

**“We’re both in the trenches together”: A pluralistic exploration of attachment
behaviour dynamics in a heterosexual couple relationship across the transition to
second-time parenthood.**

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Abstract

Attachment theory provides a framework for categorising behaviours in close relationships by individuals during times of stress. Attachment behaviours are commonly thought to be determined in early childhood experiences and assumed to hold through to adulthood. Further, these behaviours become particularly salient across life events, such as the transition to parenthood. Attachment styles range from security-based, in which individuals seek to alleviate distress by seeking and receiving proximity to an attachment figure, to insecurity-based styles in which attachment figures are viewed as insufficiently available. These styles have been identified primarily through the use of quantitative methods. However, this risks reducing the intricacy of relational behaviours to discrete and exclusive styles. The use of qualitative methods offers one way to preserve the complexity of relational experiences but there are a limited amount of studies which use this approach. The use of pluralistic qualitative methods allows for more holistic insight by viewing the complexities of attachment from multi-dimensional perspectives and is the methodological focus of this study.

The research presents a longitudinal single case study which explores the attachment behaviours of a couple during their transition to second-time parenthood. It uses multiple methods of data collection, including individual semi-structured interviews to gather accounts of experience, diaries to gather accounts of everyday practices and behaviours, and joint unstructured interviews to gather collaborative accounts of the couple relationship. Narrative analysis is used to understand how identities are formed and reformed over the longitudinal period, and gives insight to how the participants make sense of their feelings and emotions. A psycho-social reading of the data enables understanding of some of the internal and external conflicts that the participants negotiate during this period. The plurality of epistemological and ontological paradigms

brought by the different methods highlights the complex variation and intricate manners in which the couple's emotion regulation strategies affect the dynamics of their relationship.

Key findings of the research illustrate that individuals engage with a variety of attachment behaviours at any given point suggesting that attachment is not a fixed feature; attachment history becomes more salient after the transition to second-time parenthood; insecure attachment behaviours (mainly avoidant ones) tend to be more marked; relationship satisfaction decreases following the birth of the second child; and the parenting relationship becomes the couple relationship after the birth of the second child. The research shows how pluralistic methods challenge traditional views of attachment as fixed and brings new insight to relational experiences by considering them as fluid and dynamic processes, informed by context, subjective meaning-making and external events across the transition to second-time parenthood.

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In loving memory of Grandad

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

This thesis views couple relationships through an attachment theory lens. Couple relationships have been described as the most important relationships developed in adulthood (Bartholomew, 1993). This chapter presents the literature forming the background to the thesis.

The literature on adult attachment theory and how it influences couple relationship dynamics is reviewed. The relevance of the context of life events, specifically the transition to second-time parenthood, a phenomenon which has received little attention thus far in the existing literature, is considered in particular.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals form close relationships, first as children and later as adults (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013), “from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). John Bowlby developed attachment theory on the grounds that children’s development of the self and mind relate to others, particularly in relation to the interactions they have with their primary care-givers (Bretherton, 1998). Attachment theory is concerned with the establishment of close relational bonds, how emotions become regulated within those bonds, and the mental organisation and representation of relationships and affect. Research into attachment tends to focus on the effects of relational processes for the individual, explicitly linking the experience of self as an individual with the experience of self in relationship.

Bowlby (1979) defined the behavioural organisation of an individual's behaviour with a caregiver in relation to threat or distress in terms of the activation of the *attachment system*. This system then sets in motion *attachment behaviours* which are types of behaviours whose goal is to attain or retain proximity to a preferred person. This favoured person is someone who is most likely to provide comfort, protection and care, and is known as an *attachment figure*. Once proximity has been achieved, the attachment system switches 'off' along with displays of attachment behaviours. The goal of the attachment system is the maintenance of *felt security*. However, if attachment behaviours fail to achieve their goal of proximity, the attachment system along with the arousal and distress that go with it, remain activated (Howe, 2011).

In childhood, the primary care-giver tends to be the attachment figure, and is usually a parent. Later on in the lifespan, attachment figures tend to be replaced by adult partners (Howe, 2011). The attachment figure serves as a *secure base* from which the person feels safe enough to explore the environment. This means that during situations where there is a lack of apparent threat, the person is likely to engage in exploratory behaviours rather than in attachment behaviours. However, when the person perceives a threat in the environment, they are likely to seek proximity. The attachment figure then acts as a *safe haven*, providing comfort and safety in the face of threat or fear (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Thus, proximity seeking, secure base and safe haven are the three defining characteristics and functions of an attachment relationship (Bowlby, 1973).

Children and adults who have a secure base feel more autonomous, curious and able to cope well with being alone. They are keen to try new things without always feeling the need to ask for help, but if they do get into difficulty, they are happy to seek advice and support. Children and adults who lack a secure base feel much more anxious

about engaging with the world on their own; uncertainty about the attachment figure's availability and responsiveness at times of need leads to feelings of insecurity. Those who lack a secure base find their attachment needs keep over-riding attempts to be independent, confident and curious (Howe, 2011).

Consequently, how well attachment relationships can fulfil these safe haven and secure base functions are translated into relationship representations of these interactional patterns, which Bowlby termed *internal working models* (Bretherton and Munholland, 2008). This reflects the internalisation of a relationship with an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1988). These mental representations integrate beliefs and expectations about the self, others and the social world in general; they are constructions of how the world has worked in the past and how it might work in the future. Meaning is given to any current situation on the basis of what has been experienced, thought and felt in the past (Bowlby, 1988). These models of self and other, gleaned from copious interactions, become expectations and biases that are used to guide behaviour in subsequent relationships, and are thus thought to affect the formation and maintenance of close relationships for the rest of the lifespan (Bowlby, 1988; Johnson, 2003).

Primary attachment figures seem to have the biggest influence on internal working models and attachment patterns (e.g. van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996). Based on the expectations and understandings the internal working model has of how others are likely to behave and how the self is likely to feel, individuals develop and organise their attachment behavioural strategies during times of need in ways that seek to increase the availability and responsiveness of their attachment figure (Kobak & Madsen, 2008).

Nevertheless, internal working models are also dynamic and provisional as they are accessible to change – ‘working’ in this context means that these mental models are revisable representations of the self and of others (Howe, 2011). Internal working models are open to being updated at any time over the lifespan, particularly in the context of close relationships. If an attachment figure continuously behaves in ways that do not match beliefs and expectations, the internal working models assimilate and accommodate this new information, and are thus revised (Bowlby, 1973).

The Development of Individual Differences in Attachment

The concept of internal working models facilitates an understanding of how the quality of external relationships gradually become a part of the child’s mental inside, to form their psychological self; in turn, the mental inside influences the child’s view of the self and of others (Howe, 2011). Therefore, a more comprehensive manner in which to understand attachment theory requires a dual focus on both intrapersonal processes and interpersonal processes. Intrapersonal strategies, beliefs and expectations are continuously influenced and shaped by the quality of interpersonal communication in attachment relationships, which in turn are influenced by intrapersonal processes (Kobak & Madsen, 2008). The inner world is inextricably linked and influenced by the external world, and vice versa. This suggests that attachment behaviours may vary depending on the type of caregiving environment in which they are located. Warm and sensitive caregiving tends to evoke feelings of comfort, understanding and security. Feelings of insecurity tend to be evoked if proximity and availability are obstructed, dubious or troubling which can then lead to the development of strategies to help deal with feelings of anxiety this may give rise to (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 2008).

Through her research and method of assessing infant-caregiver attachment relationship (Strange Situation Test - SST), Mary Ainsworth distinguished three attachment classifications in infants, which reflect differences in internal working models. Based on observed patterns of interactive behaviour of separation, reunion and the infant's exploration of the environment, each relationship is classified as 'secure,' 'avoidant,' or 'ambivalent' (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Children whose attachment figure responded consistently and provided support in times of distress may result in the development of a *secure* attachment style, where the child feels autonomous, effective and competent. Other people are experienced as being attuned, loving, available, predictable and dependable and so the child feels easily able to express their need for protection and comfort. Those children whose attachment figure responded inconsistently or insensitively may develop an *anxious-ambivalent* attachment style, where the child feels ineffective, dependent and has a sense of low self-worth. Other people are experienced as being insensitive, depriving, neglecting, unpredictable and unreliable, and so the child maximises their attachment behaviours and overplays their needs and distress; their affect is under-regulated. Those children whose attachment figure disliked physical contact and were unresponsive to distress may develop an *anxious-avoidant* attachment style, where the child feels rejected and controlled. Other people are cognitively represented as rejecting, unloving, intrusive and predictably unavailable at times of need, and so the child minimises their attachment behaviours and inhibits feelings; their affect is over-regulated (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Howe, 2011; Weinfield et al., 2008).

Each of these attachment patterns (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) are considered to be organised attachment behaviours. Each pattern represents the best way to achieve proximity to the attachment figure during times of need, which is the goal of

attachment behaviours. However, there are caregiving environments in which children may find it difficult to organise their attachment behaviours in order to achieve proximity with their attachment figure. Children whose attachment figure is confusing, dangerous, and emotionally unavailable or fail to offer protection may develop a *disorganised/disoriented* pattern of attachment, where the child feels frightened, alone, rejected, dangerous and bad. Relationships with attachment figures are experienced as stressful and frightening; the attachment figure tends to be the cause of the child's fear and distress. Regardless of which attachment pattern is used, it fails to achieve proximity or comfort from the attachment figure. Consequently, children's attachment behaviours lack strategy or direction, and may appear odd or contradictory (alternating both ambivalent and avoidant behaviours). Children's attachment systems remain chronically activated and their arousal remains unregulated (Howe, 2011; Main & Cassidy, 1988).

By middle childhood, children are able to start developing closer relationships with their peers (e.g. Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Kerns, 2008). By late adolescence, peers tend to be preferred over parents as sources of emotional support and comfort (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). By adulthood, attachment relationships tend to be transferred from parents to peers, including to romantic partners who assume the role of the attachment figure in most cases (Zeifman & Hazan, 2008).

The Cultural Context of Attachment

A core element of attachment theory is the universality of its key principles of sensitive care, secure attachment relationships and children's competencies, regardless of the specific cultural context in typically developing children (Mesman, van IJzendoorn, & Sagi-Schwartz, 2018). Bowlby (1969) maintained that these core

concepts are universal and apply to all members of the human species, and these claims were empirically supported when results of the SST were replicated in samples of mother-infant dyads from Uganda and the United States (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth et al., 1978). Furthermore, there have been a number of cross-cultural comparison studies which have observed the same core concepts of secure attachment relationships between infants and their primary caregivers. These studies have also found that children categorised with secure attachment tend to compose the numerical majority amongst the other attachment categories (e.g. Grossman, Grossman, Huber & Wartner, 1981; van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999; Vereijken, Riksen-Walraven, & Kondon-Ikemura, 1997). Studies that support the universality of attachment have been conducted across widely differing cultures, including Africa where non-parental caretaking/multi-caregiving is common (e.g. Konner, 2005; Morelli & Tronick, 1991; Marlowe, 2005); East Asia which favours interdependence and has a collectivistic culture (e.g. Archer et al., 2009; Grossman, Grossman, & Keppler, 2005); and Japan which values relational and psychological dependence (e.g. Durrett, Otaki, & Richards, 1984; Vereijken, 1996).

Nevertheless, although secure attachment is the most common category of attachment across cultures (65% secure, 21% anxious; 14% avoidant), the percentage of infants in each attachment type varies to some extent. For example, German infants show a considerably higher percentage of avoidant attachment (35%) in comparison to infants in the United States (21%), Great Britain (22%), and Japan (5%) (van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). This is in line with the values German parents tend to have of independence and encouragement of children to be non-clingy, and so these behaviours may reflect the cultural beliefs and practices (Grossman, Grossman, Spangler, Suess, & Unzner, 1985). In contrast to the western cultures of the United States and Great Britain, there are higher rates of children with anxious attachment in

Japan (27%), China (25%) and Israel (28%) (United States has a rate of 14% and Great Britain has a rate of 2%), likely due to respective child-rearing practices in correspondence with cultural values (van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). This suggests that the key principles of attachment are culturally universal, while considering that specific attachment behaviours may be expressed differently across cultural contexts (Grossman, et al. 2005).

Adult Attachment

Although Bowlby's theory of attachment concerned itself with a lifespan perspective, he focused primarily on the bonds that form between infants and their caregivers. It was not until the 1980s that the attachment perspective on adult's romantic relationships became an active topic of interest (Feeney, 2008). The infant attachment categories by Ainsworth et al. (1978) were adopted for adult attachment classifications by Mary Main and colleagues, although these adult patterns do not necessarily follow on directly from their corresponding childhood patterns (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) also applied an attachment perspective to adults and conceptualised love as a process of attachment. They introduced a three-category model of adult attachment styles: secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent based on a self-report measure. However, Hazan and Shaver (1987) similarly recognised that it was unlikely that their conceptualisation of adult attachment style corresponded with the exact attachment behaviour that Ainsworth and colleagues had observed in infants.

Bartholomew (1990) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) built on the initial work of applying an attachment perspective to adults (e.g. George et al., 1985; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and developed a four-group model of adult attachment. This model was

based on Bowlby's (1979) claims that attachment behaviours reflect internal working models of the self and of others. Bartholomew (1990) proposes that models of the self and others can each be dichotomised as positive or as negative. She also contends that the working model of self (positive or negative) can be combined with the working model of others (positive or negative) to define four adult attachment styles: secure, *preoccupied*, *dismissing* and *fearful* (see Figure 1). Similarly to childhood, each attachment pattern influences the manner in which individuals behave in significant relationships.

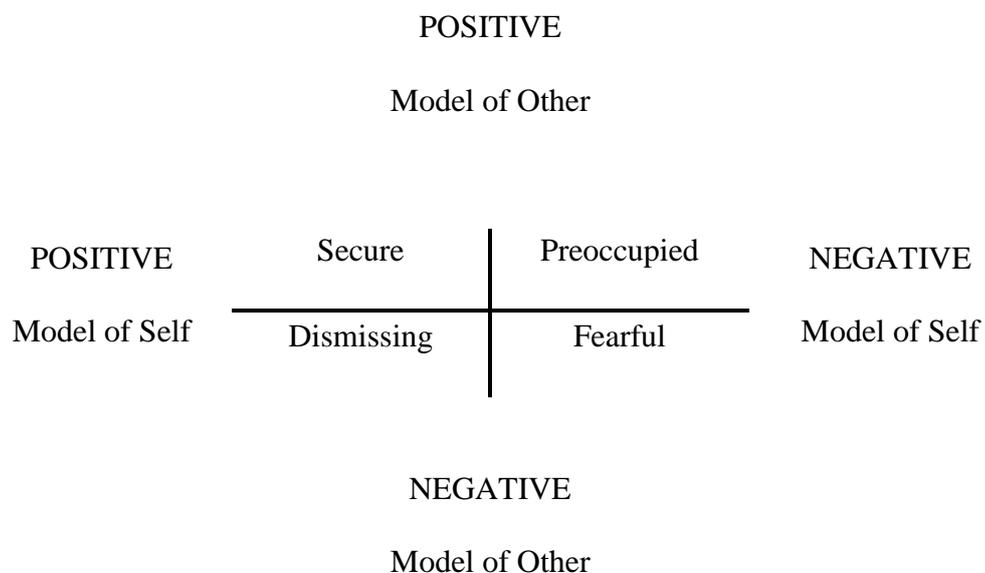


Figure 1: Four-group model of adult attachment (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994)

The internal working model of adults classified as secure is one with a positive view of the self and of others. These individuals feel comfortable with both autonomy and closeness; they are trusting of others and seek support and comfort when needed. Secure adults remember both the good and the bad, and have the ability to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, behaviour and situations without too much distortion. They tend to behave in a non-defensive manner. When secure adults do experience stress, they are

able to react in resilient ways such as thinking and acting flexibly, remaining calm and constructive, dealing with their negative emotions as well as with the source of these, and adopting problem-solving stances (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013; Feeney, 2008; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Howe, 2011).

The internal working model of adults classified as preoccupied (corresponding with anxious attachment) is one with a negative view of the self and a positive view of others. These individuals tend to have low self-esteem and a low sense of self-worth. They have a high need for obtaining and retaining access to their attachment figure, a low sense of autonomy and a fear of abandonment. Persistent feelings of anxiety and doubt may be expressed as anger, jealousy and possessiveness. Preoccupied individuals have low levels of resilience and are likely to focus on negative emotions and seek more support than partners are able or willing to provide (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013; Feeney, 2008; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Howe, 2011).

The internal working models of adults classified as dismissing (corresponding with avoidant attachment) is one with a positive view of the self and a negative view of others. These individuals tend to suppress attachment-related thoughts or emotions. When stressed, dismissing adults are likely to distance themselves and resolve their problems self-reliantly rather than seek support. They have a high sense of autonomy and a low need for closeness, showing discomfort with intimacy. Dismissing adults feel that the self is accepted by being competent in tasks and not making too many emotional demands on others – by being in control, rejection by others is avoided, thus losing control is unsettling (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013; Feeney, 2008; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Howe, 2011).

The internal working models of adults classified as fearful is one with a negative view of the self and of others. These tend to be individuals who have an unresolved state of mind around prior loss or trauma and are likely to experience significant problems with peers. Current stressors may trigger old distressing memories and emotions associated with the prior loss or trauma, to invade and disrupt present relationships. Fearful individuals have a low sense of trust and often display contradictory behaviours characterised by both preoccupied and dismissing styles in a haphazard and chaotic manner. Although these individuals intensely and anxiously seek intimacy and closeness, they lack confidence and greatly fear rejection and abandonment. Fearful adults may use defensive strategies such as withdrawal, aggression and contempt (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013; Feeney, 2008; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Howe, 2011).

Attachment patterns can also be measured along two orthogonal dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Fraley & Waller, 1998) (see Figure 2). A secure attachment style is characterised by low anxiety and low avoidance. A preoccupied attachment style is characterised by high anxiety and low avoidance. A dismissing attachment style is characterised by low anxiety and high avoidance. Finally, a fearful attachment style is characterised by high anxiety and high avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

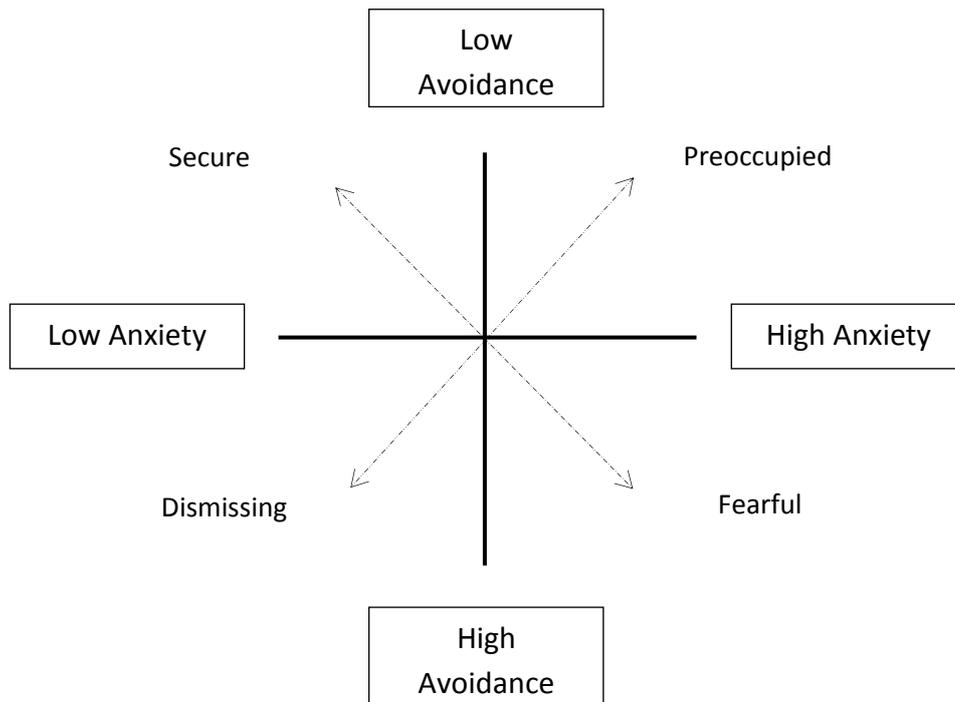


Figure 2: Avoidance and anxiety attachment dimensions in relation to Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) adult attachment styles (Fraley & Shaver, 2000).

This dimensional approach is another manner in which to understand adult attachment, including many issues relating to the regulation of emotion. In fact, some researchers regard attachment theory as a theory of affect regulation. They have proposed that the main function of affect regulation is the maintenance of emotional security (Cummings & Davies, 1996; Kobak & Sceery, 1988).

Adult Attachment and Emotion Regulation

A core matter in attachment theory is the manner in which the attachment system is involved in regulating negative emotions which arise as a response to the assessment of threats and dangers. As previously mentioned, Bowlby (1973) viewed proximity seeking as a primary strategy for regulating affect. This means that the availability, responsiveness and sensitivity of the attachment figure is considered to be one of the major sources of variation concerning strategies for affect regulation.

Shaver and Mikulincer (2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008) have proposed a three-component model of the activation and dynamics of the attachment system. The first component involves the monitoring and appraisal of threatening events, and is responsible for the activation of the primary attachment strategy of proximity seeking. The second component involves the monitoring and appraisal of an attachment figure's availability and responsiveness. This component is responsible for individual differences pertaining to attachment security.

Secure-based strategies of attachment rely on primary attachment strategies of seeking proximity to an attachment figure. An available, responsive and sensitive attachment figure promotes the formation of a sense of attachment security. This results in positive expectations about the availability of others and positive views of the self as competent and worthy. Major affect regulation strategies are organised around these positive beliefs, such as trusting others, acknowledging and displaying feelings. Secure strategies also include engaging in problem solving, seeking support and depending on others for support, as well as having the knowledge that distress is manageable (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003). These individuals are low on both the anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions and are like to be categorised as having a secure attachment style.

The third component of Shaver and Mikulincer's (2002) model involves the monitoring and appraisal of the feasibility of seeking proximity to an attachment figure as a way of coping with distress. This component is responsible for individual differences in the development of specific secondary attachment strategies of emotion regulation. This indicates the formation of an insecure bond with the attachment figure, and so these insecure-based strategies rely on secondary attachment strategies of seeking proximity to an attachment figure when they are deemed to be insufficiently

available or responsive. In turn, this biases an individual towards either an excessive preoccupation with maintaining proximity or towards a persistent avoidance of proximity in order to regulate emotion (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). These secondary strategies are characterised as *hyperactivating strategies* or *deactivating strategies*, and they each have a specific regulatory goal (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

The appraisal of proximity seeking as a feasible option can result in a hyperactivating strategy. Hyperactivating strategies involve a strong approach to attain proximity to an attachment figure and intense efforts to elicit their attention, protection and support through clinging and controlling behaviour. This is aimed at reducing distance between the individual and the attachment figure, with a view of oneself as helpless and incompetent. Hyperactivating strategies lead to persistent tendencies to be particularly vigilant to threats and continual worry about the availability and responsiveness of the attachment figure (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer et al., 2003). Individuals who use hyperactivating strategies to regulate emotion are higher on the anxious dimension and lower on the avoidant dimension, and are likely to be classified as having a preoccupied attachment style.

The appraisal of proximity seeking as a non-viable option can result in a deactivating strategy. Deactivating strategies involve inhibition of support seeking, and a determination to handle stressors alone. It also includes the suppression of, or the discounting of threats that might activate the attachment system so as to avoid frustration and further distress compounded by the unavailability of attachment figures. This strategy avoids closeness and intimacy, and maximises autonomy and distance from attachment figures. Deactivating strategies lead to continual propensities to ignore attachment figures, reject their offers of support, and a reduction in expressions of affection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer et al., 2003). Individuals who use

deactivating strategies to regulate emotion are higher on the avoidant dimension and lower on the anxious dimension, and are likely to be classified as having a dismissing attachment style.

Finally, a fearful pattern of attachment may use a combination of both hyperactivating and deactivating strategies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer et al., 2003). Individuals who use a combination of these secondary attachment strategies are high on both the anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions, and are likely to be classified as having a fearful attachment style.

Empirical Support for Emotion Regulation Strategies in Adult Attachment

There is an abundance of research that supports the understanding of emotion regulation in adults. In addition, there is extensive evidence that threats tend to activate proximity seeking and support seeking in some adults. This evidence is found in a variety of studies. Individuals who use the primary attachment strategy of emotion regulation tend to seek social support when experiencing stress rather than engaging in distancing behaviours or focusing solely on negative emotions (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Feeney, 1998; Mikulincer & Florian, 1995). Some of the literature on the primary strategy of emotion regulation is reviewed here.

Mikulincer and Florian (2000) found that in studies investigating people's heightened awareness of death, those with a secure classification intensified their proximity seeking efforts in contrast to insecure people. In addition, Mikulincer's (1998) study investigating anger found that individuals with a secure attachment style were less susceptible to become angry and expected more positive outcomes from anger episodes than did those with an insecure attachment style. Individuals with either an

anxious or avoidant attachment orientation reacted with more negative affect and stronger attribution of hostile intentions.

In other studies, such as on the transition of leaving home to go to university (Mayseless, Danieli, & Sharabany, 1996) and on separations at the airport (Fraley & Shaver, 1998), individuals using a secure attachment strategy behaved self-reliantly whilst simultaneously acknowledging appropriate separation distress. In contrast, individuals using an insecure hyperactivating attachment strategy demonstrated more distress and less self-reliance. Those individuals using an insecure deactivating strategy showed more denial of distress whilst scoring low on measures of well-being. These studies lend support to Brennan and Shaver's (1995) research, which found that individuals with anxious or avoidant attachment orientation were more likely than those with a secure attachment orientation to use alcohol, food and sex as a way to alleviate negative emotions.

Overall, the research evidence demonstrates that individuals who use secure attachment strategies are typically able to successfully regulate negative emotions. The research evidence also demonstrates that these individuals typically engage in proximity seeking and support seeking in mostly positive and effective manners, particularly in comparison to individuals who use secondary attachment strategies.

So far, the studies discussed have mainly focused on the primary secure attachment strategy; nevertheless, there are many studies which have explored the secondary insecure attachment strategies in the service of emotion regulation. Secondary attachment strategies of *hyperactivation* or *deactivation* include psychological defences against anxiety and pain caused by the attachment figure's unavailability. Each strategy is aimed at achieving a viable relationship with an

inconsistently available or consistently unavailable attachment figure. Therefore, although these strategies may be adaptive under certain circumstances, they end up being maladaptive when used in later relationships when a secure strategy would be more effective (Mikulincer, 2008). There is extensive evidence that individuals who use a secondary attachment strategy of emotion regulation inhibit or interfere with successful proximity seeking and support seeking, of which some studies are reviewed here.

For example, in Mayseless, Danieli, and Sharabany's (1996) study on the transition of leaving home to go to university, individuals using a deactivating strategy desisted from dealing with the separation. Conversely, individuals using a hyperactivating strategy reacted to the separation with intense distress, anxiety, rejection and self-blame. In addition, Mikulincer's (1998) study investigating anger found that the recollection of anger-inducing events of individuals with an anxious attachment orientation included uncontrollable amounts of angry feelings, incessant rumination on these angry feelings as well as despair and sadness following conflicts. In contrast, individuals with an avoidant attachment orientation did not explicitly report intense anger and used distancing strategies to cope with anger-inducing events. However, these individuals displayed intense physiological arousal during conflictual interaction, showing that they were indeed experiencing negative emotions at some level.

In another study, participants were asked to write continuously about their current thoughts and feelings whilst being asked to suppress thoughts about a romantic partner leaving them for someone else (Fraley & Shaver, 1997). They found that individuals with an anxious attachment orientation had poorer ability to suppress these thoughts. In contrast, they found that those with an avoidant attachment orientation had a greater ability to suppress these thoughts. Fraley and Shaver's (1997) findings

concerning individuals with an avoidant attachment orientation were replicated and extended by Mikulincer, Dolev, and Shaver (2004). Participants were asked to suppress thoughts about a painful separation from a romantic partner whilst writing about their current thoughts and feelings. Those with avoidant attachment orientations were successful at doing so. However, their ability to maintain these separation-related thoughts was disrupted when a cognitive load task (remembering a seven digit number) was added to the writing task. Under these conditions, individuals with an avoidant attachment orientation displayed thoughts of separation, demonstrating that the suppressed material resurfaced in their present experience and behaviour when there was a high cognitive demand made of them (Mikulincer et al., 2004). This suggests that negative emotions do affect people with avoidant attachment orientations, but these individuals use strategies effective in the suppression of distressing thoughts and feelings. However, when faced with a high emotional demand, these suppressed distressing experiences re-emerge.

Overall, individuals using a hyperactivating attachment strategy experience a higher intensity of emotions than do individuals who use a secure attachment strategy or a deactivating attachment strategy (Searle & Meara, 1999). They have learnt that displaying negative emotions increases the probability that they will receive the attention of their attachment figure. These individuals are unlikely to attempt to use self-regulation techniques as this would exemplify that they are capable and do not need their attachment figure's attention. Therefore, hyperactivating attachment strategies are usually successful at eliciting the attachment figure's care, to which the hyperactivating individual deems valuable (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008). However, these strategies are not always adaptive. For example, when the attachment figure is not present or available, individuals who use hyperactivating strategies are unlikely to be successful at

self-soothing. In fact, it is likely that their negative emotions will escalate in the absence of their attachment figure (Hünefeldt, Laghi, Ortu, & Balardinelli, 2013).

However, individuals using a deactivating attachment strategy inhibit their emotions in contrast to what individuals who use a secure attachment strategy or a hyperactivating strategy do. These individuals block conscious access to emotions and so avoid noticing their own emotional reactions. This is because these emotional states can activate unwanted attachment related needs. They have learnt that displaying negative emotions leads to rejection or punishment from their attachment figure (Cassidy, 1994). These individuals use coping strategies that involve distancing rather than seeking support and so tend to cope with stressful situations alone (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008).

A vast amount of evidence supports the application of the concepts of primary secure attachment strategy and secondary insecure attachment strategies to the understanding of emotion regulation in adults. However, there is a lack of consistency with regard to the measurement of attachment. For example, the number and names for attachment categories differ, making it difficult to compare findings (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Further, most studies have relied on self-report measures of attachment style, which also do not converge with other measures of attachment, such as interviews. This indicates that more research is needed in order to clarify the meaning of the various measures and their associations with emotion regulation (Mikulincer, 2008). This is discussed in more detail in a later section in this chapter on measures in attachment theory research.

Furthermore, the reviewed research has so far focused on attachment strategies and styles at the individual level. However, they can also be understood in the context

of relational behaviours at the dyadic level in adult attachment, such as in couple relationships. This is discussed in more depth in the following section.

Adult Attachment and Couple Relationships

As previously discussed, the functions of attachment behaviours are proximity seeking and maintenance, as well as eliciting a safe haven and secure base during times of need. Researchers have argued that these functions also apply to adult attachment behaviour (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

In romantic relationships, an individual searches for closeness and proximity to their partner. During times of distress, the partner is turned to for comfort and support (safe haven). The partner can be used as a base from which to explore the environment (secure base). In contrast to childhood, adult attachment does not necessarily require physical contact with the partner as they can be represented internally (Castellano, Velotti, & Zavattini, 2010).

The attachment system is interrelated with the caregiving system, and is usually activated when a partner asks for help. This system functions to provide protection against threat and offer a sense of security through a series of behaviours. One of these behaviours is offering a safe haven to the other partner, who then experiences the other as responding to their need for security. The other behaviour is providing a secure base to the other partner, who is then supported to explore the environment (Castellano et al., 2010). In couple relationships, each partner functions as an attachment figure for the other. This means that the attachment system and caregiving system is bi-directional and reciprocal. Each partner can both seek and provide care and comfort, and so adult partners enact both care-seeking and care-giving behaviours, depending on which partner is in a state of need at any given time (Howe, 2011). Further, this suggests that

the capacity of each partner to move between depending and being depended upon is contingent on the security of the couple relationship as a unit. For this reason, it is important to understand the behaviour of one partner in relation to that of the other (Clulow, 2001).

Attachment and caregiving behaviours are an interpersonal process. Firstly, the care-seeker sends some form of signal through behaviour, and secondly the care-giver responds to the care-seeker's signal (Castellano et al., 2010). However, the type of signal given by the care-seeker and the care-giver's interpretation of this signal is dependent on each partner's attachment security. For example, the signal indicating distress in the care-seeker may be searching for closeness (secure attachment behaviour/primary attachment strategy), intensive worry (anxious attachment behaviour/secondary hyperactivating attachment strategy), or denial of upset feelings (avoidant attachment behaviour/secondary deactivating attachment strategy). In turn, the care-giver's interpretation to these signals may be sensitively receptive and appropriately soothing without being stifling (secure attachment behaviour/primary attachment strategy), overly sensitive and indiscriminately interpretation of all communications as requests for help (anxious attachment behaviour/secondary hyperactivating attachment strategy), or unreceptive to their partner's distress (avoidant attachment behaviour/secondary deactivating attachment strategy). As each partner of the couple bring their own attachment and care-giving behaviours, it is important to understand these phenomena at both the individual and the dyadic level. These are discussed in more detail in the ensuing sections.

Secure Couple Attachment

Sensitive partners provide comfort and support at times of need and distress, offering a safe haven. Partners turn to each other for support and understanding, especially during times of anxiety, stress or distress. They can express dependency needs as well as having the ability to tolerate each other's dependency. Secure partners also provide a secure base from which the other is able to explore (e.g. work, ambitions, interests, skills). Secure partners validate each other's sense of worth and confidence. In addition, they are comfortable with intimacy but are also happily independent when the situation requires it. Finally, secure couples tend to experience less conflict than insecure couples. Secure partners are generally good at acknowledging the conflict and its source, as well as voicing their own feelings and attending to those of their partner (Fisher & Crandell, 2001; Howe, 2011). Relationship security can be predicted when both partners of the couple respond sensitively to each other's signals and provide each other with a safe haven and a secure base (Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2006). The couple relationship is symmetrical and reciprocal in its care-giving and care-receiving capacities, and is likely to be mutually satisfying.

Insecure Couple Attachment

The patterns of insecure attachment share a lack of flexible bi-directionality and reciprocity in care-seeking and care-giving abilities within the couple relationship. There is a marked degree of asymmetry and rigidity within the relationship. Typically, one partner will be positioned as care-giver and the other as care-receiver, with little interchange between these positions (Fisher & Crandell, 2001). Nevertheless, each insecure pattern of attachment has different implications for the couple relationship, and is discussed below in turn as well as in combination with the other attachment patterns.

