owe her so much, and I were like “you get up there and get your brother”

I: **[Slight laugh].**

P: and I'm thinking 'oh my God poor thing, this is a little young girl who looks up to my friend as a Mother and I'm giving her this big responsibility to go get her brother' and I thought 'she's not going, she's not going to say boo to my friend' you know and I thinking 'can't cope', so I just get on the phone and phone [friend] and I said "I'm sorry" I said "I'm locked up but I'm not dead" [slight laugh] that's my favourite word. I said "I want to be a part of his life" I said "yeah I'm in Prison already, I'm his Mum you know?" she said "but it's going to affect him, he's not even talking, hear me", "I don't want him to talk", but when you're angry you say things, I say "I want him to be a baby as long as ever, you know, just leave him, you know, nothing's wrong with him" which now we can't shut up [laughs]

I: [Laughs].

P: you know what I mean? But I don't know how it, it has affected him you know? Being so young, I don't know what he's gone through, you know, I know how hard it was for me, as an adult, I know how hard it was for [daughter] now that we've got to talking, get it off, but he's a babe, I don't know, I don't know if it has affect him, you know? But it would be silly to think that somehow, you know, he hasn't noticed but they say kids are young, that young kids, you know, they'll get over things, so I just, hope and pray that he'll just forget about, especially [closed prison], you know that, he'll just forget it but, I just had to say "I'm sorry" so what I had to do, I said "[daughter] alright I'll tell you a different way, just go and say to [friend] that you want to spend some time with him" because that's where he's grown up in the house round [you], round my granddaughter, "so just say you'll have him for a bit, you want him for a few days" and I said "please don't give him back to her" [slight laugh]. That's what we did and [inaudible] out and, she's saying "oh I just wanted to help" and whatever "and I wanted to help", I remember, it was, he were potty training and stuff and what I didn't like the fact that she were just naming out these little things that she's done like, every month she used to get her wage and go up, take him to town and buy him stuff and I thought 'he wasn't short of clothes because his Dad always makes sure, you know, that' and I'm thinking 'if you were a good enough person you shouldn't even mention it', you know,

and I'm thinking 'there is no way' and I were like 'how am I going to get out of this place? I need to go look after my baby', and I look and sit at night in the cell and I look at them fencing I thought 'just forget it because there's no way I can jump that high' [slight laugh], you know I'm just thinking 'I need to get out of here, I really need to get out of here' then I look, I'm thinking 'but if I get out, when I get caught I've got to come back and do it again' [laughs]

I: Yeah [slight laugh].

P: you know, so I just look at, it's, Kelly it's mad, it's mad, it is absolutely crazy.

I: Did it make a difference to your, how you felt about things like that once you got to [open prison]?

P: Yeah when I got to, yeah when I got to [open prison] it was like really surreal like I remember when I got to the gate and I were like, 'there's no bars'

I: Oh yeah [laughs].

P: like the gates are open, I remember you know like going through all this and I were like, 'seriously this is a Prison like?' and then I saw, you know, HMP [*****] I were like, 'there's no bars' [slight noise] you know, and it was really surreal hear me just, it's just a big house, you know, it's just, God I sound really daft because I'm thinking 'I'm a big woman now pull yourself together' but I'm thinking 'this Prison' I were like 'okay I think I'm going to be alright here'. And then there, I remember when I go into Reception and they gave me a key for my room, hear me I've got a key [inaudible]

I: [Laughs].

P: I'm going, I were like, 'I'm going to open my' you know what I mean? I were like "I'm going to open my own door?" you know?

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: I were just really, I just never heard, you don't hear of it, you're thinking 'Prison' and you think 'I've had', you know, in the films what you see on telly and you'll be working and whatever and you get locked in and you get fed whenever they open the doors, what happened in [closed prison], they said "this is your room door key" and I were like 'oh my God', "and you might share and the highest you might share with is five, or you might get a three, you might lucky to get a two" and I "oh please God let me get a two", four weeks I did in a five bed and then I got a two bedroom and I've been there for like all the year, and I thought, although I go through a lot of hard things I still didn't lose my faith, there is time when was so vexed with the big man up there we call him

I: Yeah [laughs].