Anxious Attachment Behaviour

Anxious partners tend to feel and express their emotions in heightened and exaggerated forms. They tend to switch rapidly between the strong expression of positive and negative feelings, driven by an anxious need to be loved, to be reassured and to never be abandoned. Anxious partners have a continual fear that their partner will leave them. They are afraid of granting their partner more autonomy for fear that they will turn their interests elsewhere. The anxiety this fear of abandonment causes results in exaggerated helplessness which discourages partners from behaving independently (Howe, 2011). They also fail to be independent and cling anxiously to relationships, even when they are clearly unsatisfactory (Davila & Bradbury, 2001). Anxious partners are keen to be seen as carers and as responding to their partner's emotional needs, but they tend to get caught up in their own anxieties. This results in provision of care that is intrusive, controlling and not in tune with their partner's actual needs (Collins et al., 2006).

Anxious/anxious couple attachment. If both partners are anxiously attached, there is likely to be a persistent feeling of deprivation with a simultaneous belief that the other can never meet their comfort needs. They demand emotional contact from each other but remain unsatisfied and angry in relation to the sought contact, resisting the very support they strive for (Fisher & Crandell, 2001). Both partners compete for support and attention to meet their unappeasable needs, whilst simultaneously rejecting responses as being inadequate. Thus, there is a high level of disagreement and conflict within the couple relationship. Within an anxious/anxious couple relationship, each partner strives for the dependent position and so the relationship is uni-directional and asymmetrical in its care-giving capacities (Fisher & Crandell, 2001). The couple relationship is likely to be dissatisfying.

Avoidant Attachment Behaviour

Avoidant partners find emotional closeness within their couple relationship to be uncomfortable. Although they may desire to be in a relationship, they feel anxiety about becoming too close and involved. Therefore, avoidant individuals tend to be emotionally controlling of themselves and of their partner. They tend to minimise or deny feelings of distress or upset, both in themselves and in their partner. This is because of their understanding that strong feelings lead to rejection and pain, or loss of control (Howe, 2011). The avoidant partner is less likely to feel comforted by their partner, especially during stressful situations. They are also less likely to seek support. Avoidant partners rarely risk becoming emotionally dependent on their partner (Feeney & Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Avoidant/avoidant couple attachment. If both partners are avoidantly attached, it is likely that there is extreme sensitivity to any expressions of dependency within the couple relationship. If there are expressions of dependency, it arouses the other's own dependency needs that have been banished from consciousness. Making emotional demands is likely to lead to rejection and pain, and must be avoided by being self-reliant and not displaying need or vulnerability. Thus, in a mutually avoidant couple relationship, neither is dependent on the other. However, if this defensive system breaks down, episodes of anger and resentment may erupt in other seemingly unprovoked contexts within the couple relationship (Fisher & Crandell, 2001; Howe, 2011). Within an avoidant/avoidant couple relationship, each partner denies their needs, thus shying away from the dependent position. The relationship is uni-directional and asymmetrical in its care-giving capacities. Further, the couple relationship is likely to be dissatisfying.

Anxious/avoidant couple attachment. If one partner is anxiously attached and the other is avoidantly attached, there is likely to be a high level of conflict within the couple relationship. The anxious partner typically expresses their discontent, with the avoidant partner dismissing the discontent. The avoidant partner is likely to attack the dependency needs of the anxious partner. The anxious partner may feel persistently deprived and emotionally abandoned and express this in an exaggerated form. The avoidant partner may show disdain towards these dependency needs. In turn, the anxious partner may escalate and intensify the expression of their dependency needs, and so the avoidant partner's defensive response also escalates and intensifies. Due to this polarised manner of relating, there is likely to be a high level of conflict and dissatisfaction within the couple relationship (Fisher & Crandell, 2001).

Secure/Insecure Couple Attachment

When a securely attached partner is paired with either an anxiously or avoidantly attached partner, the secure partner is able to act flexibly in both the care-giver and care-seeker position. However, the insecure partner is likely to act in a rigid uni-directional manner. Nevertheless, it may be that the insecure partner experiences a continual corrective emotional environment which may mean that they are able to engage in their couple relationship in a more balanced and flexible manner in relation to care-giving and care-seeking. However, it may also be the case that the secure partner experiences a persistently destructive environment and becomes more inflexible and unbalanced in relation to care-giving and care-seeking (Fisher & Crandell, 2001).

Empirical Support for Adult Attachment in Couple Relationships

Attachment research has often focused on attachment as an individual trait; however taking a more integrative approach suggests that romantic attachment should

be studied as a relational construct. This is due to the expectation that the attachment behaviours of both partners work in conjunction to influence couple relationship satisfaction and patterns of interaction within the couple (Feeney, 2002). As previously discussed, the different combination of the partners' attachment behaviours suggests that partners understand their relationships differently.

There is extensive evidence that demonstrates a link between couple attachment security and the quality of the couple relationship. Some of the findings are discussed here.

Couple relationship satisfaction may be a joint product of both partners' attachment behaviours (Alexandrov, Cowan, & Cowan, 2005). Several studies have demonstrated that partner attachment and relationship satisfaction are related aspects of relationship quality (e.g. Collins & Read, 1990; Sümer & Cozzarelli, 2004). Individuals with secure attachments tend to be more satisfied with their romantic relationship. Indeed, the most typical finding is that couples where both partners are classified as secure have more adaptive functioning than couples where one or both partners are classified as insecure do (e.g. Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, & Pearson 1992; Creasey, 2002). Secure attachment is associated with less defensive behaviour, more positive perceptions about the partner and more optimism about the anticipated support they from the partner, in contrast to insecure attachment (Feeney, 2003).

Tidwell, Reis, and Shaver (1996) found that individuals with a secure style displayed higher levels of intimacy and enjoyment and lower levels of negative emotion in their interactions with romantic partners than did insecure individuals. In addition, Brennan and Bosson (1998) found that individuals with a secure style reacted positively to feedback from their partners, valuing and relying on this feedback in contrast to

insecure individuals. Finally, Kobak and Hazan (1991) explored attachment orientations of both partners of couple relationships, and their interactive behaviour whilst engaging in collaboration tasks. They found that secure partners were more supportive and less rejecting than were insecure individuals. Secure partners also reported higher dyadic satisfaction than insecure partners. These studies illustrate that secure attachment is related to higher quality and satisfaction within the couple relationship in contrast to insecure attachment.

However, these studies have focused on the attachment orientations of one partner of the couple and on their perception of their couple relationship. There is some research which has aimed to understand how both partners' attachment behaviours interact within the couple relationship. For example, Creasey (2002) found that couples made up of a secure woman, and either a secure or insecure man, displayed more positive attachment behaviours than did couples with an insecure woman. Further, he found that couples made up of an insecure man, and either a secure or insecure woman, displayed more negative attachment behaviours during conflict than couples with a secure man. However, gender alone does not guarantee the manifestation of positive or negative attachment behaviours within couple relationships.

Cohn et al. (1992) found that couples where both partners were secure, and couples which were made up of one secure and one insecure partner, did not differ in their interactions as rated by observers. However, both these groups exhibited less conflict and were rated as better functioning than were couples where both partners were insecure. The findings suggest that the attitude and behaviour of the secure partner may lessen the impact of the insecure partner on the quality of the couple relationship (Cohn et al., 1992).

Another study explored attachment type at the level of the couple. Senchak and Leonard (1992) explored the marital adjustment in couple relationships through self-report measures. They grouped together couples where both partners were secure, couples where both partners were insecure, and couples which contained one secure and one insecure partner (mixed). Senchak and Leonard (1992) found that secure couples displayed better relationship functioning, more reports of intimacy, less partner withdrawal and less verbal aggression in response to conflict than did insecure and mixed couples. Mixed couples showed similar marital adjustment to insecure couples (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). These findings suggest that the attitude and behaviour of the insecure partner in the mixed couple may have a superseding influence on the quality of the couple relationship.

This is in contrast to Cohn et al.'s (1992) findings, where mixed couples (one secure partner and one insecure partner) were rated as similar to secure couples rather than to insecure couples. It may be that this disparity in findings is due to the different measures used (self-report against both self-report and observer's ratings of couple interaction). Further, in Senchak and Leonard's (1992) study, the unit of analysis was the overall couple relationship and thus it remains unclear what the specific role of each partner within the couple relationship is, making it difficult to support this conclusion. In contrast, Cohn et al.'s (1992) study examined both the individual and the couple relationship, which suggests that it had a more robust design and therefore more valid findings. Furthermore, Cohn et al.'s (1992) findings were supported by a more recent study conducted by Alexandrov et al., (2005). They also used both self-report and observer's rating of couple interaction and found that mixed couples reported greater relationship satisfaction than insecure couples. This finding, again, suggests that there may be a buffering effect against the impact of the insecure partner on the quality of the

couple relationship. These findings point to the need to clarify patterns of stability and change in attachment organisation and behaviours. This includes understanding further the intra-individual and the inter-individual processes that shape these attachment patterns and behaviours (Feeney, 2008). Attachment stability and change is considered further in the next section of this chapter.

The studies discussed so far (Alexandrov et al., 2005; Cohn et al., 1992; Creasey, 2002; Senchak & Leonard, 1992) did not analyse the different attachment combinations within couple relationships. This means that the couple relationship as the unit of analysis was limited to the broad categories of attachment security, insecurity or mixed security and insecurity. Although these studies have enabled some general insight to attachment behaviours within couple relationships, they do not distinguish between the various different forms of relating within insecure dyads (e.g. anxious/avoidant attachment) or mixed dyads (e.g. secure/avoidant attachment), and their implication for the quality of the relationship. Nevertheless, each attachment orientation represents individual differences in how a partner may behave within and understand their couple relationship. These behaviours and understandings can be very different from one another, suggesting a need for more in-depth inquiry into these complex relational processes.

Another important issue is whether attachment patterns and behaviours are properties of individuals or of relationships (Kobak, 1994). Some studies have investigated the consistency of attachment across different types of relationships, and these have corroborated that partner attachment is relationship specific rather than a stable personality trait (e.g. Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996; Lehnart & Neyer, 2006). In Ainsworth's studies using the SST, she found that the same infant could behave securely with one caregiver and insecurely with another. They

could also elicit different responses from the same person, signifying that security is a feature of relatedness rather than a fixed personality characteristic (Clulow, 2001).

Adults also seem to use more than one attachment strategy; someone can habitually behave securely but behave in a more preoccupied or anxious manner when feeling threatened or stressed. Attachment behaviours can and do change when relationships change, and thus can be thought of as continuous rather than absolute (Johnson, 2003).

Further, Alexandrov et al. (2005) found that scales of secure and insecure adult attachment overlapped partially. This level of interrelatedness is consistent with a view of couple attachment as a multidimensional construct, in which security and insecurity are not thought of as mutually exclusive attachment styles or categories. Rather, each partner's attachment styles can be simultaneously characterised by levels of security, avoidance and anxiety. This suggests that multiple working models of attachment may be operating within a single individual with respect to a particular relationship, and it is not necessary to reduce a complex phenomenon to a mutually exclusive and simplistic category.

Furthermore, working models may also change as individuals arrive at new understandings or new interpretations of their past experiences, particularly those that are attachment related (Feeney & Noller, 1996). Feeney (1999) calls for further investigation regarding these matters through longitudinal studies that follow couples over the course of long-term relationships. This would likely broaden and contribute to the existing understanding of adult attachment and couple relationships.

Attachment Stability and Change

Attachment orientation is considered to be only moderately stable throughout one's life (Fraley, 2002) and can vary due to life circumstances (Waters, Merrick,

Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000). One of the key considerations in attachment theory regards the influence of early attachments on other relationships.

According to Bowlby (1979) “there is a strong causal relationship between an individual’s experiences with his parents and his later capacity to make affectional bonds” (p. 135). This means that Bowlby considered that early childhood experiences with attachment figures (*attachment history*) strongly influence later attachment experiences, such as in romantic relationships. He further specified that internal working models are the mechanisms that cause this influence (Bowlby, 1979). There are various ways of considering the manner in which attachment history may affect the organisation of internal working models which underlie attachment orientations and behaviours. In assessing the influence of how much weight past early attachments have on current attachment dynamics, a distinction has been drawn between *continuous* and *discontinuous* developmental models.

The developmental model of *continuity*, or the *prototype perspective*, views the past as a necessary and sufficient condition whereby an adult’s current internal working models have developed in a fairly linear and continuous manner. This perspective assumes that early attachment representations remain unchanged and play a direct role in influencing relational experiences later in life. As such, it contributes the understanding that there is a stable factor underlying temporary variations in attachment dynamics throughout the lifespan. This allows for the possibility that attachment patterns and behaviours will be highly stable from infancy to adulthood (Fraley, 2002). This stance aligns itself with the view that early attachment relationships provide the model for current romantic attachment relationships (Castellano et al., 2010).

In contrast, the developmental model of revision or continuity/*discontinuity*, or the *revisionist perspective*, views the past as a necessary but insufficient condition. An adult's internal working models assimilate new experiences into frameworks of earlier attachments, and accommodate these into the internal working models of the current relationship. This perspective assumes that early attachment representations are revised and updated in light of ongoing experience and consequently may or may not correspond to later attachment representations. Therefore, this perspective is capable of predicting both stability and change (Fraley, 2002). This model maintains a balance between continuity and flexibility (Castellano et al., 2010).

The literature concerning these models has been ambiguous, suggesting that a consensus has not yet been reached regarding attachment stability over time. For example, several studies have shown that attachment patterns persist throughout life with little change (e.g. Fraley & Brumbaugh, 2004).

Fraley (2002) conducted the first meta-analysis investigating the continuity of attachment styles. He analysed 27 articles which examined attachment stability in five separate time intervals from 12 months of age to 19 years of age. Attachment continuity was stronger at closer time intervals (e.g. age one to four, and one to six) with a rapid decrease at longer intervals (e.g. age 1 to 19) (Fraley, 2002). Further, a more recent meta-analysis conducted by Pinquart et al. (2013) examined attachment stability across a period of time. This ranged from 1 year of age to 27 years of age, and they found no significant attachment continuity when time intervals exceeded 15 years.

The findings of these studies support the model of continuity, or the prototype perspective, regarding attachment stability. Both studies report moderate stability of attachment styles over time albeit with significant inconsistencies when longer time

intervals are assessed (Fraley, 2002; Piquart et al., 2013). This makes it difficult to establish any causal inference to support models of attachment stability over time.

Waters et al. (2000) measured attachment at 12 months of age and then when participants were 20-22 years of age. They found that 64% of participants were given the same attachment classification, while 36% of participants changed classifications. Hamilton (2000) supports these results with his findings that 77% of participants aged 17-19 were assigned the same attachment classification as when they were one year of age. However, both studies found that negative life events (e.g. loss of a parent, parental divorce, life-threatening parent or child illness, parental psychiatric disorder or physical/sexual abuse by family member) were associated with changes in attachment classifications to insecurity, or the maintenance of already established patterns of insecurity.

These findings support the idea that external factors such as life events have a strong influence on attachment stability between infancy and adulthood (McConnell & Moss, 2011). This is in line with Bowlby's (1973) assumption that changes in attachment styles are likely to occur when individuals face life-altering events that expose them to new information that either reinforces or contradicts the core assumptions of their internal working models. These events represent significant changes in a person's social environment that may disconfirm existing models (Collins & Read, 1994). These findings support the model of revision or continuity/discontinuity regarding attachment stability, and illustrate the significant impact that life events can have.

Simpson, Collins, Farrell, and Raby (2015) extend the support for the model of revision or continuity/discontinuity with their longitudinal study spanning 35 years

across individual's lifespans. They found that adult attachment relationships are not the direct or sole product of early parent-child relationship experiences. Instead, adult attachment relationships reflect the accumulation and combination of their relational history, rather than being completely governed by their past or current life circumstances. Once relationships are formed, individuals' cumulative relational histories guide their interpersonal dynamics regarding relationship maintenance (Simpson et al., 2007), including representations of their romantic partner (Haydon, Collins, Salvatore, Simpson, & Roisman, 2012), emotional experiences (Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007), and emotion regulation capabilities (Salvatore, Kuo, Steele, Simpson, & Collins, 2011).

As previous research supports that attachment is open to change and is not necessarily stable (e.g. Hamilton, 2000; McConnell & Moss, 2011; Waters et al., 2000), it is important to consider that adults who share an attachment bond in a couple relationship may function in a coordinated manner (Sbarra & Hazan, 2008). This means that attachment relationships may serve *co-regulatory* functions, where individuals within a dyad adjust themselves in interaction with their partner in order to maintain a regulated state. This suggests that when one partner's sense of security increases or decreases, so might the other partner's sense of security. Co-regulation further indicates that partners can serve as anchors that affect each other's sense of security (Sbarra & Hazan, 2008).

Hudson, Fraley, Brumbaugh and Vicary (2014) investigated attachment security in couple relationships at five intervals over a year-long period. They found positive correlations in the partners' attachment security across time. This means that if one partner experienced increases in avoidance at a particular time, their partner was also likely to experience increases in avoidance. These findings indicate that attachment

needs to be understood in terms of dyadic processes (Hudson et al., 2014). This kind of coordinated change supports the idea that internal working models in romantic relationships fluctuate and update in response to ongoing relational events (Bowlby, 1969).

Nevertheless, Hudson et al.'s (2014) study did not collect data on the specific events that couples experienced or on the salience of these events for the couples. However, Davila and Sargent (2003) found that the subjective meanings individuals give to life events is associated with changing levels of security, rather than the objective features of the event itself. This demonstrates the importance of understanding how people construe their life events to best comprehend the impact of those life events on views of the self and others. However, Davila and Sargent's (2003) study focused exclusively on perceptions of loss; nevertheless other life events (positive or negative), and their ascribed meanings may affect attachment stability and change in different ways. One such life event is the transition to parenthood.

The Transition to Parenthood

Bowlby (1988) believed that the transition to parenthood was a salient time during which changes in attachment orientations were likely to occur. This is because the emotionally and interpersonally demanding nature of having a child may make individuals more receptive to reviewing and revising their internal working models. This event can also revive significant attachment-related memories that may make individuals more receptive to re-evaluating and updating their current views of self and others (Bowlby, 1988).

Becoming a parent has been identified as a complex process and challenging transition for couples, involving major changes in their lives and in their couple

relationship. The transition to parenthood is often stressful (Kohn et al., 2012). Some studies have found that relationship satisfaction and individual wellbeing in some couple relationships remains stable, and can actually increase for other couples (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrère, 2000).

Nevertheless, many new parents experience declines in relationship satisfaction during this period (Mitnick, Heyman, & Slep, 2009). There is consistent evidence that parenthood has a detrimental effect on couple relationship satisfaction. For example, studies have shown that during the transition to parenthood there are sudden changes, such as in child care and the division of household chores (MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990), less time to spend with each other (Crawford & Huston, 1993), increases in conflict and decreases in relationship quality (Huston & Vangelisti, 1995), sustained declines in subjective wellbeing (Clark, Diener, Georgellis, & Lucas, 2008) and decreases in relationship functioning (Doss, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009).

However, there seems to be some variability in how couples respond to this stressful life event. Some couples do not appear to experience as much difficulty during this transition as others (Belsky & Rovine, 1990). Further, within those couples who do experience decreases in relationship quality, some are better able to recover from such declines than others (Cox, Paley, Burchinal, & Payne, 1999). Issues of attachment security are likely to become particularly salient as the couple relationship accommodates the presence of a new and highly dependent individual. Substantial changes may take place in the attachment system of each partner of the couple (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals with different attachment styles experience changes in relational quality during the transition to parenthood in distinctive ways (e.g. Paley, Cox, Harter, & Margand, 2002).

For example, Velotti, Castellano and Zavattini (2011) found dyadic adjustment levels following the transition to first-time parenthood were lower than when compared to non-parents (controls). Individuals rated as having insecure attachment representations reported having the worst adjustment levels across the transition. These findings were supported by Castellano, Velotti, Crowell, and Zavattini's (2014) in a later study which found that secure individuals reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction during the transition to parenthood. They also found that, in contrast, insecure individuals reported lower satisfaction levels (Castellano et al., 2014).

Kohn et al. (2012) found that anxiously attached individuals were less satisfied when they perceived threats to their couple relationship across the transition to parenthood. They also found that avoidantly attached individuals reported less satisfaction when they perceived threats to their independence. Furthermore, Kohn et al. (2012) demonstrated that couple relationship satisfaction across the transition to parenthood was also affected by the individuals' partners. Individuals were less satisfied with their couple relationship when their partners perceived that they were receiving less support. This was particularly the case if the partners were high in anxiety. When individuals perceived family demand to be high, they also reported less satisfaction, especially if they had avoidant partners (Kohn et al., 2012).

In another study, Ferriby, Kotila, Kamp Dush, and Schoppe-Sullivan (2015) found that avoidant individuals experienced a significant decline in commitment following the birth. Partners of these avoidant individuals also experienced decreases in commitment. The findings also showed that anxious fathers experienced increases in felt constraint, and their partners experienced declines in commitment across the transition to parenthood (Ferriby et al., 2015).

These findings suggest that partners with unmet attachment needs have an adverse impact on the satisfaction of the other partner. This illustrates that the consequences of one partner's unmet attachment needs are dyadic, affecting both partners. The transition to parenthood is a stressful event, requiring ongoing adjustments at both individual and dyadic levels. These findings highlight the need to examine this phenomenon at the dyadic level.

Additionally, changes in relational quality across the transition to parenthood tend to be experienced somewhat differently depending on gender; for example, women tend to experience changes more swiftly than men do (Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008). Castellano et al. (2014) found that women appeared to be less satisfied than men across the transition to parenthood. In addition, Simpson, Rholes, Campbell and Wilson (2003) measured attachment styles in couples before and after the birth of their first child. They found that women became more ambivalent across the transition if they perceived having less partner support as they entered parenthood. Women who initially rated high in avoidance became more avoidant across the transition, although men who rated themselves as providing more prenatal support became less avoidant across the transition. These findings further illustrate the importance of exploring the transition to parenthood at the dyadic level as men and women appear to experience it somewhat differently.

Furthermore, earlier relational histories appear to be particularly important for couple relationship adjustment during the transition to parenthood. Experiences in past relationships (e.g. with parents) can affect couple relationship quality after a child is born. Cowan and Cowan (2000) found perceptions of greater conflict in one or both partners' families of origin was associated with declines in relationship satisfaction across the transition to parenthood. In addition, Belsky and Isabella (1985) found that

individuals who reported being raised in rejecting and emotionally distant families of origin viewed their couple relationships in ways that became more discrepant from their partners' views over the transition period.

Nevertheless, few studies have been conducted that explore the role that attachment history plays on the transition to parenthood. The few that have been carried out have focused on outcomes rather than the manner in which attachment history affects current attachment behaviours at the dyadic level across this salient life event. This demonstrates the need to understand current adult attachment across the transition to parenthood in the context of early attachment history.

Although the transition to first-time parenthood has been investigated extensively, there are few studies which examine the transition to second-time parenthood. As discussed, couple relationship quality declines when couples become parents, however this decline continues with additional children (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983). This suggests that it is also important to explore couple relationship quality and attachment when parents have more than one child.

The Transition to Second-time Parenthood

Most of the literature focuses on the transition to first-time parenthood. A significant shortfall in the research on the transition to parenthood is the near absence of exploration on the couple relationship when becoming parents to more than one child, which may affect couple relationships in different ways.

Nichols, Roux, and Harris (2007) explored the experiences of 100 married women during the prenatal period. Fifty of the women were experiencing their first pregnancy (*primigravid*), while the other 50 women had been pregnant multiple times

(*multigravid*). Nichols, Roux and Harris (2007) found significantly lower levels of marital satisfaction in multigravid women in comparison to primigravid mothers. The findings suggest that they had less time to focus on their couple relationship and so felt less content with it. Nichols, Roux and Harris' (2007) findings illustrate that even just in the pregnancy period, there are differences in couple relationship quality when there is more than one child.

Walz and Rich (1983) found that during the postpartum hospital stay, second-time mothers felt that their relationship with their partners could wait while they focused on their children. These findings suggest that the addition of a second child to the family placed an added strain on the couple relationship. Additionally, Moss (1981) interviewed women who had given birth to more than one child on the third day after the birth. She found that one of the women's main areas of concern was meeting the needs of the family and being a good mother. Hiser (1987) built on these findings with her study which also interviewed women who had given birth to more than one child, 10 to 14 days after the birth. Hiser (1987) also demonstrated that these mothers' main area of concern was meeting the needs of the family.

Although the aforementioned research investigates the transition to becoming parents to more than one child, these studies are around three decades old and thus may be outdated. Further, they focus on the short period of time following the birth which is likely to be a considerable time of adjustment for the family as well as for the mothers. Therefore, it would be of interest to explore the subsequent period of time following the immediate aftermath of the birth of the second child.

More recently, O'Reilly (2004) interviewed 10 women about the meaning of the transition to second-time motherhood. The women had a second child between the ages

of six months and two years. O'Reilly (2004) found most of the themes revolved around seeking to achieve and maintain a new balance in the family by making adjustments in their role as mothers. However, one of the themes centred around maintenance of the couple relationship. The mothers experienced a change in their couple relationship, with additional strain being placed upon it. They realised that they should spend more time with their partners, although this was not a priority for them. These women also felt that spending time together as a family was more important than spending time alone with their husbands, and were pleased if they could maximise that time. Nevertheless, the mothers appreciated their partner's support. Boulton's (1983) study of mothers of two children also emphasised the significance of their partner's support.

In another study, Munn (1991) investigated mothers' self-evaluations of their performances as mothers. She found that mothers felt as though they were not performing as well with their second child as they did with their first, although there were no differences in one child being more difficult than the other. Munn (1991) also found that apart from developing a relationship with each child at the same time, mothers also develop a different type of relationship with each of her children. Additionally, Frost (2006) found that mothers make use of knowledge they gained from the experience of having their first child to form their expectations for having their second child, and that mothers consider having a second child as a second opportunity for motherhood. Frost (2006) also found that having space exclusively for themselves was important for the mothers as the second child became less dependent and the relationship between the two children starts to develop.

Although these studies provide insight to the experiences of mothers to two children, they focus on role of motherhood to the exclusion of the couple relationship. Nevertheless, this is an important aspect to consider as the partners are likely to be the

mothers' attachment figures and main support system across the stressful life event that the transition to second-time parenthood entails.

Krieg (2007) compared the transition to first-time motherhood in 40 women with the transition to second-time motherhood in 42 women. The mothers participated when they were in the third trimester of pregnancy and then again one month after the birth. Krieg (2007) found that satisfaction with the frequency of positive activities within the couple relationship declined over time for both first- and second-time mothers. However, no changes were reported in negative activities, or in positive or negative feelings about the relationship for either first- or second-time mothers. In addition, Krieg (2007) found that second-time mothers reported greater role differentiation in the household and family, but had relatively stable satisfaction with this. In contrast, first-time mothers reported being more dissatisfied with their changed marital roles. Stress associated with the relationship the mother has with her partner was higher after the birth of both the first and second child. However, since changes in the couple relationship do vary for first- and second-time mothers, the sources of stress seem to be different. This suggests that the couple relationship may buffer stress for second-time mothers.

Krieg's (2007) study demonstrates some of the differences in experiences of first- and second-time mothers in the context of their couple relationship, illustrating the significance of needing further research into the transition to second-time parenthood. Furthermore, these findings show that across the transition to second-time parenthood, there is an impact on other family members such as on the fathers, who also influence the mothers' adjustment. This highlights the need for studies to include both mothers' and fathers' experiences of the couple relationship across this life event in order to provide further understanding into this phenomenon.

As discussed, the few studies that have looked at second-time parenthood tend to focus on the mothers' transition to having more than one child rather than on both partners of the couple. To the best of my knowledge, there have only been two studies that examined the processes by which family members adjust to the birth of the second child. Stewart (1990) followed 41 families longitudinally from the pregnancy of the second child to 12 months postpartum. He found that although mothers become active parents from the birth of their first child, fathers showed a larger interest in family life after the birth of the second child. Fathers also assumed greater responsibility in childcare and household tasks during this time. Stewart's (1990) research shows that fathers also have different experiences when they transition to second-time fatherhood than when transitioning to first-time fatherhood. This also impacts on family life as a whole. Nevertheless, this research is almost three decades old and the findings may therefore be at risk of being outdated.

Much more recently, Vollig, Oh, Gonzalez, Kuo, and Yu (2015) conducted a longitudinal study which aimed to identify patterns of marital change across the transition to second-time parenthood in 230 couples. The study included five time-points of data collection, starting in the third trimester of pregnancy of the second child, and then subsequently at one, four, eight, and 12 months after the child's birth. Each partner of the couple completed a battery of questionnaires at each interval, and the couples were also observed engaging in a 10 minute discussion together about their day at the first time-point. These observations were then rated.

Vollig et al. (2015) found that in general, couples experienced a period of adjustment at one month postpartum, with declines in the quality of their relationship. However, by the four month time-point, couples had adapted with marital quality returning to pre-birth levels.

Although this was their overall finding, Vollig et al. (2015) also found variations in the impact on the couple relationship the transition to second-time parenthood had. The majority of couples ($n = 101$) had little difficulty managing the transition to second-time parenthood, with both partners reporting high levels of marital positivity at the prenatal time-point. Although there was a relatively small, but significant decline in wives' marital positivity over time, there was no change in husbands' marital positivity throughout the first year after the birth of the second child.

Other couples experienced more difficulties managing the transition to second-time parenthood. Another large group of couples ($n = 79$) also reported high levels of marital positivity at the prenatal time-point, but experienced more disruptive changes to their relationship after the birth. Wives reported a steady increase in marital negativity over time. Their husbands reported a decline in marital quality following the birth, but this returned to pre-birth levels by the four month time-point.

A smaller group of couples experienced the most difficulties across the transition ($n = 12$) where the wives reported very low levels of marital quality prenatally. They subsequently reported significant improvements in marital quality over the year following the birth, but this was still lower in comparison to the previously discussed groups. In contrast, their husbands reported declines in marital positivity over this same period, with a sudden decrease at the one month time-point and an improvement at the four month time-point. However, husband's reports of marital quality remained unchanged to the end of the year, and it was still lower than their wives'.

Another group also experienced relative difficulties across the transition to second-time parenthood ($n = 17$). Wives reported an initial decrease in marital

negativity prenatally to the one month time-point, followed by an increase in negativity throughout the year. Their husbands, in contrast, reported an increase in marital positivity over this time.

Other couples appeared to differentiate in the marital stress experienced respectively by the wives and husbands. For example, there was a group of couples ($n = 16$) where the transition seemed to impact the wives more than the husbands. Although both partners reported similar levels of marital positivity prenatally, wives experienced a major increase in marital negativity at the one month time-point. However, they returned to pre-birth levels by the four month time-point and reported an increase in positivity throughout the year. Their husbands reported no change in marital quality throughout the first year after the birth. In contrast, there was another small group of couples ($n = 4$) where the transition appeared to impact the husband more than the wives. Husbands displayed decreases in marital quality one month after the birth, but returned to pre-birth levels at the four month time-point with an increase for the rest of the year. In contrast, there was little change for wives throughout the same period of time (Vollig et al., 2015).

These findings demonstrate the complex variation in patterns of marital quality across the transition to second-time parenthood. However, Vollig et al. (2015) did not explore in-depth the reasons for these individual differences either across or within the couple relationships. Investigating each partner's attachment orientations could help to explain the variations in couple relationship quality across the transition to second-time parenthood.

Furthermore, some of the discussed studies have employed a quantitative approach and have therefore focused on comparing pre and post outcomes of the

transition to second-time parenthood (e.g. Krieg, 2007; Vollig et al., 2015). Although quantitative designs allow for the comparisons of large groups, other studies have applied a qualitative approach, providing richer and detailed insight to the transition to second-time parenthood otherwise unattainable through the use of quantitative measurements (e.g. Frost, 2006; O'Reilly, 2004). The variation in experiences of couple relationships across the transition to second-time parenthood illustrates the need to explore and understand this phenomenon in more depth than quantitative designs permit.

Nevertheless, regardless of the research approach, none of the aforementioned studies have investigated the transition to second-time parenthood in couple relationships from an attachment theory perspective. As discussed, attachment theory is valuable in helping to understand views of the self and others, at both the individual and the dyadic level, and how these levels interact. Furthermore, this theoretical framework is also valuable for understanding how changes to views of the self and others occur across life events. However, attachment theory is typically researched using quantitative methods and has rarely been researched through the application of qualitative methods. The employment of a qualitative approach could help to generate additional insights to views of the self and others across the transition to second-time parenthood and the meaning this holds for couple relationships. In addition, a qualitative approach would enrich quantitatively based findings. This notion is explored further in the following section.

Measures in Attachment Theory Research

Despite having roots in a common theoretical framework, adult attachment research tends to be conducted in two distinct methodological cultures.

One culture, mostly represented in social and personality psychology, is based on self-reports that assess adult perceptions of relationships, mainly romantic relationships (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013). Adults are asked to agree with or rate their level of agreement with sentences that describe differing relational styles that are supposed to correspond with attachment styles (Hesse, 2008). These self-report measures rely on the ability of participants to accurately report their experiences and expectations in intimate relationships. This method taps into adults' conscious appraisals of themselves in romantic relationships, and assumes that participants have the level of awareness required to make such evaluations (Jacobvitz, Curran, & Moller, 2002). Further, self-report measures can be divided into those that assess discrete attachment categories, such as the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) (Hazan and Shaver, 1987), and those that yield continuous attachment dimensions, such as the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

The other culture, mostly represented in developmental psychology, is based on standardised semi-structured interviews with a classification coding system based on numerical ratings – the most popular one is the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). The AAI explores an adult's current mental representation of attachment by asking them for adjectives that describe their childhood relationship with parents, and then asking for specific memories as examples to support those adjectives. Parental behaviour is discussed in terms of feelings of being loved and feelings of rejection, experiences of being upset, hurt and ill, and experiences of separations, loss and abuse (Hesse, 2008). The AAI was designed from a psychodynamic stance to assess unconscious processes associated with the adult's current overall state of mind in relation to their reports of childhood experiences of parental care. Thus, the analysis focuses on the manner in

which adults talk about this. Based on ratings, each interview is assigned to a specific classification (George et al., 1984).

A substantial and current debate in the adult attachment literature concerns whether these methods of evaluating adult attachment actually measure the same underlying constructs. Given that both research traditions - interview and self-report instruments - have similar theoretical underpinnings, it would be logical that they would obtain similar findings regarding adult relationships.

In an attempt to clarify this matter, Roisman et al. (2007) carried out a meta-analysis of existing studies that include both an interview and a self-report measure of attachment, and found an inconsequential to small correlation between these measures. This suggests that interview methods and self-report methods assess different aspects of attachment and so cannot be expected to consistently converge.

However, there has been considerable variation in empirical findings on the association between interview and self-reports, meaning that researchers wishing to stress the divergence between these measures can cite a few studies that have failed to find a statistically significant relationship. Those researchers wishing to emphasise the convergence can also cite a few studies that show statistical significance between these measures (Roisman et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, an issue that causes confusion seems to be that some researchers reviewing the same data have reached quite different conclusions. For example, Shaver, Belsky and Brennan's (2000) report on the associations between the components of the two measures has been interpreted as being robust by social psychologists (Bartholomew & Moretti, 2002) but interpreted as being small by developmental psychologists (Bernier & Dozier, 2002). It seems that the two different methodologies

may lead to differences in how an individual's attachment style is classified, suggesting that studies using both methods may not be comparing like with like (Jacobvitz, Curran, & Moller, 2002). Nevertheless, attachment styles that have been classified by either interview or self-report measures tend to be discussed as though they are interchangeable, highlighting the need for further clarification of this matter.

Another issue in comparing these methods may derive from the fact that self-report measures of adult attachment use an individual's rating of their conscious evaluations of their experiences in close relationships (e.g. Collin, 1996). In contrast, interview measures of adult attachment use an individual's unconscious processes by assessing their coherence of mind. It seems that these measures tap into different processes, which may also be a reason as to why they differ in their findings.

Nevertheless, these methods of exploring adult attachment belong to a generally positivist and reductionist approach, which is interested in objective classification, generalisability and reducing phenomena to basic units. However, this is very tidy – rarely is life so neat. As previously discussed, individuals may use a variety of attachment behaviours depending on the context and relationship, which would fall into several of the differing attachment categories, styles or strategies.

Attachment theory offers a framework from which to understand the development of the self; the application of an interpretivist approach to this theoretical framework would emphasise subjective experience as well concern itself with meanings and identities. Although there is value in exploring how different patterns of how the self develops, it is also important to understand the unique meanings that experiences hold for individuals (Dallos, 2006). This approach takes the stance that experience is

continual and that we create narratives about what has happened to us, and these help to shape how we think of our past and how we see the future.

However, narratives are not simply a passive recording of the past, but are an active process of continual construction, reconstruction and review so as to maintain a current sense of coherency (Dallos & Vetere, 2009, p. 9). Narration is a complex and multi-layered activity where meaning is co-constructed through interaction. Identity is seen to be fluid and shifting, where beliefs, schemas and attitudes are considered to be connected to particular contexts and relationships, rather than being intrinsic to an individual (Gergen, 1999). This view of identity is consistent with an attachment perspective that considers internal working models to be reviewed and updated in relation to different relationships.

As discussed, most studies that employ the interview method of researching adult attachment use a standardised semi-structured interview to categorise attachment styles by giving an individual's account numerical scores. These interviews generate a wealth of narratives that often go unreported and unanalysed, but which may offer a unique way of understanding adult attachment through gaining insight to individual experiences and perspectives.

There have been very few studies which have applied a qualitative approach to adult attachment research. These studies have used a standardised semi-structured interview to classify adult attachment (e.g. the AAI), and have also subsequently analysed the generated narratives qualitatively. Qualitative analyses applied to the narrative data have been thematic analysis (Allison, Bartholomew, Mayseless, & Dutton, 2008; Dallos & Smart, 2011; Mayseless, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2004), interpretative phenomenological analysis (Dallos & Denford, 2008) and template

analysis (Worley, Walsh, & Lewis, 2004). These studies show some of the possible variations in qualitative analyses of attachment related material, and report the findings of these in terms of particular identified attachment behaviours. These findings also demonstrate that an individual can use strategies belonging to more than one attachment category, depending on the context of the experience being described. The qualitative analyses help to make sense of the identified attachment behaviours categorised through the interview that otherwise would have been missed (e.g. Worley, Walsh, & Lewis, 2004).

To the best of my knowledge, there has been only one study which used solely a qualitative approach in research on adult attachment through the application of thematic analysis (Duncan & Browning, 2009). This study did not concern itself with classifying individuals into attachment categories, but rather offered an account of the complex variation of participants' experiences. The study applied attachment theory to give context and understanding to individuals' various attachment behaviours in different situations (Duncan & Browning, 2009).

Overall, by using qualitative methods to explore adult attachment, a deeper and more accurate understanding of an individual's experiences can be unearthed. This can be achieved by giving context to identified attachment behaviours, and not reducing a whole individual and the complex variations in their life experiences into a basic category.

In sum, adult attachment has typically been researched by using quantitative methods, namely self-report and standardised interview methods with a coding system. This appears to be mainly due to attempts to classify individuals into an attachment category. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the agreement and

disagreement between quantitative measures of adult attachment. This may be because some adult attachment instruments measure conscious processes whereas others measure unconscious processes.

The use of qualitative methods to explore adult attachment can overcome the aforementioned problems by focusing on the meaning, understanding and interpretation of individuals' experiences without seeking to label or categorise them into a box. Qualitative methods place the emphasis back on the individual and their constructed descriptions of experiences, taking into account both conscious and unconscious processes, and by placing these experiences into context. Adult attachment is a complex phenomenon that deserves to be treated and explored as such, and qualitative methods offer the opportunity to enrich and further its understanding.

Summary and Research Aims

Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals form close relationships across the lifespan. The functions of attachment behaviours are proximity seeking and maintenance, as well as eliciting a safe haven and secure base during times of need.

Secure-based strategies of attachment rely on seeking proximity to an attachment figure and include engaging in problem solving, seeking support and depending on others for support, as well as having the knowledge that distress is manageable. Insecure-based attachment strategies can be hyperactivating or deactivating. Hyperactivating strategies involve a strong approach to attain proximity to an attachment figure and intense efforts to elicit their attention, protection and support through clinging and controlling behaviour. Deactivating strategies involve inhibition of support seeking, and a determination to handle stressors alone. It also includes the

suppression of, or the discounting of threats that might activate the attachment system. This strategy avoids closeness and intimacy, and maximises autonomy and distance from attachment figures.

In couple relationships, each partner functions as an attachment figure for the other. This means that the attachment system and caregiving system is bi-directional and reciprocal. Each partner can both seek and provide care and comfort, and so adult partners enact both care-seeking and care-giving behaviours. Each attachment strategy represents individual differences in how a partner may behave within and understand their couple relationship. These behaviours and understandings can be very different from one another, suggesting a need for more in-depth inquiry into these complex relational processes. As each partner of the couple brings their own attachment and care-giving behaviours, it is important to understand these phenomena at both the individual and the dyadic level.

Another important issue to be addressed is whether attachment patterns and behaviours are properties of individuals or of relationships. Some studies have found that partner attachment is relationship specific rather than a stable personality trait. Others view couple attachment as a multidimensional construct, in which each partner's attachment styles can be simultaneously characterised by levels of security, avoidance and anxiety. This suggests that multiple working models of attachment may be operating within a single individual with respect to a particular relationship, and it is not necessary to reduce a complex phenomenon to a mutually exclusive and simplistic category.

One of the key considerations in attachment theory regards the influence of early attachments on other relationships. One model assumes that early attachment

representations remain unchanged and play a direct role in influencing relational experiences later in life. Another model assumes that early attachment representations are revised and updated in light of ongoing experience and consequently may or may not correspond to later attachment representations. This perspective is capable of predicting both stability and change.

The literature concerning these models has been ambiguous, suggesting that a consensus has not yet been reached regarding attachment stability over time. However, it has found that external factors such as life events have a strong influence on attachment stability between infancy and adulthood. As internal working models in romantic relationships fluctuate and update in response to ongoing relational events, this further illustrates the importance of examining attachment in terms of dyadic processes. In addition, the subjective meanings individuals give to life events is associated with changing levels of security, rather than the objective features of the event itself showing the importance of understanding how people construe their life events.

The transition to parenthood is a salient time during which changes in attachment orientations are likely to occur. Some studies have found that relationship satisfaction and individual wellbeing in some couple relationships remains stable, and can actually increase for other couples across the transition to parenthood. Nevertheless, many new parents experience declines in relationship satisfaction during this period. Individuals with different attachment styles experience changes in relational quality during the transition to parenthood in distinctive ways, illustrating the variability in how couples respond to this stressful life event. The transition to parenthood requires ongoing adjustments at both individual and dyadic levels, highlighting the need to examine this phenomenon at the dyadic level.

Furthermore, earlier relational histories appear to be particularly important for couple relationship adjustment during the transition to parenthood. However, studies have tended to focus on comparing outcomes rather than understanding how attachment history affects current attachment behaviours at the dyadic level across this life event.

In addition, there is a lack of research on the transition to second-time parenthood, which may affect couple relationships in different ways to the transition to first-time parenthood. Some of the few studies which have examined the transition to second-time parenthood focus on the period immediately following the birth and are around three decades old and thus may be outdated. The other few studies have focused on the role of motherhood to the exclusion of the couple relationship. However, there is an impact on other family members such as on the fathers, who also influence the mothers' adjustment. This highlights the need for studies to include both mothers' and fathers' experiences of the couple relationship across this life event in order to provide further understanding into this phenomenon.

Vollig et al.'s (2015) more recent study found that in general, couples experienced a period of adjustment at one month postpartum, with declines in the quality of their relationship. However, by the four month time-point, couples had adapted with marital quality returning to pre-birth levels. This study also found complex differences in patterns of marital quality across the transition to second-time parenthood (Vollig et al., 2015). However, there was a lack of in-depth exploration of these differences which could be investigated by understanding each partner's attachment orientations and how this affects the couple relationship across this life event.

Further, attachment theory is typically researched using quantitative methods and has rarely been researched through the application of qualitative methods.

Moreover, individuals may use a variety of attachment behaviours depending on the context and relationship, which would fall into several of the differing attachment categories, styles or strategies. The employment of a qualitative approach could help to generate additional insights to views of the self and other across the transition to second-time parenthood and the meaning this holds for couple relationships. Therefore, qualitative methods offer the opportunity to enrich and further the understanding of attachment theory.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to explore the nuances, changes and dynamics in attachment behaviours across the transition to second-time parenthood in both partners of a heterosexual couple relationship. It will do this by asking: How can attachment behaviours be understood in the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship?

The research will bring additional in-depth insights and multi-layered understandings to adult attachment theory through the use of a pluralistic qualitative approach. This approach seeks to minimise reductionism and enhance more holistic understandings of the experiences, changes and practices of attachment behaviours in this context by engaging with a plurality of meanings.

The next chapter discusses the study's methodological approach in detail, outlining its research question and objectives in relation to the methodological considerations.

Chapter 2: Methodology: The Case for the Single Pluralistic Case Study

In this chapter I present the methodological issues that I considered in order to address the aims of this research by arguing for the application of a pluralistic qualitative approach to a single case study. The chapter begins by discussing qualitatively-driven mixed methods and qualitative pluralism, leading to the research questions this study addresses. It then outlines the selected methods of analyses and their respective objectives, and describes the practicalities of conducting these analyses. The chapter goes on to describe the design of the study and outlines the process of data generation before then considering ethical issues about the research process. It then discusses how quality in qualitative research was considered and addressed. The chapter concludes by providing a summary of the participants' individual and shared biographies, and in doing so, sets the context for the subsequent empirical chapters. Reflexivity is embedded and weaved throughout the chapter.

Pluralistic Qualitative Research

Mixed methods and qualitatively-driven mixed methods. People's experiences and lived realities are multidimensional; if phenomena have different layers, then choosing to view these phenomena from the perspective of a single dimension may mean that our understanding is inadequate and incomplete (Mason, 2006). Mixed methods research refers to the use of two or more methodological strategies in a single research study with the purpose of gaining insight into another aspect of the phenomenon under investigation which cannot be accessed by use of one method alone. Therefore, mixed methods research is a systematic way of using at least two research methods in order to answer a single over-arching research question; these research methods can be either all quantitative or all qualitative, or can be both quantitative and

qualitative (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). The value of combining methods is that it provides a more enhanced understanding than using a single method provides (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), which in turn offers a more balanced perspective of phenomena (Morse & Chung, 2003). Furthermore, mixing methods goes beyond the mixing of type of data solely, such as whether it is quantitative or qualitative, but rather, it is also concerned with the mixing of worldviews and ways of understanding these as well (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).

Qualitatively-driven mixed methods privilege the qualitative approach, which forms the core of the overall mixed methods research; this is a particularly suitable approach when there is a lack of clarity in a theoretical framework and when exploring areas which have not received much attention (Hesse-Biber, Rodriguez, & Frost, 2015). Drawing on qualitatively-driven mixed methods offers the opportunity to generate multidimensional material (Gabb, 2009) and permits a more holistic insight into experiences that can be understood from a combination of epistemological and ontological stances (Frost & Nolas, 2011), suggesting that the ability to perceive these layers is rooted in paradigmatic flexibility. Qualitatively-driven mixed methods offer the opportunity to explore and understand phenomena and its complexities in a manner that is not bound by methodological dogma and constraints (Elichaoff, Rodriguez, & Murphy, 2014). This approach also pursues access to unique perspectives on experience and seeks to highlight the dynamism and complexity of phenomena by its use of multiple paradigms (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015).

The use of several paradigms may incur tension, but the dialogue between contrasting ideas can provide a space for new insights and understandings (Creswell, 2009). Gabb (2009) puts forward the notion of ‘messiness’ of research in analysis and representations of phenomena, rather than the tidying away of experiential loose ends

that illustrate lived lives. The retention of messiness in the representation of findings does not intimate that analytical rigour is at risk but it reflects the complexity of experiences that may otherwise be lost; loose ends do not mean frayed ends (Rodriguez & Frost, 2015). This may go some way to further illustrate how the richness of multi-dimensionality can be understood through the use of qualitatively-driven mixed methods. Therefore it is recognised that multi-dimensionality and multi-methodological perspectives offer some means to access these additional layers, conflicts, contradictions and messiness (Frost et al., 2011), where a co-operative relationship between question, epistemology, paradigm and researcher is part of an ongoing reflexive process (Chamberlain, Cain, Sheridan, & Dupuis, 2011).

Another way of acknowledging and upholding the multi-dimensionality of experience is through a pluralistic qualitative approach. This recognises that different perspectives produce distinct pictures of meaning-making, and the layering of different approaches create a tapestry of insights of the same phenomenon (Josselin, 2013). This is different to qualitatively-driven mixed methods as it does not prioritise one method over the other, and instead values equally each qualitative approach.

Pluralism in Qualitative Research (PQR). A qualitative pluralistic approach recognises that there are multiple ways of viewing phenomena rather than there being a single 'truth', and it also understands that different methods set out to achieve different things, and thus provide diverse insights to the same phenomena. Reality and existence is seen to be multiple (Johnson, 2015), and as previously alluded to, people's experiences are multidimensional as well as fragmentary and contradictory. Pluralism argues that a single method cannot convey everything there is to know about a phenomenon, therefore a choice should not have to be made between which method to use, as employment of two (or more) can provide multi-perspectival and holistic

understanding (Frost, 2011; Willig, 2013). Consequently, the presence of multi-ontological stances and the tensions they generate are strengths of a pluralistic approach, which involves moving away from an ‘either, or’ position to a ‘both, and’ position (Frost & Nolas, 2011). Furthermore, analytical rigour is strengthened by making explicit the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the different methods, demonstrating the researcher’s conceptual clarity of these (Barbour, 1998), as well as by highlighting the gaps and divergences arising from the separate analyses (Frost & Nolas, 2011). In addition, by analysing the data in this manner and acknowledging the ‘experiential loose ends’ without tidying it up to construct a coherent and neat story represents the messiness, uncertainties and contradictions of human experience (Gabb, 2009).

Pluralism in qualitative research mixes different qualitative approaches, where use and status of each method is determined to combine with others in order to provide a more holistic insight to phenomena than can be gained using one method alone. Crucially, this approach recognises the plurality of epistemological and ontological paradigms underlying each of the qualitative approaches (Nolas, 2011), and values the tensions and benefits of combining methods within paradigms as well as across them. It does not confine individuals to being understood from only one epistemological stance, and allows for flexibility by building up layers of insight which can provide multiple understandings of a person’s reality. This can be particularly helpful in research that seeks to understand the complexity of perspectives of those for whom reality and meanings can change (Frost, 2011), such as the transition to parenthood in couple relationships, and what this means for their sense of self and their sense of relationships across this life event. Therefore, a qualitative pluralistic approach seeks to avoid reductionism and allows for a holistic view of phenomena which would not be possible

from the use of a mono-method approach (Frost, 2008). It does so by valuing all qualitative methods used as being equal to each other and it does not prioritise one qualitative approach over either a second qualitative or quantitative approach as qualitatively-driven mixed methods does.

More specifically, analytical pluralism refers to the mixing of several methods of qualitative data analysis on a single dataset (Clarke et al., 2015).

Pluralistic qualitative research recognises that a data set can tell us about a number of different things, depending on the questions we ask of it. A pluralistic approach involves asking a series of questions of the same data; each new question that is asked of the data requires that the researcher returns to the data and interprets it in a new way (Willig, 2013, p. 19).

Use of multiple methods of qualitative data analysis enables different things in the data to be attended to, as diverse forms of knowledge are produced through different methods of analysis. Therefore, a pluralistic analysis produces multi-layered and multi-perspectival interpretations which allows for a richer understanding of phenomena. These various forms of knowledge do not attempt to achieve an ultimate 'truth' or consensus (Dewe & Coyle, 2014) but are instead viewed as complementary rather than in competition with each other; each analysis reflects another dimension of the experience (Frost et al., 2011).

Pluralism and pragmatism. Differing philosophical assumptions allow for differences in their beliefs about the nature of existence and reality (*ontology* – what is there to know?) and they also differ in their beliefs about the nature of valid and reliable knowledge (*epistemology* – how and what can we know?) (Willig, 2013). Criticisms have been put forward regarding the incompatibility and mutual exclusivity of these

underlying philosophical assumptions, which has served to further perpetuate the divide between positivist quantitative and constructivist qualitative research, resulting in a paradigm war when attempting to integrate these stances. There remain some concerns around the issue of incommensurability in mixing the sometimes discordant and conflicting methods of analysis undertaken in a qualitative pluralistic approach. Such concerns centre on the tensions and discord between the different beliefs of the underlying philosophical assumptions which are seen to be in conflict with each other.

Nevertheless, ensuing debates around the mixing of methods have led to the achievement of ‘paradigm peace’ (Bryman, 2006) as alternative conceptual frameworks underpinning mixed methods have been put forward (e.g. Mertens, 2012; Shannon-Baker, 2016). One such framework which overthrows the dogma of the paradigm wars and supports the mixing of methods is pragmatism, which focuses on determining the meaning of phenomena (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006). The pragmatic approach breaks down the hierarchies between positivist and constructivist paradigms by looking at what is meaningful from both and understands that different knowledge claims arise from different ways of engaging with the world (Biesta, 2010); see Figure 3.

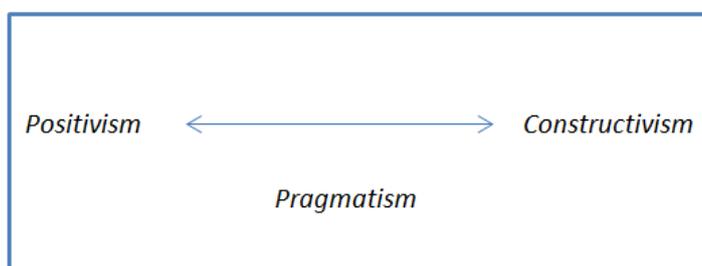


Figure 3. Pragmatism as a paradigm to overcome incommensurability issues.

It achieves this by placing the research question in a central position in order to attain the richest possible response to it and by basing itself on the assumption that there

is not a single set of methods that is correct (Mertens, 2012). Choice of method(s) is subsequently driven by the aim of finding those that are best suited to addressing the research question rather than being hindered by debates of incommensurability (Elichaoff, et al., 2014). Qualitative pluralistic approaches are interested in prioritising the research focus over the methods used, and achieve this by ensuring clear theoretical foundations that link the research question to the choice of methods employed. This enables a renewed focus on the need to understand and highlight the ways in which research questions are addressed. Such a focus allows for flexibility in research design that promotes the seeking of tailored insight to the complexities of human experience (Frost, 2011). Furthermore, adopting a pragmatic approach helps to avoid the issue of methodolatry, where the privileging of certain research methods and their underlying frameworks, as opposed to the topic under investigation, discourages the adaptation of methods to suit said research topic (Chamberlain, 2000; Chamberlain et al., 2011). A pluralistic approach addresses this concern of methodolatry by its consideration of several qualitative methods within the context of the same study.

Therefore, the data of this study are analysed using a qualitative pluralistic approach. The same data are analysed sequentially using two different qualitative methods: narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading, upholding the integrity and complexity of the multiple layers presented in the following research question.

Methods of Analyses

Overarching research question. The purpose of the current study is to explore the nuances, changes and dynamics in attachment behaviours across the transition to second-time parenthood in both partners of a heterosexual couple. This study will ask

the following overarching research question: how can attachment behaviours be understood in the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship?

By using a single case study, the narrative analysis approach asks:

- How does each partner of the couple (re)construct their sense of self as an individual through the stories they tell?;
- How do the stories that each partner narrates (re)construct their sense of their couple relationship?;
- How do the stories that the couple narrate together co-construct their relationship?

By applying a psycho-social reading of the data, it asks:

- Why does each partner of the couple self-present their self and adult others in the way that they do?
- Why do both partners present their couple relationship together in the way that they do?

In bringing these questions together, they address the overarching research question. The aim of this research is to understand the nuances of each partner's attachment behaviours; it enquires into the influences of these on their sense of self, and on their couple relationship by exploring how these dynamics change and interact through the life event that is the transition to second-time parenthood.

In order to achieve these aims, multiple methods of data collection and analysis are used. These are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Narrative analysis. Narrative analysis recognises that people create and use stories to make sense of the world for themselves, and they also use them when presenting their experiences to others; a story is co-constructed in a particular way between a story teller and the listener. It explores how people make sense of their identity and of events within their lives, by recognising the stories they tell and examining content and ways in which they are told. In particular, it is at times of breaches in individual's sense of identity, such as across life events, that stories are useful for making sense of these changes (Reissman, 1993). Therefore, narrative analysis is well suited for exploring how individuals subjectively construct or reconstruct their identities following life events (Emerson & Frosh, 2009). For this reason, narrative analysis is especially valuable for understanding life events such as the transition to second-time parenthood and meanings constructed around sense of self and sense of relationships across this phenomenon. This aligns with Bowlby's view of the importance and influence real life events have due to their ability to change expectations about attachment figure availability and responsiveness (Bowlby, 1982; Rodriguez, 2015a).

There are many different ways of conducting narrative analysis, including Hiles and Čermák's (2008) narrative oriented inquiry; McCormack's (2004) storying stories; Emerson and Frosh's (2009) critical narrative analysis; and McAdam's (2012) life narrative studies. Each asks different questions of the narrative (Reissman, 1993). In particular, Labov's (1972) model of structural narrative analysis focuses on how an event is told in a story context and on how narratives are organised (Reissman, 2008). This method of narrative analysis was employed in this study as it is particularly appropriate for addressing the previously outlined research question because it

illustrates the form in which meaning and identity is constructed in narratives about attachment experiences.

Philosophical underpinnings of this study's narrative analysis. The narrative analysis in this research adopts a relativist ontological position to focus on realities that are continuously and multiply created and recreated according to context. Reality is seen as constantly 'in-the-making' rather than viewed as an 'out-there' truth (Burr, 2015).

In this study, a social constructionist epistemological stance is adopted which argues that all knowledge about the world is constructed through language and the dynamics and process of social interactions (Willig, 2013). Language is regarded as productive and as constructing reality (Edley, 2001). Knowledge of the world is seen to be historically and culturally situated, giving rise to numerous ways of perceiving it (Willig, 2013). From this perspective, identity is seen to be constructed and reconstructed within relationships and across multiple contexts (Gergen, 1994) whilst at the same time acknowledging that identity is multiply located in social contexts that can be contradictory (Gergen & Davis, 1985).

However, radical social constructionism argues that "it is the discourses that 'form the objects of which they speak'" (Parker, 1994, p. 100). This means that rather than objects being represented through language, they are constructed through language (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000), thus reality cannot exist outside of language as it is the medium through which it is produced (Edley, 2001). This extreme form of social constructionism concerns itself with the manner in which discourse is produced and its purpose within its very specific social context – the socially constructed reality does not survive beyond the context in which it was produced (Willig, 2013). Therefore it cannot

make any claims about reality outside of this and also cannot be used as support for theory since this is also seen to be socially defined (Thibodeaux, 2014, p. 831).

Nevertheless, a contextualist social constructionist position argues that all knowledge is local, provisional and situational (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988, as cited in Madill et al., 2000), and that there is a reality which pre-exists language and shapes the way in which reality is produced and given meaning in specific contexts (Willig, 2013). This position accepts that discursive representations are imbued with subjectivity: they are not invalidated by alternative and conflicting understandings. In addition, the contextualist social constructionist approach necessitates the grounding of findings, such as basing these on the participants' accounts (Madill et al., 2000).

A contextual social constructionist approach can be considered to be somewhat consistent with a critical realist approach (Pascale, 2011; Watkins, 1994) which assumes that accounts of experience are not a direct reflection of reality and thus interpretation is necessary to understand it (Willig, 2013). This consistency with critical realism can also be due to researchers' concerns in understanding individuals' lived experience, in a manner that is seen to possess a degree of coherence and continuity (Josselin, 2013), and so ontologically it can also be grounded in the belief in an objective social world (Pascale, 2011).

However, a contextual social constructionist position departs from the critical realist stance in its belief that meaning is historically and culturally constructed, and is shaped by language and social processes in local contexts (Ibarra, 2008). It also differs in its stress that there is no single privileged voice that dictates understanding of phenomena and instead reality is multiform and variable (Newton, Deetz, & Reed, 2011)

- the same phenomenon can be effectively approached by using different views (Madill et al., 2000).

Therefore, although the stance adopted for the narrative analysis is firmly that of contextual social constructionism, it remains closer to critical realism than to extreme relativism, and thus radical social constructionism. This is because it grounds its claims in a more objective reality that underlie the participants' accounts (Josselin, 2013) although it understands that meanings are created through social processes, and that alternative interpretations do not necessarily invalidate one another as there is no one reality that can be revealed.

Method of narrative analysis and its objectives. Although previously outlined, the narrative analysis sets out to address the following questions across the transition to second-time parenthood:

- How does each partner of the couple (re)construct their sense of self as an individual through the stories they tell?;
- How do the stories that each partner narrates (re)construct their sense of their couple relationship?;
- How do the stories that the couple narrate together co-construct their relationship?

I worked with one participant's interview at a time, and so following transcription, I read and re-read it several times, along with listening to the interview again in order to become really familiar with its content. Following this, I identified the narratives within the data by looking for stories that were temporally ordered and had a beginning, a middle, and an end which included a sequence of events. I then identified the elements

of each narrative by applying Labov's (1972) model of structural narrative analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1

The elements in Labov's (1972) Model of Structural Analysis

Abstract (A):	Summary of story
Orientation (O):	Time, place, characters and situation to orient the listener
Complicating	Events of the story
Action (CA):	
Evaluation (E):	Where the narrator steps back from the story to tell the listener its meaning
Resolution (R):	Outcome of the story
Coda (C):	Ending the story and returning to the present

The narratives were then re-transcribed into their component elements, and analytical notes made about the function that each element played in constructing the story. Not all elements were present in each narrative and some appeared more than once in the same story. Analytical notes were also made about observations concerning the presence, lack, repetition and interruption of the individual elements within each of the narratives as these were details pertinent to their structures. I subsequently attempted to separate out the narrative tables into two piles, one to address each objective of the narrative analysis. However, this was not entirely possible as there was an inevitable overlap due to the multicentricity of the construction of identity and therefore some of the narrative tables lent themselves to addressing both objectives. Subsequently, rather than de-contextualising the narratives, they were then interpreted within the context of the entire interview by reading through the participants' accounts bearing in mind the analysis just carried out, before writing up its interpretation. The next step was to engage with the second method of analysis applied to the same data.

Overview of psychosocial studies. Psychosocial studies have emerged as a recent paradigm in the UK; the approach uses psychoanalytical concepts and principles to illuminate core issues within the social sciences (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). This developing field is concerned with the complex interchange between the external social world and the internal psychic world (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008), and is thus investigated in a manner that moves beyond the separation and reductionism of the psychological and the social (Roseneil, 2006). The ‘psycho’ cannot be separated from the ‘social’ - these are inextricably interweaved and in constant exchange with each other, and so psychosocial approaches concentrate on the issues and complexities that bring together these concepts without prioritising one over the other (Stenner & Taylor, 2008). Therefore, psychosocial research is particularly well-placed to explore questions of social and personal change and how such change occurs (Frosh, 2003), and thus is an appropriate approach to take to investigate the transition to second-time parenthood.

Psychosocial studies have attempted to connect the gap between the psychological and the social using two opposing approaches. Each stems from different ontological and epistemological stances. A psychoanalytic stance to psychosocial studies is based on the understanding of the existence of an internal reality. It recognises the effects of unconscious dynamics in the construction of reality and the way in which others are perceived (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Meanings and experiences at a conscious level are integrated by social, cultural and historical factors, which in turn have been mediated by unconscious dynamics. It understands that current external meanings and experiences yield information about powerful unconscious motivations and defences (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005). The psychoanalytic stance recognises that individuals work to cope with internal and mostly unconscious contradiction, conflict and ambivalence, and also work to externally reconcile what is happening inside with

what they are supposed to feel (Craib, 1995, p. 155). Further, this approach draws attention to individuals' histories and investments in particular discursive positions, and emphasises that identity conflicts experienced within social practices are not necessarily understood nor resolvable by conscious intentions or forces (Hollway and Jefferson, 2005). Therefore, a psychoanalytically-informed psychosocial reading is underpinned by a critical realist ontology and interpretivist epistemology that goes beyond the text and treats external activity as a means to understand unobservable, internal motivational processes. This is because the positions that individuals construct through their talk are taken to be indicative of anxieties, defences and particular ways of relating that develop in infancy and recur throughout life (Hollway, 2011).

On the other hand, discursive psychologists argue that inner processes are actually constituted through social discursive activity and as such, psychology should be based on the study of this outward activity rather than unobservable, inner motivational processes (Billig, 1997, pp. 139-140). Discursive psychologists align with the view that the performative aspects of language is the only valid focus of analysis and therefore read the text for the identity positions that are constructed for the person talking and for the audience (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). The text is also read for the available and familiar broader cultural discourses and subject positions drawn on (Frosh & Saville-Young, 2008; Wetherell, 2003). Therefore, it considers that human biographies are shaped entirely by available social discourses. It is underpinned by a social constructionist epistemology and a relativist ontology which understands the nature of human beings as rational and unitary which signifies that individuals can always know why they feel, think and behave as they do.

Discursive psychologists have criticised and rejected the psychoanalytic approach to psychosocial studies on account of its ““top-down”, expert-knowledge

epistemological strategies of psychoanalysis”, “accompanied by an interpretive practice that seems to always to know best, or at least to know subjects better than they know themselves” (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008, p. 347; Hoggett, 2008; Wetherell, 2003). The psychoanalytic approach has also been accused of being deterministic with a heavy reliance on a developmental framework of subjectivity (Saville-Young & Frosh, 2010; Wetherell, 2003) and ignores the discursive context which participants experience which may pressure them to offer a reasonable account of who they are and their behaviours (Wetherell, 2005). Frosh and Saville-Young (2008) support this critical view and suggest that in contrast to the psychoanalytic stance, reality is always provisional, fluctuating and continually reconstructed and produced in different contexts, therefore no interpretation is ever final. Critiques of the psychoanalytical approach tend to align with a social constructionist Lacanian perspective where priority is given to language in constructing personal and social lives and the unconscious is understood as a realm of experience outside of awareness but which nevertheless forms that awareness (Saville-Young & Frosh, 2010).

A constructionist and discursive approach to psychosocial studies has in turn been contested on the basis that language is not always enough to understand human emotional experience. Some feelings are beyond words and can only be understood through affectively feeling the emotion. This implies that affective communication as well as discursive expression are both necessary “precisely because of the inherent limitations of language in expressing experience” (Hoggett, 2008, p. 381). Branney (2008) recognises that the construction of subjectivity is possible through discourse, but goes onto argue that language places limitations on the possibilities available to humans because socio-cultural phenomena is beyond the control of any one person. Further, Branney (2008) questions how humans are able to acquire a history and a sense of the

future without anything to hold discourses in place. In addition, the discursive approach has been criticised based on its preoccupied focus on the meanings that humans give to their behaviour solely through discourse, which disregards the suggestion that humans do not necessarily know themselves fully (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This approach also results in a lack of attention paid to the strength of what is unspeakable, unspoken, unthinkable and unthought (Hoggett, 2000, cited in Roseneil, 2006) and therefore the more difficult effects that unconscious motivations may have upon people's behaviour.

A psychoanalytic stance to psychosocial studies can provide an account of both internality and agency (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005), as it understands that internal and external worlds overlap and are reciprocally constituting. This approach also recognises that while they are irreducible to one another, each world is managed by its own rules of 'structure formation'. It suggests that it is essential to maintain the distinction between the internal and the external as representing the space of overlap and interpenetration. This is signified by the hyphen between the psycho- and the social (Hoggett, 2008, p. 383). The preservation of the hyphen in psycho-social approaches is important as it serves to represent that the social is always multiply mediated by the psychodynamic and vice versa:

We are *psycho-social* because we are products of a unique biography of anxiety- and desire-provoking life events and the manner in which their meanings have been unconsciously transformed in internal reality. We are *psycho-social* because such defensive activities affect and are affected by discourses and also because the unconscious defences that we describe are intersubjective processes (that is, they affect and are affected by others). We are *psycho-social* because the real events in the external, social world are

desirously and defensively, as well as discursively, appropriated (adapted from Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, as cited in Hollway, 2004).

This means that psycho-social research understands discourses as products that are already psycho-social created from realities and socio-cultural phenomena that are already mediated by unconscious motivations, and in turn also affect these unconscious motivations.