P: he may not want to know I'm not speaking to you, I don't want [laughs], I had a necklace and I took it off and just literally put it aside somewhere and I said "oh I'm not even your friend right now" you know?

I: So it really challenged it then?

P: Yeah

I: Yeah.

P: it did for me but I know still there was a little something there that I still had my faith there, and I don't know if you believe in it but I, it's just taken me through or if it's not that whatever it is, you know, I'm grateful, you know? But I'm thinking 'there's a lot of doors that's been closed during my Sentence but they're still one close and then another one open' you know what I mean? And I thought 'God', I got to [open prison] in October, and then me and [friend] read up everything about [open prison], we know it from [laughs] what it looks like, absolutely everything.

I: So did you know [friend] when you were [closed prison]?

P: Yeah that's what I met, where I met her. I used to share with this lady, oh my God, this lady she used to work on the other Wing where [friend] worked, and then this lady that I used to share with was saying "oh I've shared with this really nice lady" and everything because I remember at [closed prison] I had to go to the toilet and it's in your cell, big enough and it's in that corner hear me? I'm going to die of something not going to the toilet because I'm no way I'm going to the toilet

I: Yeah [slight laugh].

P: when she's here, and I used to pray for her to go work, oh like 'when are you leaving?'

I: [Laughs].

P: [laughs], I were like "Jesus" you know little things that I'd never dream of going in front of my daughter and then here I'm sat on the toilet in front of a stranger.

I: Yeah.

P: And I, oh my God, you know so I'd never run my daughter out of the bathroom never, you just, little things I thought, but them are little things that in life that you think 'it is normal not to be in the toilet in front of someone' you know? So she came [inaudible] and she said "I met this lady and she's going to put you, have a word to go up on * Wing" because * Wing was the Enhanced Wing. You're not locked in there, you've got your own key and you just, like a big cabin and stuff and there was like forty rooms in there, you can walk around till ten o'clock, hear me I need to be [claps hands] up there, like I 'what is it'

I: [Laughs].

P: [claps hands] 'that I?' you know what I mean? [Slight laugh] I said "what is it that me to do?" you know, in eight weeks I was up there, I were like I'd never stopped and I were like "what do I need to do to be Enhanced?" you know what I mean? But it was easy for me because I wasn't, a naughty person or a [inaudible] you know what I mean? If they say [inaudible] because I'm in their hands and there's nothing I can do about it, I never forget there's another Asian girl that I met when I was in Court bawling downstairs and she said to me "we will be alright", she said "if you cry you're going to do your Sentence, if you don't cry you're going to do it, if you try and kill yourself you're going to do it" I were like "[crying noise]" [laughs] she was really, really hard, she's an Asian lady and I thought 'she said no matter what you do love', you know, she was in Court fighting to have her kids, not lose her kids, God bless her she has lost them to [exhale noise] adoption but, that was, I were like 'oh my God so there's no way out, just go to do it, I've got to find some way of doing it'. So the three of us just got tight from then, we still have we're going out for a meal on the fifteenth [laughs] we all have and, well she's home now for good but me and [friend] are going to book a Home, at Town Visit, so we're going out for a meal.

I: So were you all at [open prison] together then as well?

P: We're all at, no, yeah just for a little while, but we we're all at [closed prison] and if I got an apple I got three apples when I was at [closed prison] [laughs], if I got a sweet I got, everything we did we just

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: you know, and we live, we got rooms on the same corridor, we all end up in * Wing [slight laugh], she was there and I said "you remember those horrible words that you say?"

I: [Laughs].

P: “them firm words that you say to me at [closed prison]?” she said “oh they weren’t horrible” but it’s because she’s been in for a few months realised that no matter what, you know

I: You’re still got to do it.

P: still got to do it [laughs].

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: So I end up saying thanks in the end but [laughs]

I: Yeah?

P: but yeah but, [open prison] man it’s just, it were just.

I: Do the Visits and things make a big difference?