Philosophical underpinnings of this study's psycho-social reading. This research adopts a psychoanalytically-informed approach to researching the psycho-social as it is based on the principle of the non-unitary defended subject: intentions and motivations are not necessarily apparent to oneself (Hollway, 2009, p. 263). The psycho-social reading is based on a critical realist and interpretivist stance, which assumes the existence of underlying mental structures which inform thought and behaviour; however, access to these are not straightforward and therefore necessitates interpretation in order to reveal the hidden underlying processes (Willig, 2012). Bowlby (1980, p. 229) proposed that meaning made for every situation encountered is constructed from representational models of the world about self and others, and that the manner in which meaning is constructed affects what is felt about the situation. Main, Kaplan and Cassidy (1985) argue that in addition to the content of stories, the manner in which stories are told are also shaped by attachment experiences. Consequently, structural concepts of accounts, such as coherence and reflexivity, provide insights as to how meaning is constructed of the self and of others in particular contexts such as a couple relationship as they become parents for the second time, generating alternative ways of understanding attachment theory.

Therefore, the psychoanalytically-informed psycho-social approach is particularly well-suited to exploring and producing explanations about the dynamics and underlying processes in both present intra- and inter-subjectivity in individual and couple attachment behaviours because it enables understanding that what is displayed (such as attachment behaviours) is an expression of underlying emotional dynamics (such as internal working models) which are what give rise to these attachment behaviours, and how these in turn inform internal working models. It will illuminate and draw out the constant interplay between the inner world and the outer world; between internal working models and attachment behaviours in both a personal and relational context. Thus, developing a psycho-social interpretation requires the choosing of a set of psychoanalytically-informed theoretical concepts and so, logically, I have chosen to carry out an attachment theory informed reading of the text in order to enrich the interpretation (Willig, 2012). The application of attachment theory will also help to avoid the recognised danger in psychoanalytically-informed psycho-social research of ‘wild interpretation’ by remaining grounded in its theoretical concepts. This grounding in concepts is also achieved by the study’s congruent design of eliciting participant’s biographical and relational histories and holistic presentation of analysis (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Attachment theory as a psychoanalytical paradigm. Attachment theory is regarded as stemming from object relations theory which is rooted in psychoanalysis (Marrone, 2014), with the departure from a drive theory to a relational perspective on motivation increasingly recognised as a central part of contemporary psychoanalytic theory (Cortina & Marrone, 2004). This is illustrated by Bretherton’s statement “the time has come when the psychoanalytical origins of attachment theory are coming into sharper focus” (1991, p. 27).

However, in departure from object relations theory, Bowlby discarded the label ‘external object’ in reference to the primary caregiver and instead used the term primary attachment figure. Further, when considering the internal representations of others, Bowlby used the concept of internal working models of attachment figures in lieu of internal objects (Marrone, 2003). The internalisation of phenomena reflects the type and quality of experiences with attachment figures (Bowlby, 1973), and attachment relationships establish early unconscious models of self and others (Cortina & Marrone, 2004). Therefore, attachment theory views the unconscious as a direct representation of the interpersonal world rather than a construction of fantasy which preceding psychoanalytical theories claim (Holmes, 1995). Further, internal working models are considered to be active constructions that can be restructured, rather than regarded simply as the passive and fixed internalisation of past experiences with attachment figures (Main et al., 1985).

Attachment theory also understands the role of anxiety in a different manner to its preceding theories of psychoanalysis. Anxiety is manifest when the attachment system is activated and attachment needs are not met (Gullestad, 2001). Anxiety can be triggered when a current situation is assessed as being reminiscent of a previous situation where helplessness was experienced; the most powerful emotions tend to be rooted in and linked to attachment-related events, such as the formation, rupture and reformation of attachment relationships as well as the sensitivity in which one is understood and responded to. Therefore, anxiety and painful feelings generally originate in interpersonal events, and unconscious defences and attachment behaviours against these difficult feelings shape the manner in which a person regulates their anxiety and seeks support from others (Cortina & Marrone, 2004).

The role of unconscious internal working models in explaining the interaction between the internal world and the external world should not be overlooked: the internal and the external are dynamic concepts which interact and interpenetrate each other. This interaction also contends that past worlds affect present worlds as individuals place the meaning of current experience in the context of existing internal working models and make connections with past experiences (Schofield, 1998). Therefore, to make the assumption that individuals operate as rational beings denies the powerful role of the unconscious (Howe & Hinings, 1995). This means that attachment theory as a psychoanalytical paradigm lends itself well to inform the application of the psycho-social reading.

Method of psycho-social reading and its objectives. As previously defined, the psycho-social reading sets out to address the following questions across the transition to second-time parenthood:

- Why does each partner of the couple self-present their self and adult others in the way that they do?
- Why do both partners present their couple relationship together in the way that they do?

There are many ways of engaging with psycho-social readings, which research beneath the surface and beyond the purely discursive, to consider the unconscious defences, dynamics and communications (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Consistent with this theorisation, the analytic procedure is based on the principle that accounts cannot necessarily be taken at face value, indicating the suspicious interpretive stance taken which points to a more important and latent underlying meaning (Willig, 2012). Therefore, the case is treated as different from the text and it is assumed that there is a

life beyond the account. The participant's account and its disclosed actions is a type of evidence about that life, and the manner in which the text is constructed provides further information about the participant's conflicts (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005). In order to explain the text, the psycho-social reading attempts to access these underlying structures through an exploration of the content of the account and the manner in which it has been expressed; it also moves beyond the text to consider the participant's biography as well as the researcher's emotional response to the participant (Willig, 2012).

A similar analytical approach to the one developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000) was applied. In the first step of the analysis I re-read the participant's biography in order to ground me in their life story. I then carefully re-read the interview I was currently working on with an open mind, guided by the research question in order to pick up on key patterns and themes. This initial descriptive step considers the text at face value to address what the experiences were and how these were spoken about. I then re-read the text and made line-by-line notes about the form of the data, such as the articulated description, explanations of behaviour, relationships. I also attended to the emotionality embedded in what was said by examining the speech, noticing emotional tone, long pauses, avoidances, metaphors, digressions, contradictions and inconsistencies. I questioned why participants might give particular meanings and what underlying motivations this might point to. In doing this, I also drew upon my knowledge of the participant's biography which I gained through a biographical interview (to be discussed in a later section in this chapter on data collection) as well as field notes written after each interview.

The second step was to cluster together these meanings and underlying motivations into themes that addressed the objectives. The subsequent step involved explaining the identified themes by writing up the analysis in an account of the emotional and

psychological dynamics that may underpin the participant's narrative. This included drawing on psychoanalytical concepts, within an attachment theory framework, to interpret the participant's account.

The pluralistic combination of the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading. Together, the application of both analytical methods to the data allows for a multi-dimensional insight to the nuances and dynamics of attachment behaviours in the couple relationship across the transition to second-time parenthood. The narrative analysis focuses on the form in which meaning is constructed and reconstructed about the self and others. The psycho-social reading attempts to explain what is going on (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005) and is concerned with the psychological processes and dynamics of inner reality and their relationships with the external world. Together, they address the research question by looking at the form of stories and their affect, and so these methods are ideal for further enhancing the depth, quality and innovation of this research.

Decisions about the sequential order of the analytical methods. I decided to first apply the narrative analysis because I wanted to work my way from the more relativist position of the narrative analysis to the more realist position of the psycho-social reading as I felt that once I started to make inferences about participant's inner worlds, it would be harder to 'unknow' this and to then develop interpretation based on how the narratives constructed identity and to not go beyond this. I attempted to adopt a 'relaxed awareness' style of being engaged with the subjective accounts whilst being aware of the tension in their narratives and contradictions in their talk (Colahan, Tunariu, & Dell, 2012).

I had to work hard to consciously stay with the method of analysis I was currently applying and keep the other method separate – I wrote the research question I was presently addressing on a large post-it note and kept it in front of me at all times during analysis, changing it as relevant. I found that this helped to keep me grounded in the method. Nevertheless, when making analytical notes on the identified narrative tables, observations that pertained to the psycho-social reading would creep in, and so I would make these notes on a separate document and save them for when it was time to conduct that analysis. This allowed me to acknowledge my thoughts and ideas that pertained to the psycho-social reading without derailing from the narrative analysis, and to keep maintaining presence in the narrative analysis.

Initially, I struggled quite a bit with putting on my social constructionist cap, and then hanging that up in order to put on my interpretivist cap as I found that one method of analysis tried to creep into the other. I found that taking a break of a few days in between the different analyses helped me to gain some distance from the previous one. Nevertheless, I found that it became easier the more analyses I conducted as I became increasingly familiar with the constraints of each approach and their underlying philosophical stances.

Reflections on methodological choices. Although so far I have presented the two analytical methods which I applied to the data within the pluralistic approach as being narrative analysis and psycho-social reading, this was not the original plan at the outset of this research project. Initially, I had intended to carry out an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), and due to my lack of prior experience with this method of analysis, I invested a lot of time and effort in becoming familiar with it such as by undergoing a training course, seminars and spending a lot of time reading and writing up notes on IPA and its philosophical

underpinnings. My aim was to use IPA to explore the personal lived experiences of my participants and their subjective meanings. This was to be alongside the narrative analysis, which aimed to understand the meanings constructed around sense of self and sense of their couple relationship across the life event of becoming second-time parents.

Through discussions with other qualitative researchers and my supervisors, it started to become apparent that using IPA pluralistically with narrative analysis presented the risk of generating findings that could be quite similar to each other (although their respective philosophical stances are different). While in general this is not necessarily an issue in pluralistic research, it was problematic for this particular research project as its aim is to demonstrate a multi-layered comprehension of attachment theory by enhancing more holistic understandings of the experiences, changes and practices of attachment behaviours by engaging with a plurality of meanings. I wanted to look at the text from different dimensions, such as from the verbal telling of stories, and from the internal-external influences on how the stories and their meanings were created, therefore expanding possibilities of seeing nuances and dynamics. The combination of both IPA and narrative analysis would not necessarily have been able to exemplify the multiplicity of attachment dynamics and nuanced attachment behaviours within the context of a couple relationship transitioning to second-time parenthood.

At this point in the research, I had already conducted a narrative analysis on an interview and I also had prior experience and therefore increased familiarity with this method. Therefore, pragmatically, I recognised that I would search for an alternative to IPA rather than to narrative analysis.

With this in mind, I decided to return to the literature on qualitative methodologies, and systematically and critically examine the many qualitative analytical approaches

while keeping my research question at the forefront of my mind. Throughout my reading, I placed no limitations on the type of method I could potentially use as I was working within a pragmatist pluralistic approach and so was not constrained by worrying about incommensurability issues. What remained vital throughout this process was that the selected method should address my research question in the most suitable manner. Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) psycho-social methodology appeared to fit best due to its focus on both internality and agency, as well as its attention on external activity as a means to understand unobservable, internal motivational processes. This suggested that the psycho-social approach was likely to generate findings that would be alternative to those from the narrative analysis and therefore bring valuable multi-layered insights to attachment theory, and would also be keeping in line with the aims and research question of this thesis. In addition, I already had the biographical interviews to support such an analytical approach. I had also made field notes after each interview about my thoughts, feelings and impressions about the participants and my own behaviours and responses to their own behaviours and interactions with me, which would also help to form the psycho-social reading. Therefore, from a practical perspective it also made sense to choose this approach.

Although it was frustrating to lose the time and effort invested in ensuring I would be able to conduct a good quality IPA for this particular research project, such is the iterative nature of novel qualitative research. Ultimately, this ensured that my research met its aims and research question in the best possible manner, and that the research itself is also of the highest possible quality.

Transcription. I transcribed all of the interviews myself for several reasons. Firstly, as a way to immerse myself in the data and to start forming ideas about what the participant had told me – in this manner, the transcription process forms part of the

analysis. Secondly, due to the nature of the pluralistic approach and interpretive work, I was able to transcribe in detailed form which included the emotional tone of the conversation where possible, by identifying stylistic aspects such as long pauses, sighs, shouting laughing, chuckling etc. Therefore, the transcription included both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Further, due to the longitudinal nature of the research, transcription was a continual process throughout the fieldwork where interviews, diary entries and field notes were considered as data. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms to protect participants' identities. Once transcribed in full, interviews were analysed by the application of the aforementioned approaches in turn.

Study design

Single case study. Case study approaches which centre on one 'unit', such as one couple, have been used to generate rich accounts by focusing attention on narrative detail. They do so by producing context-dependent knowledge which allow for depth rather than breadth (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, case study approaches have been used with the aim of "problematizing existing concepts or helping to develop ways of looking at new areas of study" (Smith, Flowers & Osborn, 1997, p. 87) and as a way to do justice to the complexity of human psychology (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, single case studies provide ways in which to revise and contribute to the development of theory, by amassing knowledge that goes beyond the specific case that is studied (Ghesquière, Maes, & Vandenberghe, 2004).

The adoption of a single case study in this research is appropriate in order to address the aim and research question because it provides the opportunity to show how the focus of the research unfolds in an insightful and detailed manner. It helps to revise

and contribute to attachment theory by advancing knowledge and providing insights into the nuances and changes in attachment behaviours that are not evident in the more commonly used reductionist classification of attachment categories or attachment styles.

Furthermore, the single case study approach facilitates an extensive and multi-layered pluralistic analysis which excessive amounts of data would otherwise not permit due to time and space. This became even clearer when I realised the amount of data generated by just one couple. A single case study design highlights the methodological focus of this thesis and enables the addressing of the methodological research question which seeks to answer: how can attachment behaviours be understood in the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship?

In addition, the selected methods of data analysis of narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading are both particularly suitable to the single case study approach as shown in other studies. For example, Creswell (2007) advocate for researchers employing narrative analysis to focus on a single case, and the psycho-social method has been commonly applied to single cases (e.g. Hollway & Jefferson, 2005; Roseneil, 2006). Therefore, this study uses a prospective and longitudinal single case study design. It focuses on data from both partners of a couple relationship as the unit of analysis and spans the time starting when the couple were expecting their second child and ending when the second child was one year of age.

Data Collection. Data were collected at several points, and multiple methods of data collection were used to generate multi-dimensional material (Gabb, 2009). Data was collected over four time points, the first when the pregnancy was in the third trimester, and subsequent collections taking place when the second child was around 4 months old, 8 months old and 12 months old. However, this thesis presents only the first

and second phase to capture the immediacy of the life event of becoming parents for the second time, as well as due to word count limitations, the richness of the data and the depth of the findings. Analyses of subsequent phases will be presented and disseminated through subsequent publications.

Each partner of the couple was interviewed both separately and together. In the first phase of the research, the separate interviews consisted of a Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) interview, designed to explore an individual's life story and entirely led by participants to decide how and what to talk about in a free-flowing manner. When they completed their story, I asked for more details with narrative inducing questions, such as 'do you remember that particular time particularly strongly? How did it all happen?' (see Appendix A) (Wengraf, 2001). This method is particularly well suited to exploring relationship histories and biographies which provide further context for the psycho-social reading of the prospective data generated by subsequent semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

The biographical interview was followed by an individual semi-structured interview, with questions developed to elicit information about current attachment behaviours and close relationships, based on the Attachment Style Interview (ASI) (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013). There were two versions of the semi-structured interview: one for the first phase (see Appendix B) and a slightly altered one for subsequent phases after the birth (see Appendix C).

Four weeks later, a dyadic interview took place in order to gain insight into the couple's shared story-telling, as well as shared perspectives and understandings about experiences of their relationship. This offered an opportunity to examine the couple's interaction and provided additional understandings which may have otherwise been

difficult to obtain solely from individual interviews (Allan, 1980; Polak & Green, 2016). The joint interview was a photo-elicitation interview, where participants took 4 – 6 photos that represented ‘a day in their life together,’ and emailed them to me a few days prior to the interview for printing. The photos and associated experiences were then discussed in an unstructured, participant-led interview although there was a brief list of topic areas to help shape the discussion. Although consent has been gained for reproduction of the photos in this thesis, they have not been included for ethical reasons.

The photo-elicitation technique offered an opportunity for participants to reflect on their everyday activities in a manner which is not usually achieved with other methods and allowed them to take a lead in the discussion. Photo-elicitation contributes different insights, adding further richness (Rose, 2012).

Participants were also asked to keep individual diaries which enabled them to provide accounts of their everyday life in yet another manner (see Appendix D). Notably however, the diaries did not generate sufficient data for analysis, providing only a few entries in the first and second phase of the research, and none in subsequent phases. This may have been due to the demands and challenges of everyday life in the transition to second-time parenthood for both partners of the couple. However, this did not detract from the richness and depth gained from the other methods of data collection.

Each subsequent phase of data collection repeated the aforementioned methods with the exception of the biographical interview which was conducted once at the beginning of the study.

Participant recruitment. Participants were required to meet certain criteria before taking part in the research: they needed to be in a heterosexual cohabiting couple

relationship where they already had their first child together and were currently expecting their second child together. They also needed to be around the start of the third trimester of pregnancy at the time of the first interviews for two reasons: firstly, this would minimise the risk of an unsuccessful pregnancy. Secondly, the unborn child would be more of a reality due to its physical manifestation, as well as the feeling of the baby's movements in the womb. Both partners of the same couple needed to be willing to participate in the various aspects of the research.

In order to recruit participants, I designed a flyer (see Appendix E), which I posted around the university campus and in the university crèche, in local supermarket pin-boards and in local cafes which included a children's play area. Following a Google search, I found many blogs written by mothers and asked whether they could post the flyer on their blog, to which 11 agreed to do so at no charge. I posted the flyer on the website for local Netmums, as well as on Facebook and Twitter and on a psychology postgraduate email list, asking contacts to share it with each other and to any parent groups that they were a part of. I also got in touch with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), who agreed to add this research to the list of approved studies on their intranet website for members following their own review process. Their enquiries team subsequently emailed all the NCT branches in London, asking them to email me directly if they wished to help with recruitment. Eight local NCT branches posted on their Facebook and Twitter accounts, and I sent them packs of flyers which were distributed at their branches, local events and drives.

These avenues of recruitment, as well as word of mouth, generated interest from people, to whom I sent detailed emails attaching the information sheet, and discussed the research with some over the telephone as they preferred to have a conversation

about it before considering commitment to the research. I followed the telephone conversation with an email with the information sheet (see Appendix F).

Interestingly, it was always the woman partner of the couple who contacted me for further information and with an expression of interest in participation. Some of these declined to participate upon hearing the amount of participation involved (e.g. the longitudinal nature and the various methods of data collection they would be required to undertake), and others were happy to participate but their partners were unwilling to. I also received interest from people who had recently had their second child and wanted to participate but who unfortunately did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Efforts at recruitment resulted in five couples who met all of the inclusion criteria and were keen to participate. I was aware that this design required an extensive and demanding commitment from participants during a challenging and busy time in their lives, and so I was both mindful and concerned about potential attrition. Therefore I agreed to conduct the research with all couples, with the view to include a single couple in this study and to analyse the data of the other couples and publish it in further work beyond this thesis. This was explained to all of the participants

In practice, some of the couples withdrew from the research while others continued for varying lengths. The participants I selected for the present research is the couple who completed the process. These participants were Claire and Jack, and I discussed with them that their data would be used as a single case study.

Ethics

Ethical considerations. The proposed study was submitted to the Psychology Department's Research Ethics Committee at Middlesex University for review and

approval. In designing the research, ethical implications were considered in line with professional guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2010), and mindful of the commitment to the research required by participants, and the potentially sensitive nature of the topics. Several steps were taken in order to protect both participants and their data.

A key ethical consideration was the possibility of emotional distress for those participating in this research, particularly as there would be a prolonged level of contact with them in addition to the elicitation of more personal and potentially sensitive information. There was the possibility of major crises occurring for participants, such as postnatal depression, the death of a baby or separation of the couple relationship. None of this actually took place, although I had made myself aware of these possibilities and prepared myself to enable the participants to stop the research immediately should anything occur.

I tried to conduct this research with as much sensitivity and care as possible. For example, in designing the semi-structured interview schedule, I reflected on the topics that may inadvertently bring distress to participants, perhaps when talking about their experiences of stress or when they had a disagreement or argument with their partner. I was careful to embed questions that had the potential to elicit positive responses, such as asking about a recent time they spent together with their partner, in order to break up the questions that might have been more likely to evoke distress. McIntosh and Morse (2009) purport that emotional distress forms an integral part of the retelling of the experience which does not necessarily signify that it causes harm as distress can co-exist with beneficence, and which can feel therapeutic rather than harmful. Nevertheless, I ensured to remain aware during the research process of changing displays of emotions so that I could take steps to care for the participants, such as by

asking whether they would like to pause or stop the interview. In line with ethical guidelines at the start of each interview participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for doing so.

As part of the consideration of ethical implications, I took time prior to the first interview to ensure that participants were fully informed of the nature of the research by providing them with a detailed information sheet and giving them some days to consider the research, to discuss their participation between themselves and encouraging them to ask me or my supervisors any questions they may have before agreeing to participate. I sent them a copy of the information sheet by email as this was our main form of contact.

At the first interviews, I asked them to review and sign a consent form (see Appendix G); I also took two copies of the information sheet to every interview and asked the participants whether they would like to review, discuss and keep it before starting the interview. This is in line with informed consent not being viewed as a one-off event at the start of the research process, but reviewed and revisited throughout (Barnett, 2007) which was particularly relevant to the longitudinal design of this study.

The photo-elicitation interview required additional ethical consideration. The participants owned the copyrights to the photos they took; therefore special consent was sought for use of the photos in presentations, as well as for reproduction in the thesis and publications. Further, permission for each individual photo was sought for the range of options and both participants had to be in agreement otherwise the photo would not be used (Rose, 2012). Consent was sought at the start of every single photo-elicitation interview (see Appendix H), which allowed for flexibility and for a collaborative relationship to develop between myself and the participants. Nevertheless, as previously

discussed, I decided not to include the photos in this thesis in order to preserve anonymity especially because of the single case study approach.

At the end of the final interview, I debriefed participants by discussing with them the research and their participation, and gave them each a copy of a debriefing form (see Appendix I), which contains contact details for some relevant support services.

With regards to the protection of the data, all recorded data was kept confidential by their immediate transference from the audio recorder to my password protected computer and stored locally. The two audio recorders used were kept in a locked cabinet as recordings were also left on them until the data had been transcribed as a back-up should the transferred audio on the computer become corrupt and the interview lost. Once transcribed, the recordings were deleted from the recorders. Confidentiality was also achieved by the anonymisation of data, by the removal and alteration of information that may aid in the identification of participants (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

Anonymity of the single case study also required some additional consideration as it was important to disguise enough of the material in order to allow the participants to remain non-identifiable. This was also balanced with maintaining adequate detail so that the participants' stories and analyses were not changed. Therefore, specific characteristics were changed in order to limit personally identifying information (McCurdy & Fitchett, 2011).

Positive ethics. Positive ethics considers the benefits to participants of taking part in research. At the end of each phase of data collection, I checked with both participants about how they were feeling about the research, to give them time and

space to voice any concerns they may have, and to facilitate a conversation about any issues. However, although they sometimes brought up intimate, difficult and painful experiences during the interviews, both participants repeatedly described that the experience of talking about themselves and their relationship with me was positive; they told me that the interviews gave them space and time to think about their lives and relationships, particularly during a period of time which was so busy that they did not have many opportunities for reflection. Each phase of the research gave them a chance to reflect upon their lives over the past few months, both individually and jointly, illustrating some positive ethical considerations of this research.

In addition, the carrying out of pluralistic qualitative interpretation requires the researcher to consider the multiple interpretations carefully and flexibly, meaning that there is less likelihood that a particular interpretation will be favoured or imposed over another one. Therefore, the employment of multiple interpretative lenses guards against the researcher becoming too attached to a particular perspective to the exclusion of other possibilities, therefore prioritising a range of meanings in the participant data (Willing, 2012). This illustrates the ethically sensitive approach of a pluralistic approach, and thus exemplifies other positive ethical considerations of this research.

Reflections on ethical concerns. Ethics are a central concern in psycho-social research as it differs from more traditional qualitative approaches regarding the manner in which participants are positioned (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). As a psycho-social researcher, I take the view that my participants do not always know why they feel and behave in the ways that they do, even if they believe that they do. This means that I am claiming the right to make sense of their experiences beyond the research encounter, suggesting that I am depriving the participants' of agency over their own story (Willing, 2012). Therefore, although I considered meeting with the participants to present and

discuss their findings with them, I decided against this as they may have been confronted with challenging interpretations which may have potentially been unethical (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Regarding a different type of ethical concern, one of the challenges I prepared myself for was maintaining participants engaged in the research for the duration of the data collection period, which took place during a demanding and challenging period of their lives. Therefore from the outset, I knew that my relationship with each of my participants as individuals, as well as with both of them as a couple, could play a key factor in this. I endeavoured to remain as sensitive to their individual, dyadic and familial needs and wants at all times throughout the research, as well as finding a place for my research needs in all of this.

I was also aware of the issues around anonymity through the adoption of a single case study, as well as the unusualness of this approach in doctoral research. I engaged in extensive conversations with my supervisors about the ethics revolving this approach as well as the challenges. Nevertheless, I was reassured and given confidence by the use of single case study design elsewhere (e.g. Josselin, 2013).

In terms of my positionality regarding being in a long term couple relationship and not yet having any children, I strove to be empathic and sensitive throughout the entire research process, trying to consider all manner of details I could imagine revolving becoming a parent, down to what I wore for the interviews. For example, without making any assumptions, I wanted the female participant to feel comfortable with me having intimate and lengthy one-to-one conversations with her husband, sometimes alone in the house with him.

I was also aware that some women may feel uncomfortable with their body during pregnancy and after giving birth, and so I considered my own clothing as I did not want this to be an issue for them, or for the research. Further, if there was any small talk before, in between or after the interviews with one of them, I strove to mention the content of this small talk with the other participant so they did not feel left out or that I had more of a relationship with one of them over the other one. Although this may seem like minutiae, I wanted to facilitate our research relationship, as well as avoid the creation of potential additional stressors to the participants as individuals or to their relationship.

Research relationship with participants. The multifaceted relational aspect of the research into the dynamics of a couple relationship included three of us at a minimum at any given moment; as well as including the participant's children, born and unborn, regardless of whether they were physically present or not. I had a relationship with Claire, a relationship with Jack, and a relationship with their relationship as a couple. Regarding positionality, it may have been that I felt I had more of a relationship with them than they had with me, due to my immersion into their interviews during their elicitation and analyses. The participants may have also felt this way due to the limited amount that I reciprocated in divulging information about myself as I did not want them to feel uncomfortable or judged by me. I also did not want them to assume that I knew what they meant when discussing their relationship. Therefore, when they asked me questions about myself, I answered them honestly but briefly. I was especially aware of the boundaries, and that I was there as a researcher and not in a therapeutic capacity. Nevertheless, I developed and fostered a genuine relationship and somewhat of an attachment to them and to their relationship.

Reflections on myself as the researcher. Reflecting upon my relationship with the participants at the various levels throughout the lengthy period of time enabled me to gain some insight into some of my own relational behaviours, and how I acted them out with the participants. As previously mentioned, the main method of communication with them was via email and with Claire only – she checked dates and times with Jack and then emailed back, and so I became familiar with her manner of writing messages. When arranging and discussing the initial interviews for the first phase of data collection, Claire came across as quite bubbly and friendly. However, when I contacted her for the second phase of the research, when the second child was around 4 months old, her messages were quite short and abrupt for no reason that was apparent to me. My typical response to such situations in other relationships is to think that I may have done something to upset the other person, although after this initial response I have a dialogue with myself to consider alternative reasons outside of myself. However, following this initial reaction to Claire’s email, I proceeded to read and reread through our email exchanges trying to find what I had said to upset her. It wasn’t until reading back through my reflexive journal that I realised I was behaving with her in ways that I would in other close relationships. I reminded myself of the boundaries of our research-based relationship and so I decided to email Claire back in my normal friendly yet professional manner. I later found out that her family had had a virus and they were all feeling quite unwell for some time and it was nothing to do with me. Subsequent emails from Claire ranged from being chatty and friendly, including signing off with kisses at times, to more abrupt emails of “yeah that’s fine”. This example illustrates some of the intricacies of researcher identity, and the complexities and shifting multiplicity of being human and relational, interacting with participants and their own shifting multiple identities. The example also illuminates my awareness and understanding of some of

these phenomena, and the usefulness of keeping a reflexive journal which has facilitated this insight. These are ethical considerations beyond the typical rules and guidelines which one considers at the outset of research, and so this example also serves to illustrate arising and developing ethical issues and thus ethical decisions made throughout the research process as they appear and become relevant, as well as some of the ways in which I have tried to remain sensitive to them.

Ensuring quality in qualitative research

Qualitative quality. Evaluating the quality of qualitative research can be complex due to the heterogeneity of the many approaches. Pre-defined sets of quality criteria may not be applicable to all qualitative methods due to their differences (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Similar to issues arising from the application of quantitative quality criterion to qualitative research - such as validity, reliability and generalisability - it is also troublesome to judge qualitative research conducted within one paradigm using criteria developed from another one (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Nevertheless, some researchers have recognised the heterogeneity within qualitative research and have attempted to develop universal criteria (e.g. Tracy, 2010; Yardley, 2008). However, others have voiced their concerns about the appropriateness of these universal checklists and emphasise the risk of accepting this 'one size fits all' as it may engender role reversal in qualitative research and quality criteria resulting in 'the tail wagging the dog', where the quality standards become the main focus and the actual qualitative research is rendered a subsidiary (Barbour, 2001, p. 1115). Therefore, qualitative researchers have been advised not to succumb to meeting the demands of a fully unequivocal set of universal quality standards as it is the characteristics of the specific qualitative approach that prescribes what the quality criteria should be, and thus

undertaking a universal approach may not necessarily align with the particular requirements of the research (Hammersley, 2007).

This may be particularly pertinent in the case of a pluralistic qualitative approach as it is not possible to maintain the same quality measures across the different methods (Barker & Pistrang, 2005) and the epistemological scope of this approach research may be too broad for universal quality standards. Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, and Dillon (2003) developed four overarching guiding principles based on a review of published quality frameworks devised in extensive consultation with qualitative experts. The review found that all frameworks have been recognised to have a primary concern with identifying good practice in qualitative research, and that it is up to the researcher to judge the overall value of the research based on choice of the most relevant principles.

As Spencer et al.'s (2003) guiding principles are at a sufficiently high level of abstraction to encompass a diversity of qualitative approaches, they meet the quality demands of a pluralistic qualitative approach and therefore fit my research; Table 2 shows the principles and their descriptions. Each principle is subsequently discussed in turn in relation to the current study.

Table 2

Spencer et al.'s (2003) quality guiding principles

Principle	Description
Contributory	Contributes to advancing wider knowledge
Defensible in design	The design includes strategies which address the research question
Rigorous	Systematic and transparent data collection, analysis and interpretation
Credible	Claims should be credible, grounded and plausible in relation to the evidence generated

This research contributes to advancing wider knowledge and understanding because of the insights into the nuances and changes in attachment behaviours longitudinally across a life event that it brings. Rather than focusing solely on the outcome, the research uses an innovative methodological approach to investigate in depth and from many perspectives, the experiences of the transition to second-time parenthood. In doing so it helps to reach new and alternative understandings of adult attachment. It also adds to wider knowledge by suggesting questions for further research as well as ways of identifying and supporting couples who become parents for the second time.

Each method of data collection has been designed so that it generates data pertaining to the overarching research question. For example, the individual semi-structured interviews and diary entries serve to address the objectives which focus on the individual's sense of self and the individual's sense of the couple relationship. The individual life story interview at the start of the research functions to provide biographical information about each participant, which is necessary in order to make the links and connections required from the psycho-social reading. The shared photo-

elicitation unstructured interviews attend to the objectives addressing their joint sense of their couple relationship.

The narrative analysis functions to address objectives regarding the construction of identity through the stories the participants tell, both as individuals and as a couple. The psycho-social reading serves to address objectives concerning their inner motivations for why they say what they do, both as individuals and as a couple. The design of this research is defensible in that every method of data collection and data analysis has a clear rationale, and all together address the overarching research question.

In addition, this research displays rigour through its thoroughness and extensive focus on its philosophical and methodological foundation, which has been continuously opened up to evaluation and inspection by myself and my supervisors throughout the research process. This research process is transparent by its explication of the chosen methodological decisions as well as in the clear accounts provided in this chapter of how the research is conducted so that readers can see how the findings were arrived at.

This research is credible in claim by its provision of sufficient data extracts in order to ground interpretations in the data, as well as to make understandings of the data explicit. In addition, this has been done so that the reader can judge the fit and plausibility between the data and my interpretations.

Reflexivity is also considered to be an essential quality standard as the researcher unavoidably influences the conduct of the inquiry. Therefore it is important that the researcher reflects on their role in the research process and to consider the ways in which they may have had an impact (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Qualitative researchers are encouraged to disclose relevant personal background, as well as relevant personal characteristics, and describe any first-hand experience with the phenomenon

under investigation that may have influenced how the data were collected and analysed (Barker & Pistrang, 2005). In order to address reflexivity, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process, which included reflexive notes on the practicalities of the research itself and decisions and their rationales, as well as reflexive notes on my thoughts and feelings. Meetings with my supervisors also provided space for reflexive discussions, which provided an additional layer and perspective to how I may have influenced the research process. Keeping the reflexive journal and supervision meetings helped me to separate my feelings and my story from those of my participants'. In order to display how I have addressed this quality criterion, I have weaved in my own reflexivity about different aspects of the research process, as well as about my relevant personal background and experiences elsewhere in this chapter. It has been weaved throughout so that rather than containing and presenting it in a 'tidy' reflexive paragraph here, I hope it has demonstrated my immersion in this research as well as the intensity of my relationship with it.

Pluralistic quality. In addition to the criteria discussed above, pluralistic qualitative analyses require some additional consideration regarding quality. To address these, this research presents the findings for each analytical method separately, enabling comparisons to be drawn between the interpretations (Clarke et al., 2015). This is particularly suitable for the purposes of the research as each finding is treated with equal significance and is considered to reflect a different dimension of the same phenomenon. This allows for multiple possibilities to be constructed rather than limiting phenomena to an either-or ontological perspective, thus recognising the complexity of participant's lives (Frost et al., 2011). The different interpretations offered by each method of analysis stand alone and taken together offer insights into the phenomena that monomethodological studies are not able to do (Clarke et al., 2015). Therefore, following the

two different analyses and interpretations of each interview, I have sought to draw out and highlight the overlap and differences in meanings.

In order to facilitate the reader to hold in mind a picture of Claire and Jack and both their relational individual and joint histories, a brief summary of their life stories generated from their biographical interviews follows. This chapter subsequently ends with a brief outline of my own story and a final reflection in order to demonstrate how I have located myself throughout the research process.

The Participants' Life Stories

Claire's individual biography. Claire was born in the 1980s in Canada. She was the fourth child (three of the children were girls), and lived with her family unit as well as her paternal grandmother who lived in an annex off their house; her paternal grandfather died before Claire was born. Two years after her birth, her mother gave birth to Claire's brother who was the fifth and final child.

Claire's father was powerful, emotionally controlling and intrusive; she felt unloved and dismissed by him. She also felt unloved and dismissed by her mother, and her relationship with her mother was characterised by emotional neglect, physical absence and unreliability. Her parent's marriage was discordant during Claire's childhood. Claire had an extremely close relationship with her grandmother, and felt she was the only one who loved her. Claire's grandmother had a degenerative central nervous system disorder and went to live in a care home, and then died when Claire was nine years old. The funeral took place one week after her ninth birthday. Claire experienced a very difficult time following the death of her grandmother and was left to cope with her feelings alone.

Claire went onto an internet music message board when she was 14 years old, and met Jack on there. He was 9 years older than her and lived in England. Claire initially pretended to be aged 18 when she went on the internet board and they got on very well together. Claire then revealed that she was younger than she had originally told Jack and he felt angry and tricked so they didn't talk for a few months. However, a few months later they resumed their relationship and were penpals over the next 7 years and had a special connection.

At age 16, Claire dated a boy from her school, and they had a sexual relationship (they lost their virginities together). They were each other's first love and had plans to get married. Claire's father found out about her forbidden romantic relationship and Claire ran away during the summer between school years. During this time, her parents divorced and her mother moved away to live in a large North American city. Claire moved in with her mother after the summer, and attended a high school there, and saw her boyfriend on some weekends. However, the six to eight months following the divorce were very difficult for Claire. Nevertheless, Claire had to cope with coming to terms with these events and her feelings about these by herself because her mother was preoccupied with her own feelings and could not offer Claire any support. When living with her mother, Claire would spend most of her time alone as her mother was hardly ever present.

At age 18, Claire finished high school and graduated. Her mother had a boyfriend and they were planning to move elsewhere together. Following graduation, Claire immediately got a job in retail and broke up with her boyfriend. One month later, she met Ben who worked the overnight shift and they started dating; he was 29 years old. At start of the relationship, she felt hesitant about her feelings for Ben but then these feelings changed to really liking him at the same time that Ben no longer wanted

to be with Claire and went to another state to have a fling with his ex-girlfriend. After his fling, Ben returned and wanted to resume his romantic relationship with Claire to which she agreed. They started cohabiting 3 months later. One year later, her mother married her boyfriend and moved away. One year after this, at age 20, Claire broke up with Ben (two years after the start of their relationship).

Claire flew over to England in May 2008. During this trip, Claire and Jack started dating each other. Upon her return from the trip to England, Claire moved in with one of her older sisters who had four small children and whose husband had been deployed for a period of 18 months. This experience was damaging to her and her sister's relationship and Claire moved out on barely speaking terms as soon as her sister's husband returned from deployment.

Jack's individual biography. Jack was born in the UK in the 1970s. His mother is from Northern Europe and had lived in the UK for a few years before meeting his British father. Jack's mother never knew her own father and does not have a good relationship with her mother.

Jack and his mother had a close relationship when Jack was a young child. She didn't push him to do anything that he didn't want to do, such as not taking him to nursery until he felt he was ready at age 4. Jack's mother indulged his interests such as computer games and taking him to exhibitions. Jack's father worked in the fashion business and travelled a lot around Europe selling the products and so he was not very present. When his father returned from his business trips, Jack attempted to get his attention and to spend all his time with his father but didn't succeed. Instead, Jack's father behaved like an older sibling and would play a lot of games with him. Jack didn't feel able to talk to him and kept any issues he had to himself or talked with his mother

about them. Nevertheless, Jack was a confident child; he was popular at school, form captain and head of clubs.

Jack's parents argued quite a lot and when he was 9 years old, his parents divorced and his father moved out. His mother subsequently broke down for the following five to six months, and Jack stepped into the parent role and took care of the house and even comforted his mother at times. Around that Christmas time, Jack felt that his mother was finally strong enough and so he allowed himself to break down. Jack was very angry and started seeing a therapist which helped him. His father quickly started a relationship with another woman who later became his step-mother and she was emotionally abusive and manipulative towards Jack.

Jack was no longer confident at school; he stopped being the form captain and stopped putting himself forward to lead clubs. He felt like an outsider and this carried on to his teenage years until he connected with a group of friends over music and this became an important part of his life. He went to university to study a joint honours degree. Although Jack still felt unconfident, he made a couple of close friends there, of which one is still a good friend to this day. In his second year at university Jack went on an exchange for a year to the USA. Jack had two different girlfriends during this time, made a lot of friends and his confidence started to build up.

Following graduation he worked in the music industry, but remained interested in psychology. Throughout his twenties, Jack had a lot of girlfriends as he did not commit to a relationship beyond 6 months to a yearlong. It was following the end of one of those relationships that Jack went onto an internet board and met Claire on there when she was 14 years old and he was 23 years old, and they had their penpal friendship over the next 7 years.

Claire's and Jack's shared biography. When Claire was 20 years old, she travelled to the UK with the purpose of meeting Jack in person for the first time. Jack wasn't in a romantic relationship at the time, and when they met up, he and Claire clicked and quickly decided to become a couple and have a long-distance relationship. They visited each other back and forth a few times and got engaged 6 months after meeting each other in person for the first time; however, it was difficult to maintain their relationship long-distance.

At the time, Jack was unhappy in his job and wanted to get back into psychology, and when the opportunity came up to do a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology focusing on marriage and family therapy in the USA, he and Claire saw it as a way to be together. He was accepted onto the course and migrated there, whilst Claire's work transferred her to the same state and she moved in with Jack. They got married and two months later found out they were expecting their first child.

Jack had a lot going on with his Master's course, and had made friends. Whereas Claire had a lack of friends and felt abandoned by Jack and felt very unhappy. In addition, Claire was ill during the early part of her pregnancy, throwing up and not eating, which in turn made her feel miserable and depressed. Jack found it difficult to balance supporting Claire with everything else that was going on for him, and their relationship subsequently experienced serious difficulties and they almost separated. However, their relationship underwent an important and positive shift when they subsequently attended marriage counselling and they learnt how to communicate better with each other.

Shane was born in September 2010, and Claire had to go back to work as she was only had 6 weeks of state-given maternity leave, after which she returned to work.

They did not want to place Shane into day-care and so Jack became a stay at home father to take care of the baby. In terms of parenting, they agreed to practice attachment parenting, which involves co-sleeping, child-led weaning and no physical punishment.

However, Jack had a sense of missing family in their lives, and Claire was missing out on Shane growing up while she was working. A few months later they decided to migrate to the UK to live and moved in with Jack's father. Jack found employment as a relationship therapist (his practice was underpinned by an attachment theory framework) and Claire stayed at home to look after Shane. After a year of living with Jack's father, Claire, Jack and Shane moved into a rented flat of their own. In November 2013, their offer on a house they wanted to buy was accepted and in January 2014, Claire fell pregnant with their second child after they both decided to try for another child. Three months later, in April 2014, Claire and Jack moved into their new house and Jack started a new job, still as a relationship counsellor.

Deborah's biography. At the time of submitting this PhD, I am thirty years old and I have been in a couple relationship for over 14 years, and no children. I have also been a voluntary bereavement counsellor for four years. Although I was born in the Canary Islands, Spain, my mother moved to London when I was almost two years old. She had been born in London and spent her early childhood living here before moving to the Canaries where the rest of our family lives. My mother and father divorced when I was 5 years old and he returned to the Canaries shortly after. Growing up, I had an extremely difficult relationship with my mother where I felt unloved and controlled, as well as only conditionally accepted, based solely on my achievements and on how well I took care of my younger siblings. I met my partner when I was 16 and he was 17 years old, and he has since been a never-ending fountain of support and unconditional love,

which has provided me with a base from which to start self-healing. I reflected on how my sense of trust in others and my sense of self-worth have fluctuated over the years, and the external events that have been associated with these internal changes, which has in turn also affected the way I have viewed and managed the events. Having spent my undergraduate Psychology years interested in understanding my mother and her behaviour, I decided it was time to research something that was my own, meaningful to me, and not about my mother. Therefore, this led me to pursue the present research on couple relationships.

I met Claire and Jack when I was 28 years old; we were close in age. I immediately identified and empathised with Claire's own difficult childhood and relationship with her parents, namely her mother. During the biographical interview, I almost felt overwhelmed by the similarity of the events in her life to mine, and by her past feelings towards her mother. I identified with her view that her couple relationship has been healing and soothing, and that Jack has been a stable and positive presence in her life since she was 14 years old. I felt as though Claire was telling my story, and that she was at the happy ending I was striving for and slowly arriving at. I was also extremely intrigued to hear Jack's side of the story of their couple relationship. I felt a deep connection with both of them, which I realised was one-sided as I barely divulged anything about my own personal life to either of them.

I had made plans to spend time reflecting and making notes in my reflexive journal after each interview. After leaving the first interviews I realised this was even more important due to the closeness of Claire's personal story with my own story, and due to the similarities between their couple relationship and my own. In the analyses, it was sometimes difficult to delineate between myself and the participants, particularly

when their experiences resonated my own. Therefore, I made sure to debrief myself in my research journal after interviews and email conversations arranging subsequent interviews. I carried on with this practice while conducting the analyses, and I found it to be useful to read back over previous notes I'd made after the interview I was currently analysing. This was particularly useful as it helped me to separate my story from their story. I also made full use of my Supervisors, who facilitated me by bringing in different perspectives, which supported me to widen my field of vision when it would narrow down at times. At the end of this study, I am confident that the findings represent as closely as possible the accounts presented to me by Claire and Jack, and that these findings contribute to the literature that seeks to understand the dynamics of attachment behaviours in couple relationships following a life event.

Reflections on my position as the researcher. Considerable attention was paid to my role as the researcher throughout the research process. I adopted a personal reflexive stance which enabled me to attend to my status, inextricably linked with my identity, maternal status, gender, and as insider or outsider researcher. I considered how these and other dimensions may have influenced data collection and the interpretive work. Through reflexive practice such as using my reflexive journal, consulting with supervisors and seeking external reviews of my work, I came to recognise my researcher position as that of both insider and outsider.

I was an insider because of my professional status of being an attachment researcher, researching participants for whom attachment theory was a significant aspect of their lives. This was both professional in Jack's work and personally in Claire's keen interest in attachment theory, as well as the engagement of both partners with attachment parenting strategies. My insider position in this regard was explicit to the participants at the very start of the data collection process, although there was no

effort on my behalf to draw attention to this as I wanted to minimise as far as possible assumptions made by the participants of shared understanding. This was demonstrated at times through each of them respectively using attachment theoretical technical concepts in some of the interviews. However, our shared interest and status helped us to develop rapport, openness and trust, which in turn facilitated the interviews in eliciting very rich and profound personal data. In addition, I felt that this added shared connection between the three of us possibly assisted in ensuring that Jack and Claire stayed involved in the research until the end of the longitudinal and demanding data collection during a challenging period of their lives.

Aside from my professional status, I was also an insider because of my personal status of being a part of a couple relationship, although this remained unspoken until almost the end of data collection, as I again wanted to limit taken-for-granted meanings by the participants. However, it was important to hold in awareness my own possible preconceptions about the meanings and dynamics of couple relationships throughout the research process, especially during data collection, analysis and interpretation. I wanted to limit as far as possible failing to go into enough depth to understand the participants' own meanings, or to allow things to go unnoticed or unquestioned because of their familiarity, and so I endeavoured to remain as curious and open as possible throughout the research process. In a later section, I discuss my insider role as a counsellor and how this may have influenced the research process (see reflections on Jack as a therapist below).

In addition to being an insider, I was also simultaneously an outsider in another prominent aspect in both the research and in my participants' lives – I am not a parent to one child, let alone to two children. This meant that I was in a position to view their experiences from a broader and more distanced perspective, and noticing things that

may have been taken for granted as being ordinary by the participants. However, it may have limited some insights into the meanings of these experiences. Nevertheless, this was another aspect where discussion with my Supervisors, of whom one was a mother to two children and a researcher of motherhood, was valuable.

My reflexive journal was instrumental for capturing my reflections on both my insider and outsider position as researcher, and it enabled me to better identify and understand my contribution to the meaning-making process. This was particularly important during the analytical work, particularly as the contextual social constructionist approach to the narrative analysis views the researcher's involvement in interpretation as also being context-dependent, and the psycho-social approach emphasises the researcher's emotional response to the participant. Keeping a reflexive journal allowed me to have enhanced awareness of my subjectivity and its influences. Additionally, by using a pluralistic approach and thus the use and application of various analytical perspectives helped to minimise any possible favouring of one worldview or interpretation over others, thus aiding in the illumination of what was real to the participants.

Reflections on Jack as a therapist. Reflecting on Jack's role as an attachment based couples' therapist, I felt that it may have impacted upon our relationship as well as on the research encounters. Attachment theory was not mentioned during communication in setting up the interviews; however it was written in the title of the consent forms. Nevertheless, nothing was discussed about this until Jack told me about his Masters course and current job during our first interview. At that moment, I felt our roles shift slightly as I then realised we shared more similarities than he was aware of.

I was also a voluntary bereavement counsellor at the time, and sitting opposite one another in the interview with Jack doing most of the talking and me doing most of the listening suddenly felt very much like a therapy session with me as the therapist and Jack as the client. Although making interpretations during interviewing is not my particular style, I became very conscious of trying not to slip into doing so, and kept myself grounded in my role as the interviewer and researcher as far as possible by writing in my reflexive journal immediately after each interview, as well as during analysis. I also discussed tensions and challenges with my Supervisors, who are also both therapists as well as researchers.

The following two chapters present Claire's and Jack's respective pluralistic analysis across the transition to second-time motherhood and fatherhood. The chapter following these presents the pluralistic analyses of their shared stories across the transition to second-time parenthood. These three ensuing empirical chapters all follow the same format of presentation.

Chapter 3: Claire's Stories across Phase 1 and Phase 2

Up to this point, I have established the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this thesis. The previous chapter ended with a summary of the participants' respective individual as well as shared biographies, providing the background to their current stories. This chapter examines Claire's current stories longitudinally across the transition to second-time motherhood, and it aims to understand how she makes sense of herself and of her couple relationship, as well as why she does so in this manner.

The chapter is divided into two sections representing the two phases of the research: Phase One when the couple is in the third trimester of the second child's pregnancy, and Phase Two when the second child is four months old. Each section presents the findings of the narrative analysis and psycho-social reading. Some of the same narratives are examined in each method of analysis so that different interpretations can be reached. This is followed by a discussion of how the findings overlap with each other or draw out different meanings to enrich each other.

Phase One

Setting the scene: the interview. This is the very first interview with this couple, and it starts with Claire's individual interview when the couple are in their third trimester of pregnancy. I arrive at their house at the arranged time, where I am greeted by Claire and her husband. Their son Shane is attending his nursery, and will need picking up in a couple of hours. We go into the living room, and Jack then goes to another room and leaves me alone with Claire to conduct the interviews. This starts with the biographical interview derived from the BNIM approach, followed immediately and seamlessly by the semi-structured interview. We remain uninterrupted throughout.

Claire's Phase One Narrative Analysis

Claire's construction of her sense of self before the second child. The following narrative illustrates Claire's awareness of her emotional reactions (see Table 3):

Table 3

Claire's story about having self-care

A:	D: can you tell me, what do you do when you experience umm either difficulties, feelings of stress or distress? What do you do?
O:	C: I think my initial reaction... is... because it was like hardwired into me is just shut down and pre- just get angry...
E:	cos anger is like a secondary emotion, like it's a a reaction to fear...
CA:	but now I'm able- I actually recognise when that process is starting to happen and if I see that working inside my head and I feel that... I think oh! no! ok I'm stressed I need to... have a bath, I need to watch a rubbish film or I need to... see Jack and we need to talk about it or I need to write something...
E:	so I try to- I try to really have a lot of self-care when those things come up because if I don't then I sort of spiral into my old established patterns and get really shut down and really angry and really closed off
R:	<i>(low tone)</i> and that doesn't work out so well

Before answering my question about what her actions are when she experiences distress, Claire tells me about her typical initial response and then justifies the reason for this by placing it in the context of how she has responded in the past. The use of the word "hardwired" illuminates Claire's understanding that her initial reaction of shutting down and getting angry is a difficult behaviour to change. The Orientation is subsequently followed with an understanding of why this may be, which conveys Claire's awareness of what her typical response might mean. This narrative construction

serves to illuminate Claire as having an intellectual understanding of herself in that she uses anger and shutting down as a self-protective strategy. The Complicating Action functions to express what the alternative strategies are in comparison to how Claire describes herself as typically reacting. By conveying her present behaviour in the context of her past behaviour, she acknowledges and demonstrates how much things have changed for the better. The text also signifies that her present reaction to stress is an active and conscious process which takes an effort to make. The significance of the story is what would happen if Claire didn't engage with her coping strategies, constructing her as someone who continuously exerts self-awareness and active coping behaviours so as not to revert back to typical reactions to experiences of difficulties. This is stressed in the narrative's outcome of "that doesn't work out so well", and although no details are offered as to what *that* looks like, Claire constructs her typical reaction as exacerbating the situation:

because if it's in my head, I'll just... it'll drive me crazy, I'll make it a bigger thing than it is, I'll turn it in- cos my brain is amazingly efficient at... taking something innocuous and... using paranoia to weave it into the world is ending!

and that allowing these "hardwired" feelings to arise will be immensely distressing.

Elsewhere, Claire says she is:

at the point in my life where I ff- I can finally say to someone 'I'm really stressed... so bla bla bla bla bla' rather than just going off and screaming and whatever... and taking it out on other people

and so constructing her past sense of self as not being in control of her feelings and consequent behaviour, and as someone who punishes others for this. Claire constructs

her present sense of self as someone who is in control of her feelings and behaviour, further highlighting the contrast between her past sense of self and her current sense of self. This account serves to characterise Claire as someone who is able to recognise her feelings and who has the ability to manage undesirable feelings manifesting in automatic out-of-control behaviours as a response to stressful situations. Claire constructs herself as someone who exercises self-care, portraying herself as someone who is in control of herself.

Claire constructs herself as someone who will turn to close others for support as one of her coping strategies when she experiences difficult feelings “if I’m experiencing stress or feelings... sad feelings or whatever, I NEED to speak to someone about it, whether that’s Jack or one of my friends”. Claire’s stress of the word “NEED” emphasises her construction of herself as someone who relies on the support of others to cope with these feelings in a manner other than her “old established patterns” which she understands “doesn’t work out so well.” By describing her as such, the account locates these others as having the ability to help Claire during times of need, which helps her to “disperse what’s going on in my head”. However, Claire tells me that she uses others as “a sounding board”, portraying them as passively giving support and constructing herself as retaining agency over how she copes with her own feelings.

When Claire speaks about stressful situations, she tells me that she is good at coping by herself. The following story depicts this (see Table 4):

Table 4

Claire's narrative about coping on her own but falling apart around others

A:	D: can you tell me about a time when you were on your own and feeling distress?
O:	C: Jack was at work
CA:	and Shane fell and hit his head and he had sort of like had a fit and I had to call A&E or the ambulance, and we had to go to the A&E
O:	and I was on my own for that and Jack showed up later
R:	and it was fine in the end and we st- you know, we stayed for observation and there was nothing wrong, didn't even have a bump...
E:	um but it was just because he had that fit that they had to observe him... um so that was... difficult but when I'm on my own, I'm very good... it's when I'm around other people that I fall apart, I guess because it's safe to do that cos when I'm on my own it's not safe to fall apart cos I know I've only got me um and especially when you have a small child you're like, they've only got me, I've gotta keep my shit together... so... I just go to like machine efficient mode, like I knew I have to dial this, I have to keep him still, I have to bla bla bla bla um and so that's fine, I only really break down when- when,
R:	then like Jack got to the hospital, then I was like okaaaay I can... fall apart now

The account provides minimal details about the background and events, and offers the outcome of the story quite early on – a reassurance that Shane was ok. The elements of this narrative serve to build a quick picture to put its meaning into context which is that Jack is at work, along with the promptly offered Resolution, function to quickly alleviate any concerns the listener may have about the child's wellbeing. This also rapidly moves the story onto its more detailed and lengthier Evaluation, suggesting that this element is the most important part of the narrative.

The text uses Evaluation to portray Claire as a survivor and a good one at that, knowing what she has to do and as having the ability to execute these actions without

the help of others. She constructs herself as self-sufficient and capable of survival when on her own. Claire constructs her survival capabilities and self-sufficiency as being choiceless when her child is relying solely on her “I’ve gotta keep my shit together” because “they’ve only got me”; she cannot fail as there is no one else to help her child. Claire goes into “machine efficient mode”, and the account portrays her as executing the situation in an unemotional, proficient and controlled manner; when Shane is in her care, Claire prioritises his care over her own.

The meaning of this story depicts Claire as a self-supporting person who can fend for herself, putting her own feelings aside for the time being. It also portrays Claire as a selfless and self-sufficient mother. The narrative ends with a second Resolution, where Claire can “fall apart” when Jack arrives at the hospital, portraying Claire as someone who is able to keep it together when she is alone until such a time when she is no longer solely responsible and feels safe in her husband’s presence. This indicates that she trusts him with the care of their child. The text also depicts Claire as being trusting of her husband with her own feelings; it portrays her as feeling safe enough with him to allow her own feelings to emerge “I’m allowed to feel like I want to puke now, so I was just like ohhhhhhhh”. Claire constructs herself as both an effective self-reliant person when on her own, and as a person who can rely on her husband when he is available.

Claire’s construction of herself as a person who puts her own feelings aside during a stressful situation involving her son is further depicted in a story about moving home. Claire was at their new house alone with Shane and all the boxes, while Jack was gone for hours dealing with a problem at their old house. Claire tells me that she was “super stressed out about it” and:

that was a really hard day cos then at the same time like I can't- I can't really show that to Shane, I can't cos it's not his fault, it doesn't involve him, he's- and in the meantime he's like (*comical voice*) 'oh! Let's play Hungry Hungry Hippos, let's draw' you know... (*normal voice*) and I'm just like 'yes! Of course!' and internally I'm screaming like about all this other stuff that's (*chuckling next two words*) going on he doesn't (*chuckling next two words*) care about.

This narrative describes Claire as feeling extremely stressed when on her own and caring for Shane while her husband was unavailable during that time. It expresses Claire's understanding that the demanding events and the way she was feeling were not her son's concerns. It portrays her as being choiceless in her decision not to display her stress to Shane, despite the magnitude of her own difficult feelings. Claire constructs herself as capable and self-sufficient when being relied on by her son.

Claire speaks about her past and how she has been able to change her sense of self for the better. The following narrative in Table 5 illustrates this:

Table 5

Claire's story about changing her past behaviours in the present

A:	it's been a learning curve
O:	because I started out... one- one way... um just sort of being ignored and not feeling loved or attached... and now I do
E:	because thankfully I ended up with a therapist who understands attachment theory (<i>loud inhale</i>) ...
CA:	and have had a lot of counselling and a lot of ups and downs
R:	and... understand that about myself so I was able to repair that... attachment injury
E:	so um... yeah, no, I feel like I'm... going to be able to raise secure kids which

is good because I've broken the cycle, but yeah I think it's just unfortunately unless you understand... why we are wired the way we are and the things that affect us and that form us from infancy... it's very hard to break the cycle

The story uses Orientation to first locate Claire's past sense of self as "not feeling loved or attached" and to locate her current sense of self as "and now I do". Claire constructs her identity as having been through a journey of change. The narrative depicts the meaning of this change as passive and being due to Claire's husband's occupation and therefore, due to something that was largely out of her control. This is highlighted by her use of the words "thankfully I ended up." However, the events of the story portray Claire as actively taking action by having counselling to help understand and change her sense of self, with the outcome of repairing herself. Claire constructs herself as being in charge of both her sense of self and of this positive change.

She constructs a further meaning relating to the outcome of the narrative, which is that she has "broken the cycle", and so she will "be able to raise secure kids". This portrays Claire as a good mother because she has been able to reflect on and understand her past and change from it "it's been a learning curve", and so her children will not be affected by her past sense of self. Furthermore, the technical and correct use of words, such as "secure" and "attachment injury" function to construct Claire as a knowledgeable person who understands herself at a psychological level. This account serves to portray Claire as an agentic person who has the power to change her sense of identity.

When thinking about the future, Claire contrasts her relationship with her first-born Shane with her expectations of the start of her relationship with her second child when born:

Having a second child feels so much like a second chance. I felt so much anxiety and self-doubt after Shane was born – and I'm very confident now as to the kind of mother I am. I look forward to enjoying more of the new born phase

Claire constructs herself as a confident mother who is sure of herself in contrast to how she constructs her past self as a nervous and uncertain mother. This highlights the change to her sense of identity. She portrays the meaning of this as having another opportunity to savour the start of her relationship with her second child as Claire deems that she will not be preoccupied with her sense of self as a mother. This account serves to convey Claire as an indisputable good mother, who has learnt from her past experiences and now knows with certainty what she is doing, which for her means that she will have a second chance to enact good motherhood.

Claire's construction of her couple relationship before the second child.

Claire considers that one of her current close adult relationships is with her husband Jack. She describes him as her best friend:

he's my best friend, he's known me since I was 14... he's seen me at my absolute worst... and he's seen me at my best and he's always supported me, he's never walked away and he could have... (*lower tone*) I've given him reason a lot- a lot of times... you know, any other person probably would have but he's always believed in us.

Claire constructs her sense of her relationship with Jack to be that he has stuck by her and has been supportive through her positives and her negatives, portraying him as being different to others because of his belief in their togetherness. The account conveys Claire as having been difficult, and she constructs her sense of their couple relationship

as one that has survived hardships presented by her. In addition, Claire describes Jack as someone she would turn to for support when feeling stressed:

I don't have to tell him the background, I'll say I'm feeling like this... because my mum... hasn't text me in three weeks and he'll, and he'll instantly know... all the background that's there, all the issues, all the damage... um and its just, he knows how to comfort me.

Claire makes it clear that Jack has always been around and that he knows her background, and portrays him as an understanding person of what she wants from him. The text serves to convey Jack as someone who knows how to respond to Claire in a way that she finds soothing in times of need. She constructs her sense of their couple relationship as one where she is able to express her feelings and where she will feel understood and supported.

In response to being asked about a particular time when Claire felt stressed, she describes “the day from hell” when she had experienced a really difficult time with a succession of stressful events involving lunch and a broken toilet, culminating in finding out that her step-father was in hospital. Claire found this out by chance only because she text her mother to ask whether she would like to chat over FaceTime, with her mother informing her of her step-father’s situation and telling Claire to check Facebook. She expresses that she felt “ANGRY” and that “it was just a shit day”. When Claire speaks about this, she tells me about Jack’s support during this stressful situation in the following narrative (see Table 6):

Table 6

Claire's story about Jack's support

A:	D: so what role did other people play if any, in terms of support or...?
O:	C: well I think it was, Jack was sorta like... after we had the actual plumber there and we had eaten,
CA:	he was just sorta like... 'whatever, don't worry about it like' and he gave me a hug and he said 'I'm sorry that your family's useless'
R:	and (<i>loud inhale</i>) ... (<i>low tone</i>) you know, he's really supportive when it comes to that stuff,
E:	so it was nice just to be able to... know that he understood and he was really caring about it so...

The story uses Orientation to situate Jack's support-giving as occurring once things had quietened down following the stressful events, conveying him as calm, patient and considerate. Claire describes the events of the story as centring on Jack's support-giving actions of demonstrating empathy and providing physical comfort while advising her to let go of any feelings of anxiety. The outcome of the story is that Jack is supportive when Claire feels stressed, and her words "when it comes to that stuff" suggests that Jack's comfort is an ongoing occurrence. The narrative constructs the meaning to centre around the demonstration of Jack's care and understanding of her, portraying him as someone who is soothing for Claire, and portraying her as someone who is soothed by him. She constructs her sense of their couple relationship as one where she feels supported by Jack when she experiences anxiety.

Narrative analysis summary. Claire constructs her sense of self as an individual who values closeness, shared experience and understanding in her close relationships as well as being in control of her emotional reactions to stress. She characterises herself as being self-reliant and reliant on others for support during

difficult times. The account portrays Claire as a selfless mother who puts her child's needs first. She also constructs herself as someone who has the power and agency to make changes to her sense of self.

In addition, Claire constructs her sense of her couple relationship as being a survivor of hardships. She constructs it as one that is supportive and understanding, offering comfort during times which are difficult for her.

Claire's Phase One Psycho-social Reading

Utter self-reliance. Claire seems to feel understood only by those who have a similar experience that they can draw on to understand her; for example, she says "I've got this other friend Sally who's kids are a bit older but she's just- she's also had similar sort of really messed up background so... we get together for coffee and we can just talk for... forever... yeah". Her friend's children are a bit older than her child, which may risk Sally not being similar enough to Claire. However, her friend seems to be 'saved' by the fact that she has also experienced a "messed up background", and so this similarity means that Claire permits herself to open up to Sally. Further, Claire cuts off when saying "for..." suggesting that she may unconsciously feel unsure of the depth of this relationship. This is followed by a pause and then a more definite and convincing "forever", followed by another short pause and an affirmation of what she has just said "yeah". This may indicate that Claire is self-affirming that her friendship with Sally is indeed a close one. This appears to serve to enforce her view of herself as someone who opens up to those who she perceives share her experience and thus understand her in the manner in which she wishes to be understood. Alternatively, selectively choosing who she opens up to may also defend her against possible distress of being misunderstood.

This is illustrated in the following when speaking about her relationship with her group of mum-friends:

I don't ask them for parenting advice cos... I realise we are doing a completely different form of parenting that most people don't do... and wouldn't understand and I know none- none of them are doing it so... I wouldn't- I don't turn to them to say 'oh! I can't! Shane's having really early mornings and late nights, what do you do?' cos they'll just say just let him cry it out' and that's... you know, we don't do that so...

The group of mum-friends do not share her parenting beliefs and Claire assumes that because of this, they will not understand her perspective and will therefore offer advice that is based solely on their own parenting perspectives. This seems to be a rather binary belief to have, which appears to function as a self-protective strategy from the anxiety of perceived potential insensitive and rejecting responses, and also appears to function as a defence constraining who is permitted to become close to her lest they hurt her.

Claire splits others into those who are 'good' and care for her, and those who are 'bad' and reject her. She says:

I can't open up if I don't- if I feel any kind of... like there's, if it doesn't feel like a safe space to do so... so I think just that and just... caring, like I need to feel like someone cares and makes an effort. I hate- I can't stand it when you say 'oh, let's meet up for coffee on this day and they're like 'oh yeah, yeah, I'll text you' and... no, it doesn't happen, I can't- if someone flakes out on me... twice I'm done... I'm not making any more attempts. If

they then wana come back and they can attempt, I'm not gona shun them...
but I'm done putting myself out there...

It seems that Claire's inner self may see others as unavailable and rejecting, and so to be vulnerable and close with another may arouse feelings of anxiety. It may be that these experiences she perceives as rejecting reproduce past feelings of painful rejection associated with her mother and her father, which would suggest that these are unresolved past relational experiences. By withdrawing and distancing herself from others before they reject her as well as putting constraints on who she will open up to defends against the felt anxiety of getting close and involved, and also allows her to remain in control of the relationship.

When I asked about whether she thought it was important to have someone close, her answer included:

we need, you know, we're not... solitary creatures, we're meant to be pack animals, we're meant to have... uhh community, you know when we were all living in caves we didn't all have our own little cubicle that we slept in you know, we all slept together in a big pile because it was safe, it was biologically appropriate...

and "our problems, our social problems come from trying to shut down... that part of us that needs to rely on people" as well as "we absolutely need to be close to other people cos we are not islands..." Claire gives a clear and logical theoretical explanation on the importance of closeness. However, these responses, spoken in the third person possibly as a way to maintain distance, seem to be an intellectualisation which may serve to defend against feelings of anxiety that closeness may evoke, and which avoids emotion. This seems to be yet another

manner for Claire to remain in control of the conversation as well as of her feelings by not giving them voice or space. This silencing also serves to suppress her feelings about this, indicating an avoidant state of mind concerning the importance of having close others.

Conflict in self-perception and behaviour. Claire has some insight as to what her typical response to feelings of distress is and the reason for it, as well as what she now tries to do differently and the reason for this:

I think my initial reaction... is... because it was like hardwired into me is just shut down and pre- just get angry... cos anger is like a secondary emotion, like it's a a reaction to fear... but now I'm able- I actually recognise when that process is starting to happen and if I see that working inside my head and I feel that... I think oh! no! ok I'm stressed I need to... have a bath, I need to watch a rubbish film or I need to... see Jack and we need to talk about it or I need to write something... so I try to- I try to really have a lot of self-care when those things come up because if I don't then I sort of spiral into my old established patterns and get really shut down and really angry and really closed off (*low tone*) and that doesn't work out so well.

Claire also says:

I think my... thing is that... it- it helps me disperse what's going on in my head cos otherwi- I mean I've spent a lifetime in my head agonising and catastrophising... and obsessing... so if I'm experiencing stress or feelings... sad feelings or whatever, I NEED to speak to someone about it whether that's Jack or one of my friends... because if it's in my head I'll just... it'll drive me crazy, I'll make it a bigger thing than it is, I'll turn it in-

cos my brain is amazingly efficient at... taking something innocuous and... using paranoia to weave it into the world is ending! Like really can do that within about... point three seconds (*thumps sofa*).

Claire recognises that she would use anger and shutting down as a defence to mask and downplay her actual feelings. This suggests that in the past she avoided allowing herself to feel these as they may have induced a sense of vulnerability which was too difficult to cope with. Claire conveys that she is now aware of her usual thought process and its development in the moment of feeling stressed and she will actively seek alternative coping strategies, such as self-comforting or seeking comfort from Jack or from one of her friends. However, if she doesn't self-soothe or turn to Jack or her friends for support, her response to the distressed feelings seems to be that her thoughts and feelings emerge and quickly escalate and become overwhelming. It seems as though Claire perceives herself as being trusting that others will be sensitive and emotionally available to comfort her during times of distress, but that she is unable to self-regulate her feelings on her own. This may also indicate that Claire is starting to view herself as someone who has worth and is not as fearful of rejection by others, as well as starting to view others as available and accepting. This suggests the start of an internal shift of her view of herself and of others from an avoidant to a secure state of mind.