P: Yeah. At [open prison] well it was in the Dining Room as you know and it’s just

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: you can get up with your kids. Even that I remember my first Visit there, I forgot that I could get up I were just sat there and they were like “oh you can go in the playroom and you can take him to toilet” hear me? I can change my baby, and he wasn’t a baby then, you know, but he was still a baby in my head, I’m like he’ll come and he’ll eat something and the sandwich I was still doing I’ll be picking up his food like a baby, I remember my friend [exhale noise] she’s like “he’s not a baby anymore” and I were like “he’s my babe” [laughs]

I: [Laughs].

P: “leave me alone”. Even him, the amount of times he’s said to me “Mum I’m not a baby”

I: [Laughs] yeah.

P: you know what I mean? Because that's where I left him, so that's the stage I'm still at with him, I'm like, "no let me break your chicken up it might choke you" he's like "I'm not a baby" he's like that [laughs] [inaudible], so that was a slow progress as well to get, you know, to forget that he's not, you know what I mean? You don't need to pull his pants up he's doing it himself, no you don't need to take him to toilet [laughs] he just goes himself, were like, I've missed out you know?

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: And even if I had ten more kids I've missed out on that you know what I mean? But it was great, the minute he comes to [open prison] I was in that playroom, I was on the floor, we was rolling, they were like "you're a big kid aren't you?" and I'm thinking 'oh you just don't know, it's just amazing to just roll about with him' you know? Take pictures with him and watch DVD together, were like oh my God this is amazing, it were, it was fab and I thought 'there is no way I'm doing anything whatsoever to jeopardise being [slight laugh] at [open prison]' because it's, it's silly, it's Prison but it's better than where I was coming from. And then my first Home Leave was in December I were like, I'm going home, but you know what was [slight laugh] crazy about it? When I went through all the procedures and all that and you fill your form in and I remember the day, I said "I'm saving it till Christmas" I could have gone eight weeks from coming in October, the tenth of October, I said "no I'll just save it and go Christmas", but the weird thing, and shocking thing was about it in a good way is on Christmas Eve I went, when they just put me outside Reception with my bag and my stuff and says "see you in [inaudible] three days hear me?", oh my God [slight laughs] I started to cry again, "hear me but I'm on my own?" she said "yeah", I were like, I can walk out of Reception and just go, you know what I mean?

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: Go home and spend time with my family, she's like "yeah", "hear me and no-one's taking me there?" you know? My friend came for me bless her, she's just always been there, she's a rock, and I were like, I didn't come out of the house the first day I just forgot that I could [laughs] I were just sat at home and I were like, like a Prisoner in my own home because that's what I were used to and they were like, my Mum said that, my daughter said "Mum are we going to the town [inaudible]?" [slight laugh] it's alright, and I didn't, and I didn't come out of my house or I do, I came out of the house but, I didn't want to go in town, because that's a different lever as well

I: [Affirmative noise].

P: again now I've got to learn to get back, I'd be like looking up outside, I were like "I can see the sky" I'll go, I used to see it because we used to walk around, it just, but it's just silly, you felt like you were just in this big bubble at [closed prison] and that's, that was it and everything was different down there, it's just a little hole and everything that's happening beyond it is totally different, but, it was just weird. And then everyone wanted to come and see me and I just wanted to be on my own and my family, four o'clock my friends were still there and people still calling, I were like '[groans]'. And literally oh after my first Home Leave when I got to [open prison] I were like, 'thank God I'm back', I were like 'oh my God what's wrong with me? I'm not normal'.

I: I'm not normal [laughs].

P: I'm not, I'm not normal [laughs] I want to go back, but that's another bubble as well it's safe, it's really, oh my God I could talk for days Kelly [laughs] about the experience [laughs] I just, but it's just crazy, absolutely crazy experience.

I: how do you feel, how do you find it like now when you're at home?

P: Oh it's amazing, [pause], I just, when I'm on my Home Leave all my focus, everything that I do, every move I make it's about them you know what I mean? I don't come into it, well I'm a, you know what I mean, it's just "oh no I'll do it", "no I'll take him", you know?