When discussing her reaction to stressful events, Claire's talk focuses on what would happen if she didn't engage in her alternative-to-the-usual coping strategies, rather than what it is like when she does – does she actually feel soothed or comforted? It seems that this part of the novel comfort-seeking process may still be difficult for her and that even when she does turn to others for support, she may still feel anxious and vulnerable about possible rejection and so she defends acknowledging this in the interview by not even mentioning what it is like for her. It may be that this is a difficult

process for her even when she does manage to turn to others for support as this is not what she has been used to and she may feel vulnerable when doing so. She may block the feelings of anxiety this may arouse by not even mentioning what happens. There is also mostly an absence of talk around her feelings other than to say “so if I’m experiencing stress or feelings... sad feelings or whatever”. Further, Claire briefly acknowledges that she experiences feelings and that these may be stressful or sad, but she quickly moves on by dismissing these with “or whatever” followed by the rest of her sentence. Acknowledgement of her feelings does not make much of an appearance in the interview, but rather she presents mostly a cognitive understanding of what is going on for her and the reasons for this. This suggests that although she has a valuable intellectual awareness of her behaviour and sense of self, Claire may not engage in understanding her behaviour and sense of self from an affective perspective. This further suggests that she may experience an unresolved and unintegrated inner sense of self.

Claire’s presentation of herself when experiencing difficulties or feelings of stress or distress is that she will turn to others during these times, and that she will draw on support from either Jack or her friends for this. However, there is often an absence of talk around support-seeking. The following story about a stressful day has been seen in the preceding narrative analysis; however, the psycho-social reading draws out a different meaning, which is presented here:

um well yesterday, it was, it was like in the morning... while Shane’s been, he was getting up at like barely six o’clock and we were exhausted cos we had gone to bed really late... and then... the toilet clogged and then Jack had made, we’d made lunch and his mother was coming over to have lunch with us and he had made this salad dressing... and I spilled the salad

dressing all over the floor, all over that wall (*points to a specific wall in the living room*) as we were, just as we were about to eat and I was starving!... so we had to ss- clean that up um... and then he had to go collect a bed and someone has had to come collect a mattress that we were giving away and then we had to have the plumbers here for like three hours and it was like... the day from hell really and then I found, I... texted my mum to say 'hey you wana Facetime?' She's like 'oh no, your step dad's in hospital'...like... um okaay... what? and she's like 'check Facebook!' and then that just made me ANGRY cos I'm like what is WRONG with you?... um you don't bother texting me ever and I just CASUALLY say 'hey do you wana Facetime?' and like (*comical voice*) oh no! your step-dad's in hospital, I wouldn't have bothered to tell you (*normal voice*) and it was just a shit day and I was just like... by the afternoon... I was pretty much over it, I was ready to go to bed... um so yeah that was... that was that.

Claire describes this stressful day as “the day from hell” showing that she had an awful time of it. Up to this point of the story, there has been no mention of feelings or of seeking support for the inferred stressful feelings. Despite historically having a relationship with her mother that does not feature support-seeking but rather insensitivity, unavailability and rejection throughout her life, Claire asks for some face to face contact with her. Claire’s mother’s reaction is predictably insensitive and dismissing of how Claire might feel at hearing that her step-father is in the hospital and in saying that Claire should look on social media to find out more; this hurtful behaviour seems to confirm Claire’s inner sense of self that she should strive for distance and autonomy rather than for closeness and comfort as a protective strategy, and serves to confirm Claire’s view of others as unavailable and unsupportive. Claire

expresses her feelings of anger at the time; it appears that she felt anger as a way to defend against her painful feelings, such as hurt and disappointment. She also displays derogation towards her mother when using a comical voice to enact her. Further, her current anger towards her mother comes across in the interview with her loud emphasis on the word “ANGRY”, suggesting that painful feelings from past interactions may remain unresolved, affecting her present state of mind.

This negative effect can also be seen when Claire says she was “over it” and “ready to go to bed”, as though she had actively decided that she had had enough and so she was done feeling and thinking about it, which seems to be another way of avoiding her painful feelings as a defence against them. This avoidance is in contrast to what Claire says she does when feeling stressed or distressed; she perceives that she reacts by recognising when she is starting to feel angry and will then engage in soothing strategies, such as self-comforting or seeking support from Jack.

However, during this stressful encounter with her mother, Claire feels angry, she doesn’t seek support or engage in self-soothing, and detaches from her feelings; indeed it was actually Jack who offered Claire support rather than Claire seeking it from him. This suggests that this is a situation in which she spiralled into her “old established patterns” and got “really shut down and really angry and really closed off.” It seems that her current involvement in her feelings of anger towards her mother overwhelm her, indicating an unresolved and out of control state of mind, indicating avoidant attachment behaviours.

Further contrary to her perception of her support-seeking behaviour, Claire does not offer examples of actually turning to Jack for support when she is feeling stressed or distressed, highlighting her use of distancing strategies rather than support-seeking ones.

However, she does tell me about a time when she was on her own with her child Shane and he fell, hit his head and had a seizure, requiring an ambulance to take them to the hospital. During this time, Jack was at work and wasn't checking his messages and so didn't turn up at the hospital for several hours. Again, this story has been seen in the previous narrative analysis, but the psycho-social reading draws out an alternative meaning, which is presented here.

Regarding her time alone with Shane at the hospital, Claire says "when I'm on my own it's not safe to fall apart cos I've only got me" and "I just go to like machine efficient mode", indicating that any anxiety arising due to the stressful situation may have been inhibited by Claire in order to be able to handle the situation on her own. Further, there is a lack of mention of support-seeking for her own feelings from any of her other close adult relationships as she was unable to get in touch with Jack, indicating her maximisation of autonomy and demonstration of determination to handle this stressful situation alone. Claire goes on to say "then like Jack got to the hospital, then I was like okaaay I can... fall apart now", which indicates that she felt safe and supported enough to be able to step outside of "machine efficient mode". It also suggests that she permitted herself to feel the stressful emotions which may have impeded her efficiency in dealing with the situation had she not inhibited these at the time. However, it seems as though her determined autonomy also functions to keep her anxiety contained as, when her husband is available, she allows herself to crumble, relinquishing both control of the situation and over herself. This suggests that she oscillates between the extremes of self-control and personal strength to dependency and fragility, depending on the situation and availability of her attachment figure.

Claire has a close relationship with Jack, which is rooted in a long shared relational history:

Well, he's my best friend, he's known me since I was 14... he's seen me at my absolute worst... and he's seen me at my best and he's always supported me, he's never walked away and he could have... (*lower tone*) I've given him reason a lot- a lot of times... you know, any other person probably would have but he's always believed in us... um... and I just sort of feel- it sounds cheesy and everyone- maybe not everyone says this but I'm sure a lot of people say this, I genuinely feel like he's a part of me... from the minute I met him... you know... 15 years ago whenever it was... err... I felt like... something in him was speaking to something in me, like I was supposed to meet him...um and it just fit, it was just natural, I've never had to put on a facade... or anything, he's just been able to read me so...

Claire seems to idealise Jack here, emphasising him as being all good in his belief in their relationship and in his lack of abandonment despite Claire's perception of the many reasons she has given him to leave her; there is a lack of balance in both the negative and positive qualities he may bring to the relationship. Further, there is also an emphasis on herself as being all bad, and a lack of mention of the positive qualities she may bring to their relationship, suggesting that she may feel little self-worth.

It seems that Claire polarises Jack as being powerful and herself as being powerless in the relationship. This splitting may function to defend against the anxiety that Jack cannot be only all good, and that he may exercise his power to leave Claire and her perception of her bad behaviour, which may be devastating for her. However, Claire also positions Jack as being a part of her from the moment they met as well as

their relationship being destined and inevitable; perhaps this is demonstrative of her conviction that it will last forever, which may serve to defend against the anxiety of knowing that he is also separate from her. This suggests that she may not be able to bear the knowledge that Jack is an autonomous person who chooses to be in a relationship with her, which is a phenomenon that is not in her control and therefore has the potential to cause her pain. It seems that maintenance of an avoidant frame of mind with regards to this serves as a defence against this anxiety.

Psycho-social reading summary. Claire presents herself as being very autonomous and as having personal strength, with a determination to handle stresses alone. Claire inhibits both her own feelings of vulnerability and support-seeking behaviour in times of need, which is in opposition to the image of self-sufficiency she has of herself. This suggests that Claire has an internal view of herself as being the only one she can trust and depend upon to care and protect herself.

Claire doesn't actively seek support from Jack, although she perceives she does. However, Claire accepts the support Jack offers her in times of stress, and she allows herself to be soothed by him. Nevertheless, care-seeking and protection is enacted in a passive manner, and she does not seek support from close others when Jack is not available. However, Claire recognises that Jack responds sensitively, is loving, as well as emotionally available and supportive of her. Nevertheless, there are times when she splits Jack as a way of making sense and defending against awareness that he may sometimes behave in ways that hurt her, suggesting that she has not quite achieved a coherent sense of self and of him.

Comparison between Phase One Analyses

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found Claire to be someone who is in control of her feelings and her behaviour. However, there were some key distinctions in these similar findings – where the narrative analysis constructed this control as Claire’s preservation of agency, the psycho-social reading found that it meant that she placed constraints on closeness as a way to protect herself from perceived threat of painful feelings.

Both methods of analyses found Claire to be someone who understands herself, however the narrative analysis understood this as Claire’s agency and power to change her sense of identity. The psycho-social reading went beyond this to understand it in a more nuanced manner: Claire as someone who has an intellectual and cognitive awareness of herself and behaviour but lacking an affective awareness, suggesting that until she is able to integrate the two she will not be able to successfully change her sense of self and sense of others.

Equally, the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found that Claire understood her couple relationship to be a supportive one that is accepting of her and provides her with comfort. Nevertheless, the narrative analysis constructed the meaning of their couple relationship to be a survivor of hardships. In contrast, the psycho-social reading revealed that she sometimes idealises Jack and sometimes does not seek support from him during times of need (but instead accepts it when he spontaneously provides it), suggesting that she defends against being vulnerable with him.

Both methods of analyses found Claire to be someone who can make changes to her sense of self. The narrative analysis highlighted this in the construction of Claire as someone who has changed to have confidence in her mothering in contrast to previously

being nervous and uncertain. The psycho-social reading emphasised this change to her sense of self in its revelation of Claire starting to trust others during times of distress in contrast to previously handling stress completely self-sufficiently for fear of rejection from others.

Phase Two

Setting the scene: the interview. This is the second individual interview with Claire, which takes place when their second child is four months old. I arrive at their house and am greeted by Claire. She is alone with baby Henry as Jack is out and Shane is attending his nursery. We go into the living room with the baby, who is breastfed by Claire when he requires it. Shortly after the start of the interview, Jack arrives home. He calls out hello from the hallway but does not come into the living room or interrupt the interview. I don't see him until Claire and I finish her interview.

Claire's Phase Two Narrative Analysis

Claire's construction of her sense of self after the second child. When Claire speaks about stressful situations, she tells me about a story of the many demands made of her. This is illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 7):

Table 7

Claire's story about the multiple demands made of her

A:	Well, I'm stressed (<i>chuckles next word</i>) everyday! Pretty much.
O:	um this morning was a particularly bad morning just cos... what happens is, obviously Shane is still adjusting to sharing attention.
CA:	He acts up and I'm stressed out and I'm trying to do everything so then I just get annoyed with him which makes him act out more umm... and yeah, I mean

there- there's just moments of where he's sitting and he's calm and we can read, we can do something but then the baby'll start needing something and I'll look at the state of the kitchen and think 'oh, I've got to do, I've got to unload the dishwasher, I've got to do these loads of laundry etc'

R: and it just becomes a big chaotic uhh storm of things.

E: So... I think that just kind of snowballs on each other really.

The Abstract conveys that the story is about Claire's incessant stress. This is followed by an Orientation which provides the background of the situation being that Shane is still currently adjusting to not having Claire solely to himself and sharing her with his recently born baby brother Henry. The Orientation also sets the scene as taking place this morning which further serves to highlight the immediacy of Claire's relentless stress, as the ensuing events of the narrative took place merely a few hours prior to the interview. Claire speaks about Shane's disrupting behaviour when she was already feeling stressed and was busy tending to the many things that required her attention. She delineates how this made her feel further exasperated, which in turn further perpetuated Shane's disrupting behaviour; this serves to illustrate the circularity of Shane's behaviour and Claire's feelings of stress.

The events of the story proceed to describe the occasions when Shane does not behave disruptively and Claire has been able to devote her attention to him. However these occasions are short-lived as demands on Claire's attention will also be made by the baby and household chores. The events of the narrative appear to function to illuminate that her continual feelings of stress are not solely as a result of Shane's acting out behaviour as nevertheless, Claire's attention would be divided and demanded by the many things she needs to attend to such the baby and household chores in addition to

Shane. The text illustrates that these are the matters that require both her constant and simultaneous attention. Claire tells me that the outcome of the story is a feeling of an eruption of mayhem and disorder, and the meaning of this outlines that everything escalates into one another and ends up overwhelming her. Claire constructs herself as someone who becomes overwhelmed when alone and facing several simultaneous demands that require her attention. This is further illustrated elsewhere:

at the moment what stresses me most is just feeling overwhelmed and like I'm not doing enough and so if I feel stressed, I'll try to do more and if I already feel like I can't handle- I can't handle, trying to do more just makes it worse.

The text portrays a paradox of overwhelming feelings at having too much to do, and of simultaneous feelings of not doing enough. It further highlights the attempts at resolving this conflict by portraying Claire as trying to do more which in turn makes her feel more overwhelmed, which further perpetuates the feelings of stress. This also appears to illustrate another continuing circle of stress for Claire. She tells me more about the meaning of this in the following:

at any given moment there's always a to-do list in my head that's never getting done and I'm the sort of person who can't, I can't really deal with that. I need- I like to-do lists but I like even more to cross off the things, I like to keep track of things, it gives me the illusion of control (*chuckling next few words*) in an otherwise chaotic world.

The text portrays Claire as someone who favours keeping a record of tasks to be completed and checking them off once achieved, and thus has the consequent ability to see what she has accomplished as a way to feel in control in an environment which feels

unmanageable. It suggests that there are always many tasks that require Claire's attention which are organised in her mind in an inexhaustible list and these never achieve completion, seemingly further perpetuating the lack of feeling in control. The account illustrates that this becomes overwhelming and stressful for Claire, portraying her as someone who feels as though she cannot cope with non-achievement of what she constructs are her duties. This indicates that Claire constructs herself as someone who feels as though she needs to meet the relentless demands made of her in order to give her a sense of control and achievement in her currently chaotic environment.

In addition, Claire speaks about feeling guilty when not meeting the many and continual demands made of her, illustrated in the following story (see Table 8):

Table 8

Claire's story of feeling guilty all the time

-
- A: I think he's right, I do try to do too much,
- O: you know I have to get up basically whenever Shane decides to get up and Henry sleeps in a bit later thankfully so, he and Shane,-Henry and Shane, Henry and Jack, I ignore anyone's name anymore. Henry and Jack were in the bed um and then- when it's just me and Shane
- E: it's ok,
- CA: like we got up, we had breakfast, we sat together, we read some books, um I was able to do a bit a bit of cleaning while he sort of played around and watched the telly...
- E: but then it gets to the point where then I- so I get into the cleaning
- CA: and I think 'oh, I've done this. I've got to do this' and then I've got, and then the list starts and then the baby gets up and then I don't actually slow down
-

E: and so yeah, I think he's right, I am trying to do too much but I also... I fe- I basically, I feel guilty all the time, I'm damned if I do, and I'm damned if I don't. If the kitchen is dirty, I feel bad the kitchen is dirty, if I take time away from the kids to clean the kitchen, I feel bad that I'm cleaning the kitchen and I'm not with the kids. Um, you know, I've tried to do- I've tried to be really gentle and talk through things and do the opposite of what my parents did and then I feel bad because... Shane still acts out or you know, I just feel like maybe I'm not being firm enough for whatev- I just never know, I feel like I never know what I am doing, cos I'm- with parenting, you don't get performance reviews, you don't know if you are doing the right thing until your kid is 20 and you find out whether they are a nice person or a jerk (*chuckling*) whether you succeeded or you failed

R: H: so it's just, constant guilt

The Abstract conveys that the story will be about Claire's agreement with Jack's view which portrays her as being overstretched. This is followed by an Orientation which situates Claire and Shane as being the key characters, as Jack and Henry were in bed and are not part of the main narrative. The situation of the story is subsequently highlighted as being acceptable and leads onto the events which depict the things that Claire and Shane did together. Claire then describes the housework she was able to do while Shane was engaged in doing things by himself. The Complicating Action is interjected to convey the meaning that Claire became engrossed in the housework before supporting this meaning with events portraying Claire's thought process around her achievements and her plans to achieve more. However, the events outline that this is then interrupted by the baby who subsequently keeps her engaged.

These elements of the narrative seem to serve to build an argument which supports the Abstract, and is further illustrated in the subsequent Evaluation outlining

Claire's agreement with Jack's opinion that she is overstretched. The remainder and majority of the narrative is composed by this Evaluation depicting the consequences of being overstretched. These consequences are Claire's constant feelings of guilt stemming from the many things she feels she must do but which she is not able to achieve. The text seems to portray her as being helpless and powerless. The Evaluation appears to somewhat change direction to convey Claire's attempts to parent in the opposite manner to her parents, but portrays her as currently unknowing whether her parenting choices are good enough. This seems to depict Claire as uncertain and unconfident in her sense of self as a parent, further portraying her as someone who feels powerless. Claire constructs herself as someone who feels continually guilty as a result of this ongoing conflict. She also constructs herself as someone who feels responsible for meeting the constant demands made of her and that when she is unable to do so; Claire constructs herself as a person who feels incapable and ineffective. This is further illustrated elsewhere:

if I go to bed early so that I can maybe hopefully get some sleep so that I can function for the kids the next morning, I feel guilty because I've gone to bed early and I've left Jack out here by himself, you know, or if I stay up late then I feel bad because I know tomorrow it's going to be hard to get out of bed and that's- Shane's going to suffer for that so it's just, it's just constant guilt, basically.

Claire constructs herself as someone who is trying to satisfy the needs of everyone else in her immediate family as well as someone who feels conflicted and guilty when she inevitably cannot do so. She appears to construct herself as someone who does not feel good enough in her identity of wife and mother.

Furthermore, Claire constructs her sense of self as one who does not cope well with stress in the first instance, as is illustrated in the following: “my first coping mechanism is not a good one, is where I just try to ignore it and push it down and try to be busy with other things”. The text describes Claire’s initial reaction to stress as refusing to deal with it, and instead disregarding and burying the stressful feelings by making herself busy elsewhere. However, the account portrays Claire as someone who has insight and awareness into the origins of her current difficult feelings and consequent behaviours:

I have a really, have a huge problem with self-regulation cos my parents never really educated me on how to do that, and they would just, if we acted out we just got spanked um and I feel like that's done a lot of damage to me and just that I- I just genuinely... when I'm in the moment, like I know how to control myself but in the moment... I don't know how to actually internally de-escalate my feelings or do something with them other than just getting upset and angry...

The text conveys Claire as someone who makes sense of her present capacity to self-regulate her difficult feelings in the context of how and why she learnt to cope with these during her childhood. It also illustrates that Claire regards that although she is able to control these feelings when they arise, she remains unable to calm herself down. Her following words also depict this understanding: “I'm aware of of the patterns when they present themselves and so I'm trying to break them, but it's difficult especially when you're under stress and you're sleep-deprived and you don't ever have a chance to have a thought.” The account illustrates Claire’s insight to how she responds to stressful situations. She constructs herself as someone who intends to change this. However, the text also serves to portray her as currently being unable to make this change due to her

existing and ongoing stress resulting from having two children. The text appears to serve to take away choice and agency from Claire, indicating that she constructs herself as someone who may feel powerless in her inability to dedicate herself to developing alternative ways of coping with stress.

In addition, Claire speaks about being continually overstretched, which is illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 9):

Table 9

Claire's narrative about the difficulties of being overstretched

-
- A: you're spread so thin when you've got two kids...
- E: I just feel like it's so much harder to keep it all in sometimes
- CA: and so sometimes it does come out and then you just feel horrible and guilty and you're like 'I don't want them to think about me this way, I don't want these to be their childhood memories'
- E: um because yeah, I don't- I don't wana be,
- O: I remember when my parents got divorced and while I was happy they got divorced,
- E: my mum was useless,
- CA: she was just crying for 6 months and unable to like, so I just took all my feelings and bottled them up
- E: and so I'm- you know I don't- I don't want my kids to have to feel that way, like they can't come to me
-

This narrative's Abstract expresses that it will be about Claire being able to only dedicate a small amount of herself to attending to each of the matters requiring her

attention since having two children. The ensuing meaning of this illuminates that being so overstretched makes it really difficult for Claire to contain her emotions. The events illustrate Claire's feelings of guilt at the impact on her children of her feelings when they do sometimes surface. Claire starts to convey a meaning about something that she does not want to be, but she stops before completing the sentence. The interruption orients the listener back to Claire's childhood when her parents divorced and she was happy about this.

Nonetheless, the subsequent Evaluation depicts Claire's meaning of this to be that her mother was "useless" at the time. This meaning is supported by the following events that describe her mother vividly expressing her own painful emotions whilst Claire was not able to communicate own feelings and so had to suppress them. The final element of the narrative is another Evaluation which serves to connect Claire's past childhood experiences with her own children's current experiences and not wishing her upbringing on them. The noticeable lack of a Resolution in this story suggests that this may be an ongoing issue. This indicates that Claire's sense of self as not parenting in similar ways to her mother's parenting remains currently unresolved. This conflict is also illustrated elsewhere when she says "so I developed my own coping strategies which were not very good throughout the course of my life and now I'm spending my adult life trying to DEconstruct (*chuckling next few words*) those coping strategies."

The account highlights further that Claire developed adverse ways in which to cope with stress in her past, and it also positions her as someone who is now working to change these ways of coping. The text seems to function to additionally emphasise Claire's fear of not knowing the impact her current behaviours in response to stress will have on her children until they are considerably older. This also seems to highlight the importance on continuing to work on changing the way in which she deals with

difficulties. Claire appears to construct herself as someone who wants her children to have a different and more positive childhood than she had, as well as someone who is aware of the significance and implications of her own behaviours on her children's upbringing and their sense of self.

This construction of self seems to be in tension with the aforementioned construction of Claire's self as someone who is currently unable to devote any resources to developing alternative ways of coping with stress due to continually being overstretched and overloaded with her two children and household duties. Nevertheless, these constructions of self position Claire as being conflicted between her intentions to change her behaviours and her present (in)abilities to achieve this.

Claire's construction of her couple relationship after the second child. When Claire speaks about her relationship with Jack, she tells stories about support. This is illustrated in the following account (see Table 10):

Table 10

Claire's narrative about being able to seek support from Jack

-
- A: Well- I pretty much feel like there's nothing off limits,
- E: like I think that- cos he's seen me at my best and my worst in every possible way so I feel really like I can, I know that I can be open with him. However, I have difficulties being open in general, so sometimes... I'll feel like I can't approach him but that's nothing to do with him, that's just cos of my inner stuff. So, and I know that's not correct so I'm trying to change that but sometimes I feel like if I'm ha-
- O: like this morning
- E: I didn't want to just tell him 'you know what, I'm having a really crappy
-

morning, I'm feeling like a really bad mother, I'm feeling overwhelmed'

CA: instead of saying that I just bottle it up and just carry on

R: and then it gets worse

E: but I feel like... I don't know if there's, inside of me I think he's gonna like agree like 'oh yeah, you are pretty bad' or... or he'll fl- I don- I don't know what I'm afraid of but I just feel like you can't admit that you're struggling because that's weakness and so... that's the stuff that I suppose I'd be more hesitant about.

The Abstract conveys that the story is about Claire's understanding that she is able to turn to Jack for support unconditionally. The subsequent lengthy Evaluation functions to illustrate this point by referring to Jack's unwavering presence during both Claire's best and worst times. The Evaluation moves on to depict another meaning of the narrative, which functions to turn the focus of the narrative from Jack to Claire, and her acknowledgement that despite the unconditional support that he offers, it is her own difficulties that prevent her from doing so. The turn in the Evaluation also serves to tell the listener that the narrator is aware that this is incorrect and that she is attempting to do things differently. Claire offers an example illustrating this meaning, and the story uses Orientation to depict that it occurred a few hours prior to the interview. This highlights the immediacy of this meaning. Prior to Claire's description of the events, the story delivers another Evaluation which provides further insight to the meaning of Claire not opening up to Jack despite his availability.

The ensuing events function to support the first Evaluation of the narrative by conveying how Claire keeps her difficult feelings to herself, which subsequently results in the story's outcome that her already difficult feelings escalate. Claire also speaks about this elsewhere "just hard-nosing it and just being like 'well whatever, I'll just deal

with it' but secretly I'm just, you know, stressing even more.” The narrative in Table 10 ends in another lengthy Evaluation that also serves to provide further insight to the story’s meaning, portraying Claire as being fearful that Jack will agree with her difficult feelings. It also portrays Claire as someone who feels as though she must appear strong and unstressed in her couple relationship. Claire constructs her sense of her couple relationship as one she is aware that she can seek support from, but simultaneously one where she fears seeking support would result in Jack’s agreement with her critical self-perception.

Nevertheless, Claire also constructs herself as someone who values closeness with Jack as this helps her to cope with stress; she reflects on the meaning of this by describing what happens conversely when she attempts to cope with stress by herself “you're just on your own in your head and in life so I think that's a lot worse, that things just get worse, it's harder to deal with things.” The account portrays Claire as someone who cannot cope with her difficult feelings on her own; this is further illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 11):

Table 11

Claire’s story about letting herself be soothed after defensively protecting herself

-
- A: Well I get very defensive
- O: because I've already spent the preceding time telling myself that I'm not good enough and I'm doing everything wrong and... all that so,
- CA: when he starts just- and he's just genuinely asking 'wha- what's wrong, why are you in a bad mood?' I interpret that as an atta- a further attack
- E: cos I've been attacking myself,
-

CA: so I get very very defensive and very very walls up um... but if I, if he, if he keeps on with it um if he works at it, then I can- if I start to feel teary

E: that's when I know like the walls are coming down,

C: so that's- that's generally what happened is,

CA: when he said 'you know, just say that you're stressed and just be vulnerable' that's when I started to get a bit teary

R: and then I felt like ok, then I wasn't as aggressive...

The Abstract depicts that this story is about Claire's self-protection; the Orientation serves to set the scene for the narrative and supports the Abstract by portraying Claire as someone who is self-critical. This also functions to set the scene for the subsequent events, which describe Jack's inquiry about Claire's mood. Claire takes this to mean a further attack on herself in addition to her earlier attacks on herself; the story reinforces this in the Evaluation before moving onto the next events. These events portray Claire as someone who becomes defensive and closed off from others in an attempt to protect herself from these attacks.

The Complicating Action offers a turning point in the narrative by depicting Jack's persistent interest in Claire's mood which permits her to start experiencing feelings. This seems to serve to portray Claire as someone who is not completely closed off and as someone who can be reached by Jack although it takes work to get there on his part. It also appears to function to construct Jack as someone who perseveres to work hard to move beyond Claire's defensiveness. The text conveys the meaning of this to be that Claire is aware that her hard self-protection starts to collapse when this occurs, and the narrative then appears to end with an ensuing Coda and without a Resolution.

The story picks up again with another Complicating Action which serves to repeat the process of Jack's efforts at moving past Claire's defences to the point where they start to crumble and she experiences emotions. This leads onto the narrative's Resolution which illustrates that Claire ended up feeling calmer, constructing herself as someone who can be soothed despite her defences. Claire further constructs the difficulty in moving beyond her defences to achieve a sense of comfort elsewhere: "I mean in the end there was... sort of a... a release of the pressure um but it's just getting to that point which is difficult". She appears to construct her sense of her couple relationship as one where there is support available to her even though she does not seem to seek it. Claire also constructs her sense of the couple relationship as one where Jack actively works to offer her support by breaking through her defensive barriers, upon which she can then start to feel soothed. Her words illustrate this further elsewhere:

I think eventually what happens is we get to a point where I actually do open up about it to Jack and we'll have a discussion about it or I'll have a cry about it or whatever and it'll be fine. And that would be a better way of coping

The account further emphasises Claire as someone who eventually permits her defences to be lowered with Jack and will consequently feel soothed. It also portrays her as someone who is aware of how she behaves when feeling stressed, as well as someone who is aware that there are better alternative ways of dealing with stress. Claire further constructs her sense of the couple relationship as one where she is the passive and defensive support-receiver and where Jack is the active and persistent support-provider and resolver of Claire's difficult feelings.

Narrative analysis summary. Claire constructs herself as someone who feels as though she needs to meet the relentless demands made of her in order to give her a sense of control and achievement in her currently chaotic environment. She also constructs herself as regards herself as a person who feels incapable, ineffective, conflicted and guilty when she inevitably cannot meet these demands.

Claire constructs herself as someone who does not cope well with stress, as well as someone who may feel powerless in her inability to dedicate herself to developing alternative ways of coping with this. She is someone who is aware of the significance and implications of her own behaviours on her children's upbringing and their sense of self. These constructions of self position Claire as being in tension between her intentions to change her coping behaviours and her present (in)abilities to achieve this change.

Claire constructs her sense of her couple relationship as one where she is aware that she can seek support unconditionally from Jack, yet doesn't do so. She also constructs her sense of her couple relationship as one where she is the defensive support-receiver and where Jack is the active and persistent support-provider and resolver of Claire's difficult feelings

Claire's Phase Two Psycho-social Reading

Strength, competence and control. As a stay-at-home parent, Claire has many responsibilities which have not diminished since having their second child; these have actually increased to include caring for Henry in addition to everything else she was already doing prior to his birth "now I'm spread thin, spread thinner than I was." This means trying to juggle many things at any given moment, without respite:

Shane is still adjusting to sharing attention. He acts up and I'm stressed out and I'm trying to do everything so then I just get annoyed with him which makes him act out more umm... and yeah, I mean there- there's just moments of where he's sitting and he's calm and we can read, we can do something but then the baby'll start needing something and I'll look at the state of the kitchen and think 'oh, I've got to do, I've got to unload the dishwasher, I've got to do these loads of laundry etc'

Claire is aware of Shane's feelings regarding no longer being the only child in his immediate family; she is also aware of how his difficult feelings interact with her own difficult feelings which stem from having many responsibilities. Claire describes spending time with Shane which then gets interrupted by Henry who requires her immediate attention "cos the baby actually does need me FOR everything" as well as explaining the household chores which need attending to.

In addition to the practical demands she juggles, Claire is also trying to juggle the different emotional needs of her children, understanding that they are two diverse individuals with respectively different needs "trying to do the best I can figuring out how to be the mother to two children now and to realise that they're both totally different entities and you can't treat one the same as the other". Further, Claire tries to make time for her couple relationship outside of parenthood. For example, at times, she stays up waiting for Jack to return home late in the evenings from work so that they can spend at least a short while together before going to bed, despite her early morning start the next day as she is "also trying to make time for our relationship outside of... having children." This shows that Claire is also juggling the emotional requirements of everyone else and her couple relationship, besides all of the practical demands. There is a lack of mention of any time or space dedicated to taking care of herself and of meeting

her own needs, suggesting that she puts these aside in the service of meeting the needs of others.

Furthermore, although Jack did the “all the cleaning, all the cooking umm all the tidying” in the immediate aftermath of Henry’s birth while Claire recovered, he quickly returned to work after two weeks. Since then, Jack does not appear to have taken on much of the burden from Claire other than to occasionally do a washing machine or dishwasher load, which serves to further exemplify the many responsibilities that fall on her to manage. This is in spite of Claire’s repeated mentions in the interview that Jack acknowledges that she is trying to do “too much”, although she does not once mention that this is an unacceptable situation or indicate that she would like for the division of responsibilities to be more equally balanced between them. This further suggests seems to suggest the putting aside of her own needs to meet those of others.

Taking on all of these responsibilities may be a way for Claire to keep busy, and a way for her to be seen as independent, competent and strong. By not admitting that she is struggling to manage it all and not asking for help is another manner in which to be seen as competent and independent as Claire seems to view that asking for help means admitting weakness “I just feel like you can't admit that you're struggling because that's weakness”. This downplaying of her perception of vulnerability and dependence seems to be a defence reaction against a fear of being seen as incompetent and needy as this suggests weakness and vulnerability, and this means risk of getting hurt. This may be too painful for Claire as someone who has been extremely self-sufficient and excessively independent for most of her life as a way to maintain distance and avoid pain. Furthermore, taking care of everyone and everything without making a fuss may be a way for Claire to gain approval from Jack from doing things right and being

competent. In this way, Claire focuses on meeting the needs of everyone else and not her own.

In order to meet all the endless demands, Claire likes to feel in control and makes to-do lists that allow her to track what needs to be done and what has been accomplished. The following story about this has been examined in the preceding narrative analysis; however, the psycho-social reading draws out an alternative meaning, which is presented here:

at any given moment there's always a to-do list in my head that's never getting done and I'm the sort of person who can't, I can't really deal with that. I need- I like to-do lists but I like even more to cross off the things, I like to keep track of things, it gives me the illusion of control (*chuckling next few words*) in an otherwise chaotic world.

Therefore, sticking to the task and completing it is how Claire keeps her emotions at bay during a time when her surroundings feel unmanageable. She understands that she cannot truly control everything, as can be seen in Claire's acknowledgement that this is an "illusion" as well as in the chuckling of her awareness of her uncontrollable environment. Despite Claire's awareness that she cannot really control everything around her and that she cannot do it all by herself, she continues to strive to do so and feels guilty when she does not achieve this "I feel guilty all the time, I'm damned if I do, and I'm damned if I don't". It seems that Claire's feelings of guilt are directed at feeling as though she is not doing enough despite her paradoxical admittance that "I do try to do too much". It may be that her self-reproach masks the fear of being seen as weak and incompetent by Jack, which may lead to his rejection of her. Claire's sense of remaining in control appears to be another manner in which she avoids rejection and pain.

Avoidance and extreme self-reliance. Another way Claire attempts to exert some control over her environment is by bottling up her feelings “if something's bothering me, I keep it to myself a lot” and not talking about them as they become too much for her to cope with. This disengagement of her feelings seems to be a way in which to downplay any sense of dependence and therefore what Claire may perceive as weakness and neediness, as this position of vulnerability may lead to possible rejection and pain. However, this has been quite difficult for Claire to do since having their second child:

I find that's... that's a specially difficult part about having two small children, when you have one small child you can just about sort of hide if you're having a really bad day, you can sort of just about hide it from them cos you've got enough within yourself but you're spread so thin when you've got two kids... I just feel like it's so much harder to keep it all in sometimes and so sometimes it does come out

When they had just one child, Claire felt as though she could control and bottle up her feelings more successfully but since having their second child, it is harder to do so as she has fewer inner resources available. This suggests that since becoming a parent for the second time, Claire is not as successful at remaining in control of these feelings and of suppressing them as she used to be and so this strategy of over-regulation does not always work. This can be seen when Claire encounters a stressful situation and she becomes overwhelmed, but rather than acknowledging these distressing feelings and seeking support, her initial response is to disregard them and to distract from them by doing other things “my first coping mechanism is not a good one, is where I just try to ignore it and push it down and try to be busy with other things.” The over-regulation of Claire’s feelings seems to be a way to gain emotional distance as a way to downplay her

sense of vulnerability, as this may invite rejection and therefore pain. This excessive over-regulation of feelings appears to work until there are one too many stressors for Claire to cope with and so she explodes, and her suppressed feelings of anxiety translate to upset and anger “in the moment... I don't know how to actually internally de-escalate my feelings or do something with them other than just getting upset and angry...”

Claire's normal defence of constrained emotional inhibition breaks down and she loses control. This loss of control is expressed aggressively through anger, which is yet another manner in which to remain distant and defend against her underlying feelings of vulnerability that she cannot cope with alone and does not seek support for.

Claire is aware of the unconditional love and acceptance that Jack gives her as well as his constant support, encouragement and gratitude for who she is and what she does. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

I pretty much feel like there's nothing off limits, like I think that- cos he's seen me at my best and my worst in every possible way so I feel really like I can, I know that I can be open with him.

and

obviously my husband is always reassuring me that I'm doing everything I can and that he's very thankful for that and that I'm a great mum and he's very very, tries to build me up as much as he can cos he knows inside I'm just tearing (*chuckles next two words*) myself down

Claire acknowledges that Jack provides such reassurances and gratitude as he is aware of her internal negative mental state, illuminating her understanding of his perspective of her. Nevertheless, Claire does not seek support from Jack when she is

feeling stressed or distressed “I'll feel like I can't approach him but that's nothing to do with him, that's just cos of my inner stuff.” Claire does not seek proximity from Jack nor does she use him as a safe haven from which to seek comfort and protection despite her awareness of his reliability and sensitive responsiveness, and she understands that this is to do with her own issues. The following account has also been seen in the preceding narrative analysis; however, the psycho-social reading draws out a different meaning, which is presented here:

Well I get very defensive because I've already spent the preceding time telling myself that I'm not good enough and I'm doing everything wrong and... all that so, when he starts just- and he's just genuinely asking 'what's wrong, why are you in a bad mood?' I interpret that as an attack - a further attack cos I've been attacking myself, so I get very very defensive and very very walls up um...

It seems that Claire cannot tolerate her own difficult emotions when she is feeling stressed or upset, let alone seek any feedback from Jack to help her through these. Further, she behaves very defensively when Jack offers her the support that she does not ask for from him. This shows that during Claire's defensive behaviour, she is blind as to what Jack's true intentions are and she cannot see beyond her own perspective and pain, and therefore she interprets his actions through her own self-protective lens.

Claire offers insight regarding her defensive behaviour and why she does not seek support from Jack “I don't know if there's, inside of me I think he's gonna like agree like 'oh yeah, you are pretty bad’”. This suggests that Claire behaves in such a self-protective manner because she fears what she may learn from Jack: that he will agree with her

rejecting and critical self-view and in turn reject her, which would be extremely painful. Remaining avoidant and unreliable on him as a self-protective strategy protects Claire from experiencing pain from Jack's perceived potential rejection, despite the repetitive and consistent evidence of his availability, sensitivity and acceptance of her.

It is also interesting to note the conflictual battle that Claire is currently engaging in: she consciously knows that Jack is reliable and available; however, she is also aware that she does not seek comfort from him during times of need due to her unconscious defences. This in turn demonstrates her conscious understanding of the reasons why she behaves in such a manner and yet despite her awareness, she is currently unable to break this cycle. This conflictual battle illuminates the struggles that Claire is presently engaging with, which seems to be exacerbated since having a second child.

Nevertheless, regardless of Claire's lack of turning to him in times of need, Jack persistently offers her his support despite her avid self-protective strategies of emotional avoidance, and he eventually manages to break through them:

if he keeps on with it um if he works at it, then I can- if I start to feel teary that's when I know like the walls are coming down, so that's- that's generally what happened is, when he said 'you know, just say that you're stressed and just be vulnerable' that's when I started to get a bit teary and then I felt like ok, then I wasn't as aggressive...

When Jack is able to break through Claire's defences by continually and actively offering his unwavering support, it then permits her to reconnect with the emotions she was protecting herself against. This allows Claire to feel soothed and helps her to regulate her distressed feelings "eventually what happens is we get to a point where I actually do open up about it to Jack and we'll have a discussion about it or I'll have a cry

about it or whatever and it'll be fine.” Nevertheless, getting to that point is a challenge, and it is Jack who is the one who works to comfort Claire whilst she defends against this, illustrating how Claire sacrifices intimacy for excessive autonomy.

The dynamic when Claire is feeling stressed shows that Jack has to somewhat forcefully offer his proximity and function as a safe haven, in order for Claire to be able to use him for support. It also demonstrates that Claire activates Jack’s care-giving system and places him in a care-giver role in their relationship, with Claire taking on a care-receiver role. This shows that Jack’s endeavours to comfort Claire continually challenge her to assume a dependant position in their relationship, despite her efforts against this. In addition, there is a lack of mention of support-giving from Claire to Jack during his times of need. This illuminates an asymmetrical quality of their couple relationship, with a lack of bi-directionality in their roles as both care-givers and care-seekers to each other.

Felt powerlessness to change behaviour. Claire is aware of her avoidant behaviour and the origin of this behaviour “if something's bothering me, I keep it to myself a lot cos that's what I was used to with my upbringing” as well as the reason why she feels she is not able to cope with her feelings by herself:

I have a, really have a huge problem with self-regulation cos my parents never really educated me on how to do that, and they would just, if we acted out we just got spanked um and I feel like that's done a lot of damage to me

When Claire was a child, there was no space for her feelings nor was she taught how to cope with them. Her parents were emotionally neglectful and punished her physically when she displayed difficult emotions. This painful dismissal from Claire’s parents throughout her childhood taught her that to show vulnerability, dependence and

emotional need would only incur further rejection, and so the way to cope with this was to downplay any feelings of anxiety and become utterly self-reliant. Claire learnt to over-regulate her feelings of anxiety and to be in control as this minimised the chances of rejection and pain. This self-protective behaviour has been brought forward from her childhood to her adulthood and can be seen to play out in her present actions and thoughts. Therefore, understanding Claire's past relational experiences helps to illuminate her current attachment behaviour. In addition, Claire shows awareness of how her difficult past is currently affecting her present and also understands that it does so in a detrimental manner. She is also mindful that her current behaviour impacts upon her children, and she wants to change this for their sake:

I don't want them to think about me this way, I don't want these to be their childhood memories um because yeah, I don't- I don't wana be, I remember when my parents got divorced and while I was happy they got divorced, my mum was useless, she was just crying for six months and unable to like, so I just took all my feelings and bottled them up and so I'm- you know I don't- I don't want my kids to have to feel that way

Claire shows insight into how her current reactions to stress of emotional over-regulation, resulting in an eruption of anger when she can no longer suppress her feelings, can affect her children and their experiences when growing up. She shows this awareness by relating back to what it was like for her during own childhood, and wants this to be different for Shane and Henry. Claire understands that she needs to consciously and actively consider her feelings in the very moments when she will most want to suppress them in order to change her reactions to stress "think about my feelings and if something happens that makes me feel like I want to close down, I have to examine why is that making me feel that way". However, despite her intentions, she

finds it difficult to make this change in her current demanding situation of being a mother to two children as she is spread so thin and under copious stress and pressure, as is illustrated when she says “if I'm under any kind of overwhelming amount of stress then I just lose it and become shouty mummy” and

I'm aware of of the patterns when they present themselves and so I'm trying to break them, but it's difficult especially when you're under stress and you're sleep-deprived and you don't ever have a chance to have a thought, like it's great to think through all this and sit down and talk about it but during my day I don't really have that chance.

Claire acknowledges that she is mindful of her reactive behaviour in the moment that it happens, but also admits that she currently does not have the time and space to herself to be able to reflect on it, and thus be able to behave differently. It seems as though undergoing this life event of second-time motherhood means that Claire has been reacting in mostly avoidant ways. It also appears to mean that she currently has fewer inner resources available to be able to catch herself in the moment, reflect and change her behaviour, despite her intentions to do so.

There is also a lack of mention of turning to Jack for support with this endeavour. As her attachment figure, Claire does not use Jack for proximity or as a safe haven during times of need further illustrating the defensive avoidance she creates in their relationship, sacrificing intimacy for her extreme autonomy.

Psycho-social reading summary. Claire juggles the emotional requirements of everyone else and her couple relationship, in addition to all of the practical demands. She puts aside her own needs in the service of meeting the needs of others.

Remaining in control appears to be a manner in which Claire avoids rejection and pain, including being in control of her own feelings. However, since becoming a parent for the second time, Claire is not as successful at remaining in control of these feelings and of suppressing them as she used to. When there are one too many stressors for Claire to cope with, Claire's normal defence of constrained emotional inhibition breaks down and she loses control. This is yet another manner in which to remain distant and defend against her underlying feelings of vulnerability that she cannot cope with alone and does not seek support for.

Claire does not seek support from Jack, and it is he who offers his proximity and a safe haven to comfort her, whilst she defends against this. This places him in a care-giver role in their relationship, and Claire as a reluctant care-receiver. In addition, there is a lack of support-giving from Claire to Jack during his times of need, illuminating an asymmetrical quality to their couple relationship.

Claire shows awareness of how her difficult past currently affects her behaviour, as well as insight into how her current reactions to stress of emotional avoidance can affect her children's experiences when growing up. She also understands what she needs to do in order to change her reactions to stress, however she currently has fewer inner resources available to do so.

It seems as though undergoing this life event of second-time motherhood means that Claire is reacting in mostly avoidant ways in herself and in her couple relationship.

Comparison between Phase Two Analyses

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found that it was important for Claire to have a sense of control. However, whereas the narrative analysis

constructed this control as providing her with a sense of achievement in her current chaotic environment, the psycho-social reading revealed that it was a defence against being seen as weak and incompetent and therefore a way in which to avoid potential rejection and hurt.

Both methods of analyses found that Claire is someone who strives to meet the needs of others and who feels guilty when this is not always possible. Nevertheless, the narrative analysis focused on the meaning of this guilt and found it to be that she felt incapable, ineffective and not good enough in her identity of wife and mother. On the other hand, the psycho-social reading placed emphasis on the meaning of meeting the needs of others over her own, and found it to be a way to gain approval from Jack and thus another defensive way in which to minimise possible rejection and pain.

Equally, the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found that Claire has awareness of her own behaviour and its origins. Further, both methods emphasised the same meaning of Claire's understanding of her past behaviour provides her with additional insight to her current relational behaviour. Furthermore, both methods also found that Claire is experiencing an inability to change her current behaviour despite her intentions, due to her demanding situation of becoming a mother for the second time. These findings highlight resemblance in the findings between the methods.

Both the narrative analysis and psycho-social reading found that Claire understood her couple relationship to be a supportive one, with the provision of comfort available to her during times of need. Both methods also found that whilst this is the case, Claire does not seek this support from Jack and that it is he who actively and persistently offers it to her. Both methods also highlighted the meaning of Claire's lack of support seeking from Jack to be a fear that should she do so, it may result in his

agreement with her critical self-view. However, the psycho-social reading went beyond this to illuminate this as a defensive strategy against the possibility that in agreement with her negative self-perception, Jack would reject Claire which would be extremely painful for her. Nevertheless, both the narrative analysis and psycho-social reading similarly found Claire's sense of her couple relationship to be one where she is in the role of the care-receiver and where Jack is in the role of the care-provider.

Uniquely, the psycho-social reading alone found that Claire over-regulates her feelings as a way to gain emotional distance and to downplay her sense of vulnerability and dependence. Since becoming a mother for the second time Claire has less inner resources available and so is not as successful in suppressing her feelings. Her normal defence of constrained emotional inhibition breaks down and she loses control of her feelings and expresses them aggressively through anger. This finding is exclusive to the psycho-social reading and was not found in the narrative analysis, highlighting yet another difference between the methods.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has presented the longitudinal and pluralistic analysis of Claire's prospective stories about herself and her couple relationship across the transition to second-time motherhood. It has also discussed the similarities and differences between the findings at each phase, highlighting the multidimensionality of this phenomenon and the multiple layers of meaning it comprises.

The next chapter pluralistically examines Jack's stories across the transition to second-time fatherhood, again by using narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading.

Chapter 4: Jack's Stories across Phase 1 and Phase 2

This chapter examines Jack's stories across the transition to second-time fatherhood. It shows how the use of narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading enables in-depth insight to how he makes sense of himself and of his couple relationship, along with the reasons for this sense-making. As before, the chapter is divided into two sections representing the two phases of the research. Each section presents the findings of the mono method analysis. As previously, some of the same narratives are looked at in each method of analysis, so that different meanings can be emphasised. This is followed by a discussion of how the findings complement or stand alone, and enrich each other.

Phase One

Setting the scene: the interview. Jack's first interview takes place on the same day and shortly after Claire's first interview. Claire left the house to pick up Shane from nursery and then went to her mother-in-law's home. Jack and I go into the living room to conduct the interview, and we are not interrupted. Considering he needs to leave to go to work in a while, he eats his lunch while we talk. As with Claire, we start with the biographical interview which is straight away and smoothly followed by the semi-structured interview.

Jack's Phase One Narrative Analysis

Jack's construction of his sense of self before the second child. When Jack speaks of times of distress, he tells stories about how he copes with them. This is illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 12):

Table 12

Jack's story about calming himself down

A:	Well eventually I verbalise them to somebody,
O	you know, to a friend or to Claire... or to my mum or... you know someone that I feel I can trust... usually Claire...
CA:	so eventually I verbalise them.
O:	When they first happen... I'm quite prone to anxiety
CA:	and I just become very anxious and I kind of freak out for a bit... .. umm... maybe isolate, perhaps go back to listening to music, something like that maybe try and go for a walk just to calm down... so the immediate reaction is to perhaps be anxious...
E:	uhh they- when they get the better of me, the feelings get the better of me and I- I become quite anxious and I might isolate to try and calm myself down
CA:	and then when I feel a bit calmer then I verbalise them
R:	and then I'm able to seek support

Jack constructs himself as someone who becomes very anxious when something distressing happens, whereby the anxious feelings become overwhelming for him. The multiple events of the narrative emphasise Jack's actions of support seeking by the eventual verbalisation of his anxious feelings. The Orientation serves to portray him as having a support network he can trust, although it highlights that it is mainly Claire that Jack turns to for support purposes. Nevertheless, as the narrative unfolds, the main event and its meaning function to illustrate Jack as immediately feeling very anxious following a stressful experience. The account illuminates Jack's ensuing self-soothing

behaviour which serves to convey him as someone who copes independently in the first instance. This can also be seen when Jack says elsewhere “I do that... for a while by myself, I just isolate and try and battle those thoughts and perhaps go for a walk or listen to music or distract myself...” and:

I take a time out and I go for a walk or something, then I start to rationalise with myself and say ‘well actually hang on, you’re not going to end up... homeless or... isolated or, it’s not going to be the worst case scenario’. I calm myself down.

The narrative indicates Jack’s process of taking some time alone to autonomously self-soothe and calm down before seeking support from others “and then I’m able to finally verbalise it and say ‘oh, you know, this happened to me today’ or ‘this made me anxious’ or ‘this got to me’.” This seems to illustrate that Jack constructs himself as someone who is both self-reliant and can cope independently, as well as a person who is reliant on others and can depend on them for support during times of distress.

When speaking of his feelings of stress, Jack tells me about a time when he felt this way due to his previous job. This narrative is illustrated in the following (see Table 13):

Table 13

Jack’s story about having support from his family

A:	D: ok, and what role did other people play then?
O:	So you mentioned Claire
CA:	J: ... I spoke to Claire about it, she listened and again she said 'whatever you decide, I'll be- I'll support you' you know 'there's no right or wrong'. I spoke

to family and they said the same thing, they said, you know 'a job is a job but at the end of the day you've got to think about your health and your welfare'

E: because it had affected me a few times

CA: I was getting uhh... psoriasis on my hands and things like that, I was getting stressed where I was getting insomnia or I was getting anxious

O: ... and you know, no- I'm- even though I wasn't seeing my family much,

E: at the times I was, I was too stressed to really be present, so what's the point?

CA: umm so they were saying you know, ' a job's a job, but you do have to think about yourself as well'

E: so it was just that sense of family support

R: and people to bounce ideas off

The events of the narrative illustrate the understanding and supportive actions of Jack's family, who are portrayed by the text as caring and as wanting the best for him. The events also describe some of the physical and emotional health consequences that were arising for Jack as a result of his stressful job, helping to demonstrate the severity of the anxiety he was experiencing during those times. Furthermore, the multiple Evaluations also help to emphasise the severe stress. It seems that the various elements that comprise this narrative work together to both persuade and to illustrate to the listener just how stressful Jack's job was and the repeated effects it was having on him.

This builds up to the end of the story, which concludes with an Evaluation and Resolution. These elements indicate that despite how stressed Jack was and despite his family offering advice and support, he retains agency by being the actual decision-maker, rendering the others there to "bounce ideas off." This seems to illustrate that the

support Jack receives from others enables him to feel supported to make his own decision. This can further be seen when he says the following:

it's not about getting advice, it's not about getting answers... it's just about someone saying 'I'm here for you no matter what' and... like- like I said the decision about my job, in the way that my family said 'whatever decision you make, we'll support you.' It's that sense of ok, whatever happens, I will be accepted and it will be ok.

This text describes the importance for Jack of other's unconditionality and unwavering support regardless of what decision he makes; Jack also doesn't want his problems fixed by them and that is not what they are offering him, which he values. This account illustrates that Jack will seek support from others when needed, and will take their views into account, but ultimately, it is he who makes the decision. Jack constructs himself as someone who is autonomous and independent, yet can turn to and rely on others for support when needed. Furthermore, he constructs himself as someone who feels accepted unconditionally by close others regardless of his actions, thereby constructing himself as someone who feels secure in both himself and in his relationships.

The interview text may serve to locate Jack as someone who portrays himself as doing the 'right thing' when he looks for ways to cope with difficulties. This may be particularly significant when considering that Jack is an attachment therapist, and he knows that I am an attachment researcher. Furthermore, Jack is a therapist for couples and is also aware that the research he is participating in explores couple relationships. The stories he tells me about his experiences with stress and about his relationships may function to portray Jack as someone who is knowledgeable in this matter and knows

what the appropriate thing to do is as someone with a secure attachment, as well as demonstrating that he actually does it. This can also be seen by his use of technical language, such as “I rationalise with myself”, “I have quite a narrative approach to it”, “catastrophising”, “I tell myself a different story”, “I make sense of it in a different way”. This suggests that Jack may draw on his professional identity of being couples’ attachment therapist to make sense of himself, which is also illustrated in his words:

you know, some of the EFT ¹ research talks about this idea of outsourcing our emotions and I think that’s what goes on for me, is that actually I’m outsourcing, you know, I feel the anxiety and then by sharing it with others or by holding hands with someone I’m actually kind of outsourcing it and sharing it and so there’s less of a burden on me.

Jack constructs himself as someone who is self-aware and understands his anxious feelings and behaviour as well as how the processes by which these are overcome. He also constructs himself as knowledgeable and as an expert in the topic of attachment theory and relationships.

Jack’s construction of his sense of his couple relationship before the second child. Claire is the person that Jack primarily turns to for comfort “I’d say 99 times out of 100”, and he tells stories about their couple relationship as being supportive. This is exemplified in the following narrative about a stressful time when they moved house in Table 14:

¹ Emotionally Focused Therapy

Table 14

Jack's story about seeking support when moving house

-
- A: I mean I rented a van for one day to try and move all of our stuff
- CA: and we had to try and move everything... AND find a place for Claire and Shane to be
- E: because obviously you can't have a three year old around a lot of boxes,
- CA: and trying to clear stuff out to the tip
- O: but just trying to get all of these things done in one day
- E: and it was a huge, hugely stressful day... umm it was very difficult not to become just angry or full or rage or just... frustrated on days like that so uhh it was nice, you know,
- O: I had a couple of friends helping me out
- R: and I took a time-out and just- Claire- sat down with Claire and we had lunch on that day and things like that,
- E: so just seeking my support and... the time-out was important
-

The events of the story are repeatedly interrupted in order for their meaning to be put forward, illustrating Jack's importance of outlining his perspective about what was happening that day. There is minimal Orientation setting the scene, which seems to serve the purpose of allowing more time and space for the events and their respective meanings. The first event of the narrative demonstrates the many factors that were being juggled on the day that they were all moving house. The main Evaluation of the narrative outlines just how stressed Jack was feeling, and how difficult he found it not to become angry or frustrated because of it all. These events and Evaluations build up to

the narrative's Resolution which conveys that Jack took some time for himself and also spent some time with Claire, followed by its meaning that he was accessing his support. This suggests that Jack is able seek support from Claire in the particular way which meets his needs.

We have seen through the analysis and interpretation of how Jack constructs his sense of self as having a soothing process of taking some alone time in the first instance to calm down when feeling anxious, before turning to others for support. This narrative also illustrates the process when Jack takes the time out, as well as highlighting its importance. However, the narrative additionally indicates that turning to Claire when he is feeling stressed is just as important for Jack, and serves to portray her as forming part of Jack's soothing process. This is further illuminated when Jack tells me about Claire's role "a problem shared is a problem halved so it was just that sense of just... you know, being able to share what was going on, having that support and... having that back-up", indicating that Jack feels soothed and supported by Claire. It seems that Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one which is supportive and comforting in times of stress.

Jack also constructs his couple relationship as one which facilitates him to feel free to have space and time to be able to enact his own particular comfort-seeking routine of first self-soothing and then turning to Claire for support. He further constructs his couple relationship as one where he is able to maintain a balance between a sense of independence as well as dependence on Claire.

Jack recounts stories about shared experiences of stress and he speaks about how he and Claire support each other together. This can be seen in the following story in

Table 15 regarding a particularly stressful day. This story has been previously examined in Claire's interviews, however it is being told from Jack's perspective here:

Table 15

Jack's narrative about dealing with a stressful time together

-
- A: Uhh yesterday was very very stressful.
- E: I don't know if Claire mentioned it, but yesterday was one of those days where it just felt like everything went wrong
- O: uhh Claire was upset in the morning because something her mum had been talking about Facebook and her dad wasn't- her step-dad wasn't well
- CA: uhh we had lunch here and we dropped a pot of salad dressing and it splashed up and went all over the new walls, uhh one of the pipes in the bathroom was leaking slightly and then the toilet was blocked,
- E: so it's all this stuff about the joys of home ownership, just suddenly bang! they all happened in one day, and we both, we both were incredibly exasperated but we dealt with it as a team,
- CA: you know, when this spillage happened we both got down on our hands and knees and just cleaned it up and just thought well you know, 'if the worst comes to the worst you can repaint the wall, it's just a wall' umm... (*sniffs*) and... with the pipe, you know, a guy came and sorted it out, the guy who fitted it
- E: so, it's just about having that support throughout
- R: and dealing with these one by one and not- not getting overwhelmed I think
-

The Abstract immediately conveys that this story will be about an extremely stressful recent time, with the Orientation setting the scene that Claire was already feeling upset by an earlier interaction with her mother. This initial part of the account

illuminates that there were already stressed feelings before any of the actual events of this narrative are told, further helping to convey just how stressful the day actually was. Jack lists all of the things that went wrong on that day in the new house that they have recently moved into. The text locates the meaning of this to be that both Jack and Claire were feeling very frustrated with these series of problems, as well as serving to portray both Jack and Claire as being able to cope with these problems together despite their frustrations.

The story's ensuing lengthy Complicating Action demonstrates how they jointly dealt with the many problems by listing all of the things that they did together. Jack explains the meaning of these shared events to be that it is about having support through the difficult and stressful times, conveying that he felt supported by Claire through the actions of dealing with problems together with her. The Resolution of the narrative illustrates that they were able to tackle the issues systematically and to not permit them to become overwhelming, perhaps because they have mutual support.

Nevertheless, the language used in this narrative is at times somewhat ambiguous when alluding to who plays the role of the support-giver and who plays the role of the support-receiver. For example when Jack says "it's just about having that support throughout and dealing with these one by one", it is not directly clear whether it is Claire who is providing the support and Jack who is receiving the support in this particular narrative. When exploring Jack's narratives further, they seem to also indicate that Jack and Claire are both being mutually supportive of each other when they experience a stressful situation together. This suggests that Jack constructs himself as a support-giver as well as a support-receiver in his couple relationship with Claire.

This is also exemplified in Jack's following words about not accomplishing everything they planned to get done on the day that they were moving house "I was just able to go 'ok, we'll get it done another day' or 'we did the best that we could, it's not a big deal' and to look on the bright side of things and stay positive". This account further illustrates that Jack also provides support to Claire as well as receiving support from her. Furthermore, the significance for Jack of both of them playing the roles of support-provider and support-receiver is clearly conveyed in the following extracts which discuss the important aspects of Jack's relationships as being "being there for each other" and "available for each other". It appears as though Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship with Claire as one which is supportive of him and he is accepting of that support, as well as one which is supportive of her. Consequently, Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one where both partners of the relationship are available to provide support for each other during experiences of stress.

Narrative analysis summary. Jack constructs his sense of self as someone who maintains a balance between coping with difficult experiences independently and by depending on others for support. Jack also constructs himself as someone who has characteristics of secure attachment both in himself and in his relationships, as well as someone who is insightful of his own feelings and behaviour. Jack constructs himself as someone who is knowledgeable in the topic of attachment theory and relationships, and as such, an expert in this field.

In addition, Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one which is comforting and supportive, where he is able to maintain his balance between independence and dependence on Claire for support. He also constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one where they are both available to each other, and as one which is mutually supportive.

Jack's Phase One Psycho-social Reading

Internal conflict performed externally. Jack shows a heightened understanding and insight into his sense of self; he demonstrates awareness of his feelings as well as of his behaviour when he is experiencing distress:

well eventually I verbalise them to somebody, you know, to a friend or to Claire... or to my mum or... you know someone that I feel I can trust... usually Claire... so eventually I verbalise them. When they first happen... I'm quite prone to anxiety and I just become very anxious and I kind of freak out for a bit... umm... maybe isolate, perhaps go back to listening to music, something like that, maybe try and go for a walk just to calm down... so the immediate reaction is to perhaps be anxious... uhh they- when they get the better of me, the feelings get the better of me and I- I become quite anxious and I might isolate to try and calm myself down and then when I feel a bit calmer then I verbalise them and then I'm able to seek support.

When Jack experiences feelings of stress or distress, his process is to initially become overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety. This is followed by a period of isolation in order to calm himself down in the first instance. Once he has calmed down enough, he then seeks support from a trusted close other, mainly Claire. Jack's initial self-soothing behaviour of going for a walk or listening to music seems to denote the activation of an internal secure base. We know from his biography that music played a very important role for Jack as an outlet for what was going on for him during a difficult time in his life, and so it seems that Jack currently uses music to help regulate his feelings of anxiety. He subsequently expresses his need for comfort and seeks this out from a close other who functions as his safe haven; this tends to be Claire who acts as

Jack's attachment figure. Jack presents his actions in this narrative, from feeling anxiety to seeking support, as enacting secure attachment behaviours when he experiences distress.

However, if we take a closer look at another place in the interview where he talks about what he does when feeling stressed, Jack speaks in more depth about the initial overwhelming anxious feelings, and how he deals with them:

whenever something happens I still have to battle not to jump to that kind of worst conclusion of 'oh, this could- this could happen' umm... so I... I do that... for a while by myself, I just isolate and try and battle those thoughts and perhaps go for a walk or listen to music or distract myself... and then I'm able to finally verbalise it and say 'Oh, you know, this happened to me today' or 'this made me anxious' or 'this got to me' and then I get their feedback and I start to feel better.

Jack's isolating behaviour involves an internal struggle in response to experiencing such overwhelming distress, as opposed to turning to a close other for support with these difficult feelings. This suggests that unconsciously he may defend against disclosing his vulnerability and may seek to firstly gain control over these emotions by himself before taking them to someone else. By maintaining control and not making too many emotional demands on others, Jack may be defending against potential pain if they cannot or are not willing to support his feelings.

This behaviour may have roots in several relational occurrences in Jack's past: after his parents separated when he was nine years old, Jack's mother broke down for the next six months or so and was extremely preoccupied with her own feelings of distress and was therefore unavailable to take care of him. Jack would step into the

parent role by doing the housework, ensuring dinner was ready, being as helpful and as quiet as possible, as well as going to his mother to provide comfort at times. During that period, which was also a very painful time for Jack, he had to take care of his mother rather than the other way around, and meet at least some of her emotional needs as well as physically running the household. This period of role reversal suggests that it is likely that he had to put his painful feelings aside as his parents were unavailable to take care of him, and thus his own emotional needs went unmet.

More recently, when Jack and Claire lived together in the USA, Jack felt alone and with the weight of the world on his shoulders in trying to make the decision by himself about whether to return to the UK, without being able to rely on Claire to support him. During that period of time, he wasn't happy in his job and wanted to spend more time with baby Shane, had financial worries and Claire was going through depression. This meant that Jack felt as though he couldn't rely on Claire and so he shut himself down and isolated himself, not asking for support. Again, this suggests that Jack's own painful emotional needs went unmet in the service of meeting the needs of everything else that was going on for him at the time, and were therefore put aside.

These possible bases of Jack's current initial avoidant behaviours when feeling overwhelmed with anxiety denote that these past relational difficulties may not be completely resolved and so play out to some degree in the present. This suggests that Jack attempts to control his feelings in the first instance; there may be an unconscious fear of rejection and so by maintaining control, the potential rejection and the pain that this would evoke, is avoided. Once his feelings are regulated and he feels safe enough to share these, Jack then seeks support. Despite Jack's presentation of self as enacting secure attachment behaviours when feeling distressed, upon closer inspection it seems that Jack is enacting avoidant attachment behaviours. It may be that he stays close

enough to a safe haven, such as Claire, but not so close that he is at risk of feeling the full pain of any dismissal, suggesting that he somewhat compromises intimacy in the service of security.

Jack uses his EFT expertise to make sense of his feelings and his behaviour:

uhh... I think I rationalise with myself really, I have quite a narrative approach to it so when it first happens there's all this negative language going on and all these negative thoughts of worst case scenarios and catastrophising, that kind of stuff... and then as I take a time out and I go for a walk or something , then I start to rationalise with myself and say 'well actually hang on, you're not going to end up... homeless or... isolated or, it's not going to be the worst case scenario' I calm myself down, I tell myself a different story umm I make sense of it in a different way, and then I'm able to come back and... kind of seek support.

Jack describes in more detail his internal battle when he becomes overwhelmed when feeling distressed and labels the different parts of this battle with technical psychotherapeutic concepts, suggesting that he is intellectualising his actions as a way in which to remain emotionally detached from it. By reasoning about his process, Jack avoids discussing the associated feelings, and this indicates that he may be defending against unconscious conflict and its associated emotional stress.

This avoidant behaviour seems to be at odds with his view of himself as behaving in secure attachment ways when experiencing distress. When revisiting the first quote (p. 188), we can see that Jack stresses three times that he “verbalises” those anxious feelings to others once he has calmed himself down through his isolated process; the action of verbalising would be considered as depending on others for comfort which

reflects secure attachment behaviours. This repetition seems to be a way in which he defends against the conflict between a view of himself as enacting secure attachment behaviours and the discordant unconscious knowledge that he enacts avoidant behaviours during these times.

Support seeker role. Jack considers himself to be a support seeker, and turns to his support network for comfort. The following story has been examined in the preceding narrative analysis; however the psycho-social reading delivers an alternative understanding to it.

When discussing a recent time when he experienced distress, Jack describes how he had been feeling quite downhearted with his employer and had been deliberating for some time over whether he should leave. However, making the decision was not straightforward as this job provided the family's income, which was particularly important as they had a child and another one on the way. It seems as though he felt that his principles were in tension with providing security for his children; this conflict between doing the 'right thing' for him and doing the 'right thing' for his children probably caused him substantial feelings of anxiety.

Jack expands on these feelings and about how he sought support with this difficult decision from Claire and from his family:

I spoke to Claire about it, she listened and again she said 'whatever you decide, I'll be- I'll support you' you know 'there's no right or wrong'. I spoke to family and they said the same thing, they said, you know 'a job is a job but at the end of the day you've got to think about your health and your welfare because it had affected me a few times where I was getting insomnia or I was getting anxious, I was getting uhh... psoriasis on my

hands and things like that, I was getting stressed and you know, no- I'm- even though I wasn't seeing my family much, at the times I was, I was too stressed to really be present, so what's the point? umm so they were saying you know, 'a job's a job, but you do have to think about yourself as well' so it was just that sense of family support and people to bounce ideas off.

Jack felt so anxious and preoccupied about his job that it was affecting his ability to be emotionally present despite being physically so, as well as having a psychosomatic effect on him; the anxiety was all-encompassing. Jack describes turning to both Claire and his family for support, and he describes their responses as encouraging him to make the decision agentically, as well as being unconditionally accepting of whatever decision he makes. They also encouraged Jack to prioritise himself and his feelings, and this supported him to feel as though it was both permitted and acceptable to do so. This suggests that they were responsive to Jack's needs and helped him to regulate his anxious feelings by acting as a safe haven for him to rely on for comfort and security. He expands further on the meaning of this:

I think it's just that sense of a tribe and someone to go to and being accepted so it's not about getting advice, it's not about getting answers... it's just about someone saying 'I'm here for you no matter what'" and "it's a sense of having others to rely on and not being alone.

This indicates that Jack felt as though his support network were predictably available to him and responsive to his needs in a sensitive manner as well as unconditionally accepting of him; there is a lack of fear of dismissal or rejection from them. Claire and his family also did not tell Jack what he should do, but supported him to make his own decision. This suggests that they also functioned as a secure base for

him to feel confident and sufficiently autonomous to make his own decision, safe in the implicit knowledge that should things not turn out as he hoped, he could return to them for comfort and support.

As discussed above, Jack considers Claire as forming a part of his support network and she is the main person he turns to when needed “I’d say 99 times out of a 100 yeah”, indicating that she is his primary attachment figure. This includes seeking support for day-to-day grievances “If I just had a bad day at the office... if I had a disagreement with the boss... about traffic on the way home... just the normal everyday annoyances”. In addition to seeking support from Claire with the more trivial daily frustrations, Jack also turns to her for support for the more stressful situations as well.

The following narrative has also been analysed through the narrative analysis, but the psycho-social reading offers an alternative understanding. For example, they had to move house in one day, which involved hiring a van, moving all the boxes from their old house to the new one, throwing things out into a tip and finding a place for Claire to be with Shane so that Shane wasn’t around all of the boxes. Jack found it to be “a huge, hugely stressful day... umm it was very difficult not to become just angry or full or rage or just... frustrated on days like that” demonstrating that he felt it to be an extremely demanding experience where it was difficult to keep control of his stressed out feelings. He describes how he sought support with these “I took a time-out and just- Claire- sat down with Claire and we had lunch on that day and things like that, so just seeking my support and... the time-out was important”. In this particular stressful situation, Jack went through his process of dealing with stress by firstly isolating himself and then seeking support from others, again stressing the significance of his time alone. He sought closeness with Claire, suggesting that she acted as a safe haven for him, providing Jack with a feeling of safety and security during his time of distress. Claire’s

presence is soothing for Jack; it is clear that by being close to her, she provides him with a sense of care, calmness and security which lowers his feelings of anxiety:

even if it's just as simple as Claire being here to... hold my hand or give me a cuddle and just say, you know 'you'll get through it, you'll be ok'... it's a sense of having others to rely on and not being alone.

Jack feels able to seek proximity with Claire when feeling distressed and recognises that she will be available as well as respond sensitively.

Support provider role. As well as seeking support when feeling distressed, Jack also provides support to Claire when needed. For example, on the day that they moved house, they were not able to achieve everything they had planned to do and he says:

rather than, you know being filled with rage about it or filled with regret or just being really upset that it hadn't happened I was just able to shrug and go 'ok, we'll get it done another day' or 'we did the best that we could', 'it's not a big deal' and to look on the bright side of things and stay positive.

Jack was able to remain calm and responsive towards Claire by providing her with soothing words intended to help lower her feelings of stress. This indicates that he functioned as a care-giver and as a safe haven for her during this stressful situation, demonstrating that he is able to tolerate being depended upon. Jack is able to shift between the role of care-seeker and the role of care-giver depending on who happens to be in a state of need, suggesting that he experiences the couple relationship as reciprocal.

The reciprocity of support-giving in their couple relationship is further exemplified on a day when a series of events happened in quick succession when they were together:

we both were incredibly exasperated but we dealt with it as a team, you know, when this spillage happened we both got down on our hands and knees and just cleaned it up and just thought well you know, 'if the worst comes to the worst you can repaint the wall, it's just a wall' umm... and... with the pipe, you know, a guy came and sorted it out, the guy who fitted it so, it's just about having that support throughout and dealing with these one by one and not- not getting overwhelmed I think.

During this joint experience, they were both feeling very stressed. Rather than viewing these problems as one big issue which may have evoked an immense amount of anxiety which may have been unbearable, they broke down the experience into separate problems and dealt with each one as required. This meant that they were manageable and the associated feelings of anxiety did not escalate out of control. Further, they dealt with the problems successfully together, suggesting that dealing with these anxieties jointly may have engendered feelings of closeness. This indicates that Jack's experience of this is that he and Claire were able to both seek and provide care and comfort for each other throughout the stressful events, suggesting that they were able to help each other to regulate their feelings of anxiety. This denotes that Jack understands his relationship to be one which is reciprocal and mutually supportive "emotionally we can go to each other whatever is going on". Jack is able to be dependent on Claire as well as being depended upon by her, and he is able to flexibly shift between the positions as necessary, indicating the enactment of secure couple attachment behaviours.

Furthermore, Jack provides support to Claire by being mindful of her particular sensitivities and stressors. Although Jack turns to Claire for his support needs in most cases, he doesn't when he says it is:

something that I think like might upset her so perhaps something where she's also involved... where I don't want to upset her further... maybe our family has done something or... I'm upset with her family about something and I don't think it's appropriate for me to talk to her about it and then I might go to a friend

Jack shows awareness and consideration of Claire's feelings and of what may cause her to feel distress and he doesn't put her in a difficult position where she may feel as though she has to choose between her family and him despite his own feelings of anxiety. This indicates that Jack provides Claire with support in the manner of not burdening her with issues that may cause her to feel upset, and so he seeks support for his anxiety elsewhere. This suggests that although Jack views their relationship as one where there is space for his needs, he is also mindful of Claire's anxiety triggers and does not impose his own support needs over her needs. Jack is empathic to Claire's thoughts and feelings, thus demonstrating mind-mindedness, which is also a factor of secure attachment behaviours.

Psycho-social reading summary. Jack presents his actions as enacting secure attachment behaviours when he experiences distress. Upon deeper inspection of Jack's behaviour when feeling distressed is to firstly isolate and to try to gain control over these feelings, before subsequently seeking support, suggesting that unconsciously he may defend against disclosing his vulnerability. These avoidant behaviours may have roots in Jack's past avoidant relational experiences. Although Jack mainly presents himself as enacting secure attachment behaviours, it seems that he behaves in avoidant ways.

Jack relies on his close network for support and sees them as a resource; he views them as both a safe haven and as a secure base, where Jack is able to value the care they provide, as well as able to act autonomously. Jack is able to seek proximity with Claire when feeling distressed and recognises that she will provide him with a sense of comfort and security.

Jack is able to be dependent on Claire as well as being depended upon by her, and he is able to flexibly shift between the positions depending on who happens to be in a state of need, suggesting that he experiences the couple relationship as reciprocal. Jack demonstrates he is in tune with Claire's feelings by seeking support elsewhere if it is about something that may cause her to feel anxiety.

Comparison between Phase One Analyses

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found Jack to be someone who became overwhelmed with anxiety when encountering a stressful situation, as well as someone who copes independently first and then seeks support. However, the narrative analysis constructed Jack as someone who is balanced in his self-reliance and reliance on others during times of distress. On the other hand, the psycho-social reading went beyond this to show the meaning of his initial reaction to stress to be a form of defence – by maintaining control and not making too many emotional demands on others, Jack avoids the risk of potential rejection. The psycho-social reading also showed that this current behaviour has roots in Jack's past and can be made sense of in the context of his childhood relational difficulties where his own emotional needs went unmet in the service of meeting the needs of others. As an adult, once Jack self-regulates the difficult feelings, it is then safe enough to share them. This

illustrates a comparative finding between the methods, and how they differ in their understanding of the finding.

Both methods of analyses found Jack to be self-aware and understanding of his feelings and behaviour. Nevertheless, whereas the narrative analysis emphasised the meaning of this to be Jack making sense of himself by drawing on his professional identity, the psycho-social reading highlighted this as a defensive way to make sense of himself in an intellectualised manner which creates distance from his feelings.

Similarly, both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found Jack to understand that others provide him with support in a manner which facilitates his autonomy. Both methods found that when Jack seeks support, he still makes his own decision in an agentic manner and the others are unconditionally accepting of him and his choices. These findings illuminate the resemblance between the methods of analysis.

Equally, both methods found Jack to make sense of his couple relationship as one that is reciprocal in that there is space to both provide and receive support. The narrative analysis constructs Jack as both a support-giver and a support-receiver, and the psycho-social reading revealed that he is able to seek care from and be dependent on Claire and as well as provide care and be depended upon by her.

Distinctively, the psycho-social reading alone found that Jack is in tune with what may cause Claire to feel anxiety. It also revealed that even though she is the person he mainly turns to for support during times of need, if it is something that may cause Claire to feel upset he will seek support for it elsewhere and will not impose his own support needs over hers. This finding is unique to the psycho-social reading, and serves to emphasise another difference between the methods of analysis.

Phase Two

Setting the scene: the interview. This is the second individual interview with Jack, which takes place when their second child is four months old. Jack has arrived home during the interview with Claire, and does not interrupt other than to call out hello from the hallway. Once Claire and I have finished her interview, Jack comes into the living room to greet us. Claire then leaves the house to pick up Shane from the nursery and does not return before Jack and I finish his interview. About a third of the way in, Jack's phone rings twice and interrupts the interview – I stop the audio recorder both times as he needs to take these work calls. Nevertheless, each time we pick off where we left off and the interview continues seamlessly.

Jack's Phase Two Narrative Analysis

Jack's construction of his sense of self after the second child. Jack speaks about behaving self-reliantly in the first instance when he encounters a stressful situation. This is illustrated when he says the following:

The immediate response is definitely... to kind of try and be self-sufficient just because as I've just said you know, I was an only child and that's my habit that I've learned is that, can I deal with this on my own? Can I try and deal with this on my own?

The text describes Jack's first reaction to a stressful situation as behaving self-reliantly; it emphasises and attributes this to his being an only child and to it being a habit carried into his adulthood. The use of the words "only child" and "habit" seems to serve the purpose of conveying Jack's self-reliance as a first response to stress as something that is difficult to break and is involuntary. In addition, Jack's questioning of his ability to go it alone appear to serve to further exemplify his self-sufficiency and

how this is a “habit”. However, the account also portrays Jack as someone who will seek support after firstly attempting to cope on his own “I kind of deal with it myself, try and see if I can find a solution myself as that only child syndrome and then if not, then I kind of seek help after that.” The text seems to serve to emphasise yet again why this first response to stress occurs, as well as where it stems from. This suggests that the text conveys Jack as not being in control of his immediate reactions to stress. He seems to construct his sense of self as being blameless for behaving in this manner.

Jack also describes how when this initial strategy of self-reliance does not work, he will then seek support. This appears to portray him as someone who recognises when he cannot cope alone and then decides what he does next about it, which is also depicted in the following text “when I'm ready, go and talk about it.” Jack seems to construct himself as someone who has agency over his support needs following the initial response.

However, there appears to be tension in the way in which the account positions Jack’s sense of self when reacting to stressful situations. He constructs his process when reacting to stress as taking place in a linear manner, from involuntary reaction of self-sufficiency through to intentional actions of support-seeking when the first strategy does not work. This tension seems to be resolved through Jack’s construction of himself as someone who is not limited by his sense of the past and its consequences on his present. This is despite the construction of his awareness of the impact they currently have.

Jack speaks about his process in response to stress, and is illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 16):

Table 16

Jack's story about the helpfulness of verbalising his feelings of stress

-
- A: D: When you got the email, what happened?
- O: J: Uhh the first time,
- CA: I kind of go into this kind of anxious shell and just feel really anxious and as I said before I try and think of a solution myself and I try and self-soothe and be self-reliant and figure it out and then when- when it's clear that that's not going to happen, then I just, again I just feel really anxious and then I might either hope that Claire will see that or I will say to her that evening 'I got this email today, it's really bugging me, I'm feeling really anxious'
- E: and just- just being able to say that helps, you know, a huge amount
- CA: and she'll talk about it with me and she'll probably say 'try not to panic' and I'll try not to panic and hopefully I'll get some sleep
- R: and usually the next day it's fine
-

The Abstract is constructed by my question about one of two stressful events concerning emails that were mentioned previously by Jack. He responds by situating the story as being about the first email. This leads to the Complicating Action which serves to illustrate how Jack attempts to cope with the stressful event on his own. It also shows how when he realises that it is not possible, Jack will either seek support from Claire or hope that she notices his distress. The Complicating Action is interrupted by a brief Evaluation, which serves to convey the meaning of Jack's ability to openly discuss the situation as being immensely useful. The interruption may indicate that it was important for the narrative to break from the events at this particular point in order to

communicate and emphasise this meaning, suggesting that Jack places value on seeking support from others during stressful situations.

The Complicating Action continues, describing how Claire provides support, as well as of how Jack then reacts as a result of this comfort. This leads to the outcome of the story, which is that it will normally turn out to be all right. This second Complicating Action and the Resolution seem to further illustrate the meaning of the Evaluation, by describing the manner in which Jack is supported after turning to someone else for help. This suggests that the account portrays Jack as someone who realises when he cannot comfort himself, and as someone who then seeks help from others and feels supported when he does so.

This narrative seems to also emphasise the “habit” that Jack has of attempting to self-soothe in the first instance of encountering a stressful situation, despite his construction of his awareness of how helpful it is to seek support from others. This suggests that Jack constructs himself as being bound by a historical process in reaction to stress that he cannot break from, before being able to move onto seek support.

Further, the account portrays Jack as someone who places great importance on having closeness with a few select people. He describes these few close others as those who he would turn to for support at the relevant time in the aforementioned reaction to stress “I like to have, as I said, a couple of very special people that I confide in, you know, if I can't deal with things myself”. This is also illustrated elsewhere when he says “there are a few people who get to know what's going on and who I share everything with and that's really important to me to have that support, definitely.” The account portrays Jack as someone who really values having support from these few close others. This also seems to serve to exemplify that although there are some people Jack who

seeks support from, they are exclusive. Further, the text seems to also function to portray these select others as being privileged to be a part of Jack's close network. This is illuminated in his repeated words "very special people", as well as when he says "who get to know" and "special people", suggesting that Jack constructs himself as someone for whom turning to others for support once he realises that he cannot cope alone is a big deal. Jack constructs himself as someone who is careful and selective about who he confides in for support.

The narrative portrays Jack's experience of becoming a parent for the second time as a stressful occasion, as well as illustrating the manner in which he coped with this. The account depicts Jack as having had expectations of second-time parenthood that were different to his experiences of what happened when his second child was born "when uhh Henry was first born, I think maybe we both assumed that because we'd done it before we would just know what to do". The text portrays these differences from Jack's expectations to include his feelings "I think we were misguided to think 'oh, because we've done this once before, we won't experience any of that'". He constructs himself as someone who felt unexpectedly vulnerable and anxious after Henry's birth:

you've been through this incredible life changing experience of birth and now suddenly here you are at home feeling quite lonely and vulnerable and nobody can quite relate and you're supposed to just get on with it so it's quite an isolating, anxiety-inducing time

The text depicts the birth of their second child as an extraordinary and transformative event, which seems to serve to make a large contrast with its description of Jack's low and negative feelings following this event. It also seems to serve to portray Jack as being alone when experiencing these feelings and having no one to turn

to despite Claire undergoing the same situation with him. This appears to additionally emphasise the helplessness of his emotions after the birth. In addition, Jack illustrates his aloneness further when he says “Claire's time is absolutely taken up now with breastfeeding and having to be with the baby”, showing that Claire was not very available during this period of time either. It seems as though Jack had to cope alone with these unexpected feelings after the birth of their second child, which is illustrated in the following story (see Table 17):

Table 17

Jack's narrative on how he coped with his feelings after Henry's birth

-
- A: I think the same would happen again ev- every time we had a new (*chuckling next word*) child,
- O: I don't think (*chuckling next few words*) we're going to have anymore, we're not planning to right now
- E: but I think it's just a chemical thing that happens on top of just being absolutely exhausted that you can't help but just be incredibly anxious and have periods of feeling quite low
- O: um and I dealt with it this time the same way I dealt with it when Shane was born,
- CA: I just kind of would go and sit in the bath for half an hour
- E: and I just find that- that to be incredibly kind of meditative and soothing and just limiting myself to that space of the bath-tub like ok, I'm compartmentalising everything, just now in this moment
- CA: and then I can just get out of the bath
- R: and kind of get on.
- E: So I found that to be a good way of dealing with it.
-

The Abstract conveys that the narrative is about having the same experience each time Jack and Claire have a new child, although the Orientation rushes to clarify that more children are not in their current future plans, suggesting that this is not an immediate concern. The ensuing Evaluation moves onto illustrate the meaning of the same experience occurring, about a chemical change happening and its impact on emotions. The use of this meaning with Jack's words "you can't help but just be" seems to function to remove choice, appearing to portray Jack as not having control over his reaction to the birth of their second child.

The subsequent Orientation seems to serve to support the Abstract by depicting that Jack's manner of coping after Henry's birth was the same way in which he coped after Shane's birth. The events describe the actual coping strategy of sitting alone in the bath tub for a while. The ensuing and interrupting Evaluation portrays the meaning of this to be that it allowed Jack to cut off from these changes and emotions to feel soothed. The events continue after this Evaluation, describing that Jack leaves the bath tub, and this leads to the outcome of the narrative that he is now able to manage with these changes. The final Evaluation depicts the meaning of these Complicating Actions and Resolution to be a positive way of coping following the birth of a child. This appears to portray Jack as being able to self-reliantly cope with difficult feelings directly related to becoming a parent of a second child. Jack seems to construct himself as someone who is able to self-soothe and is able to manage considerable stress by himself.

Despite this construction of his sense of self, the account also seems to portray Jack as someone who would like to be supported during such difficult times, which is illustrated when he says "sometimes that's nice when somebody else will notice that and

actually then draw it out of me and say 'is there something that you are thinking about' or 'is something going on?' and then I would share” and “I would hope maybe that Claire would notice that something was up”. Jack describes how he wishes to be noticed when feeling stressed and have support offered for him to then disclose what is going on. The text appears to convey Jack as someone who would like to be noticed without having to actively seek support himself during stressful times, especially by Claire. Nevertheless, this does not seem to always be possible considering Claire’s unavailability and preoccupation with their second child during this time. Therefore, the account portrays Jack as gaining support from sources other than those he would normally gain it from, such as from a larger crowd as is illustrated in the following extract:

all our friends and neighbours were really really lovely during that first two weeks, they all brought around food, um... sent cards so again it's just that sense that there are people out there, that there is that network of support if you need it, which was really nice

The text describes the role that people played in providing support, such as bringing food and sending cards. It is portrayed as giving Jack a comforting sense of having a support network that he could draw on should he want it. This meaning is further elaborated when Jack says “it's just nice to feel that people care and that people are out there and you can forget that because you do feel so isolated and vulnerable and tired, it's good to, to have that reassurance.” It portrays Jack as feeling comforted, cared for and thought about by people other than Claire during a time when he felt low and exhausted from a source other than his “couple of very special people”.

In contrast, the account illustrates that Jack drew support from those he would not normally seek it from and who were there offering it to him, something the text depicts that he wished for. This suggests that the account conveys Jack as being in such need for support during the stressful event of becoming a parent for the second time and as being unable to seek it from Claire due to her being unavailable, that he felt comforted by those outside of his usual special confidants.

Jack's construction of his couple relationship after the second child. When Jack spoke about his couple relationship, he tells stories about support during times of need. This is illustrated in the following narrative (see Table 18):

Table 18

Jack's story about being able to share his feelings

-
- A: another time when I've been on my own,
- O: just things like getting to the train station and suddenly they announce that there's huge delays on the line and then you kind of think 'oh, am I going to make it to work' or 'what's going to happen?'
- E: and then that- just something like that can make me very anxious so yeah,
- O: even, even I mean that did happen a couple of weeks ago
- CA: and I texted Claire and said 'oh this sucks, this is what's going on.'
- E: So again just being able to share, even if it's just by text
- D: yeah, yeah.
- J: um yeah.
- D: So in that instance you texted cos she wasn't there-?
- CA: J: (*interrupting*) yeah, yeah, I text her, I said 'I'm at the station, they've just announced huge delays, I don't know if I'm going to make it to work' and she
-

just, she went on an app and said 'oh, I'll look at alternative trains that are available' and there wasn't really anything, she said 'oh yes, it says that there are delays due to signal failures' so she was kind of doing some research for me um and saying 'hopefully it will be running soon, good luck.'

R: So it kind of felt like she was there with me

O: even though she was at home

This narrative is relayed in response to being asked about a time when Jack was on his own and feeling stressed. The Abstract conveys that the story will be about such an occasion. The following Orientation provides the background to this stressful time by describing situations when Jack arrives at the train station and there are announcements of considerable train delays which lead to him to have concerns about his ability to get to work on time. Since this forms the background to this particular story, it suggests that this is likely to have taken place on multiple occasions.

The ensuing Evaluation is that these events cause him to feel “very anxious”, which seem to portrays Jack as someone who is greatly impacted upon negatively by happenings which are out of his control when they impede with his ability to get to work on time. It functions to set the scene for the stressful occasion that the Abstract conveys that this narrative is about. This seems to function to highlight the previous Evaluation of it provoking a great deal of anxiety.

The story continues with another Orientation, which makes it clear that this happened a short while ago, further emphasising that these events and consequent impact on Jack’s feeling are not an irregular occurrence.

The subsequent Complicating Action describes Jack's actions of reaching to Claire for support via text message. The story moves onto another Evaluation which conveys the meaning of this event to be the ability to share what is happening to Jack. The story seems to start to wind down until I ask for more meaning about his support-seeking action. The narrative picks back up again by moving onto more events. Jack describes the contents of the text message and Claire's supportive actions in response, which portray her as being supportive in a practical sense - as doing as much as she could to help Jack from where she is. The Complicating Action also depicts her supportive remark once there was nothing more that she could do, conveying her as being emotionally supportive to Jack.

The ensuing Resolution portrays the meaning of Claire's practical and emotional help, which depicts Jack as feeling supported and not alone in this stressful situation. This is in spite of the ensuing Orientation which serves to further emphasise these comforted feelings as it clarifies that Claire was not physically present with him at the time.

Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one where he is able to share his stressful feelings, as well as one which provides him with support and a sense of not being alone even when he physically is. This sense of his couple relationship as supportive is further illustrated in the following extract:

it feels like she's an extension of me, that that's really stuff that we deal with together as a team. So it's our problem rather than just my problem. It is that sense of a problem shared is a problem halved

The text conveys Claire as being a part of Jack, which seems to suggest that Jack is never alone during times of need. It also appears to indicate that when Jack

experiences difficulties, they are also experienced by Claire as she is a part of him. The text portrays this to mean that consequently the problem is dealt by both of them, portraying Jack as always being supported by Claire during times of distress. This seems to further construct his sense of their couple relationship as supportive and as a place where he does not feel alone.

Jack also speaks about spending time together with Claire, and this is illustrated in the following story (see Table 19):

Table 19

Jack's story about a nice time he had with Claire

-
- A: D: can you tell me about a particular recent time when you spent some time with Claire?
- J: Yeah, we had some really lovely times over the holidays,
- O: we went to Brighton for 24 hours
- E: which has become a tradition that we do kind of at the end of the year every year.
- O: My mum came with us, so she watched Shane
- CA: and he wanted to kind of just stay in the hotel and play around with her and Claire and I got to go out with Henry,
- O: but you know, he was in the wrap and he was asleep
- CA: and we just got to walk around the Lanes in Brighton and we looked at our favourite shops there and we were looking for the ideas of some art to put on the fireplace and talking about that kind of stuff
- R: and just reconnecting
- E: so that was really nice.
-

The Abstract of this narrative portrays that it is about the good times spent together over the recent Christmas holiday, with the ensuing Orientation setting the scene of the story as taking place in Brighton which they visited for 24 hours. The Evaluation interrupts to convey meaning which is that it is a yearly tradition, before the story clarifies that Jack's mother went with them and looked after Shane through an Orientation. This second part of the Orientation also functions to set the scene for the following Complicating Action which describes that Shane stayed in the hotel with his grandmother while Jack, Claire and Henry went out together. Further Orientation situates Henry as being in the wrap asleep, as though he were not present in the story, and as though only Jack and Claire were. This element serves to address the part of the Abstract which asks for a story about a time that Jack and Claire spent together, indicating that the story illustrates that even if the baby is present, it still counts as time together for the couple relationship.

The subsequent Complicating Action describes what Jack and Claire did together, which functions to illuminate the ensuing Resolution that they were reconnecting as a couple, further illustrating Henry's presence as being minimised. The final element of Evaluation provides the meaning to these events and to the outcome, as well as supporting what the Abstract conveys the narrative is about – that it was a really enjoyable time.

The first half of the story appears to build up to the second part, which portrays the alone time Jack and Claire spent together and what it meant for their couple relationship. This narrative appears to portray their couple relationship as managing and prevailing around having had their second child by finding a way to honour their yearly tradition of reconnection at Brighton. This seems to construct Jack's sense of his couple relationship as one that is important enough to make time for outside of parenting and

its demands. This is further illustrated when he says: “I think it was just about reconnecting with Claire and having that time to you know, just be ourselves again”, “it means we get to connect and just talk about us” and “rather than just feel like you're constantly stuck being parents all the time”. These accounts serve to provide further illumination into the time Jack and Claire spent together in Brighton, conveying them as being two people in a couple relationship in contrast to merely being two people who are parents together. This further constructs Jack’s sense of his couple relationship as one that is valuable enough to invest time in. It also constructs his sense of his couple relationship as meaning that it is actually a couple relationship outside of parenthood.

Narrative analysis summary. Jack constructs himself as someone who is involuntarily self-reliant in his response to stress, and as someone who then agentially decides to seek support from others. Jack constructs himself as being bound by a historical process in reaction to stress that he cannot break from, before being able to move onto seek support.

Nevertheless, Jack constructs himself as someone who is able to self-soothe and manage considerable stress by himself when he became a parent for the second time. However, it also portrays him as someone who would have liked to have been offered support during this immensely stressful time, especially from Claire who was unavailable to do so. Nonetheless, Jack constructs himself as someone who felt supported by the helpful actions offered by others outside of his usual confidants and so as someone who will draw comfort during times of need from other sources when his normal sources of support are unavailable.

Jack constructs his sense of his couple relationship as one which is supportive during times of need, as well as one which provides him with a sense of not being alone even

when he physically is. In addition, the text portrays Jack's sense of his couple relationship as managing and prevailing around having had their second child, and constructs it as one that is important enough to make time for, outside of parenting and its demands, and which thus has meaning outside of parenthood.

Jack's Phase Two Psycho-social Reading

Qualities of the couple relationship. Jack has a small network of close relationships which he confides in and uses for support during times of need. Claire is Jack's closest relationship, and is the person who he is most comfortable and intimate with:

uh! Well she's my wife um and the mother of our children, so obviously she's the person that knows exactly what we're both going through and we share those experiences together, and whilst I do have friends that I talk to, obviously they don't- they're not experiencing that, so they don't have the same insight so Claire is a uni- in a unique kind of position to know what we are going through and I can share that with her and sometimes just not having to even verbalise it but being able to sit together and know what it's like is really meaningful um... yeah, I feel that we can both talk about what's going on and we can turn to each other for support

Jack considers that he is close to Claire because of her status of being his wife and of being the mother of their children – the “obviously” as well as the initial “uh! Well” suggests that this is clear and undoubted. However, it goes beyond simply her status as the person who he should be the closest to as, it is evident to Jack and he makes it evident to me, she is his principal confidant. Claire is the person who understands him above and beyond any others, such as his close friends.

Jack understands their shared experiences to mean that they can relate to each other in an exclusive and intimate manner and that their connection goes beyond the verbal, where he finds Claire's mere presence as soothing. In addition, Jack considers that they are available to each other for the provision of support when needed. This suggests that Claire meets the markers of the aspects of close relationships that Jack delineates are important to him "shared experience and that ability to relate to each other is really really important in relationships for me, and a sense of trust and uhh understanding, mutual understanding." This indicates that Claire is his attachment figure and thus the person who Jack is most likely to seek comfort from and feel soothed by. This exemplifies the value Claire and their couple relationship holds for him, as well as the important role they play in his life.

Further, Jack emphasises that he seeks support from Claire for most things when he is feeling distressed:

Anything within our relationship, or anything within the family, any kind of child stuff um probably any kind of job issues that affect me because then that also affects us as a family so anything that was getting me down at work I might talk her about, financial stuff in the family, life admin stuff

Jack seeks support from Claire about the both the big and the small stressors in his life, suggesting that he sees her as a resource which will help to make him feel better about the stressful situation in question. This also suggests that at times, he is comfortable expressing his dependency needs and to seek help from Claire should the need arise. This demonstrates a positive and secure view of his couple relationship in some contexts. This also suggests that he permits himself to feel soothed when he does

seek support from her, as can be seen when Jack says “It is that sense of a problem shared is a problem halved, that we deal with all that stuff together.”

However, despite Claire being Jack’s main source of support who he turns to when feeling stressed, he shows understanding of her current position of limited availability:

I think if something just felt... like unimportant, if something was bugging me or if something had happened or uh maybe even like a news story that I didn't like or an article that I didn't necessarily agree with, I might not take that to her because I know that she's always stressed about the bigger issues and I might not want to trouble her with that so that's the stuff I might take to a friend or to my mum or something like that

Jack does not make demands of Claire that he deems are unnecessary at this present time as she is currently stressed out with the bigger things - seemingly alluding to Henry - and so he seeks support for those particular needs elsewhere. This suggests that Jack is attentive of Claire’s current mental state and is in tune with her perspective and her feelings of ongoing stress, and so does not want to burden her any further if it is avoidable. Jack places her needs first, which is a way of avoiding his own feelings. His actions of being in tune with her feelings seem to be indicative of avoidant attachment behaviour.

Jack’s attentiveness of Claire’s emotional state is another way which fosters closeness in their couple relationship. For example, it is a way in which to helpfully repair disagreements and rifts created in their relationship as is illustrated when Jack discusses a recent experience of this. Jack describes a situation where after sleeping in, he wanted to have a family day out over the Christmas break but Claire was exhausted

from having been up with the children since 5.30am and had had a difficult morning with them. Jack was excited to do something all-together whereas Claire was tired and irritable and just wanted to stay in. In the end, Jack decided they should all go out to an animal museum and also decided that Claire would go with them to which she did so, albeit unwillingly. There was miscommunication and disconnection between them during this experience. Nevertheless in the interview, Jack showed insight to what Claire had been feeling at the time of their disagreement as well as the impact this had on both of them at the time:

she probably just wanted to be left alone and probably go to bed and catch up on her sleep and there's me saying 'oh let's go off and do all these exciting things' it's probably the last thing she wanted to do...

Jack acknowledges Claire's feelings about their disagreement suggesting that once he had had some time, he was able to reflect on it and go beyond his own mental state to tune into her individual perspective, and thus allowing him to reflect on and reconsider his own behaviour by saying "I shouldn't have become insistent and I shouldn't have had my expectations".

Later that evening, they had a conversation where they discussed how they had each felt at the time of the dispute and Jack acknowledged Claire's individual feelings during this talk. This further indicates Jack's ability to be in tune with Claire's own mental state, and he was able to use this to help to repair this rift in their relationship, bringing them close together again.

Despite Jack's understanding of Claire's perspective and her current mental state, it seems that he latently wishes for her to be more accessible to him. For example, Jack declares that the transition to second-time parenthood time has further fostered the

closeness in their couple relationship “I think actually the birth of our second child has brought us closer together, it's a huge life event that you share.” Despite the shared experience of this significant life event, there is no mention of how it has actually brought them closer together; no further details are forthcoming anywhere in the interview. It seems that there is a lack of language for emotions.

Since the arrival of their second child, Claire’s time has been vastly taken up with the new baby and especially since Jack had to return to work one week after the birth. This means that she has been less available to Jack in these past months than she may otherwise have been. It appears as though Jack has gone to some effort to outline and persuade that he and Claire still have a very close relationship despite the intrusion of their second child into their couple relationship. This suggests that they may no longer be as close presently, but he may latently wish that it were so. Jack does not openly express this anywhere in the interview, but it seems to be revealed where Jack repeatedly expresses in the interview his hope that Claire will notice what is going on for him when he is feeling stressed, for example “I would hope maybe that Claire would notice that something was up” and “I just feel really anxious and then I might either hope that Claire will see that”. Jack’s hope that Claire would notice his distressed state without his explicit request for support suggests that he wishes she were more available for him. Jack puts aside his own needs as Claire is currently preoccupied and suppresses his own feelings. He doesn’t ask for her support, indicating avoidant attachment behaviour.

Flexible coping strategies. Jack has a range of coping strategies in reaction to stress. As well as feeling emotionally close to Claire, Jack is also able to self-soothe when feeling distressed. When Jack encounters a stressful situation, his initial reaction is to feel anxious about it “I kind of go into this kind of anxious shell and just feel really

anxious". He freely speaks in the interview about times when he has felt anxiety and vulnerability, for example when Jack talks about the time following Henry's birth, he says "you just feel naturally very vulnerable and anxious". Jack recognises what his distressed feelings are, as well as acknowledges that he has them. He does not distort or get caught up in them helplessly, nor does he defend against them either in his actions during stressful events, or when telling me about them. This suggests that Jack is able to sit with his difficult feelings, indicating secure attachment behaviour.

Jack subsequently attempts to cope with the situation on his own "I try and think of a solution myself and I try and self-soothe and be self-reliant and figure it out", showing that he adopts a problem-solving stance in an attempt to regulate his emotional upset. Nevertheless, once he has resolved the stressful situation and is feeling calm, Jack still turns to close others to tell them what happened although not in a manner that seeks support:

I probably say 'oh this thing happened today, and it freaked me out and you know, I was anxious for a while but then I thought about it and I figured out the solution or then this thing happened and it wasn't such a big deal after all.' So probably would afterwards go and say 'oh here's what happened' um, just to tell the story

Following the event and its satisfactory resolution, Jack shares with close others about the stressor, his consequent feelings, how he coped with the situation and how he felt about it afterwards. In these instances, he does not speak about it in order to seek support for coping with the stressful situation, but rather to share his experiences with others. Jack values being able to do this "just to, to have an ear to kind of share with and tell the story, I think that's really important", suggesting that he can handle being open

and vulnerable with close others. As he has already resolved his anxiety self-sufficiently, this appears to be a safe way to strengthen his bonds with his confidants and therefore a way to foster intimacy in these relationships. However, it exemplifies avoidant attachment behaviour.

Regarding his support needs, Jack is able to act flexibly and adapt to the current situation, such as the demands made of him and his couple relationship from becoming a parent for the second time. For example, since the birth of their second child, Claire has been extremely occupied with Henry “Claire's time is absolutely taken up now with breastfeeding and having to be with the baby”, whereas Jack does not have the same demand made of him “I'm not tied you know, uhh tied to the baby in the same way”.

During the first two weeks after Henry's birth, Jack felt very vulnerable, anxious and isolated. However, as Claire was mostly unavailable during this time, Jack did not pressure her further by asking for support, showing understanding of what things were like for her. Instead, he found a way to self-soothe against the feelings of vulnerability and anxiety:

I just kind of would go and sit in the bath for half an hour and I just find that- that to be incredibly kind of meditative and soothing and just limiting myself to that space of the bath-tub like ok, I'm compartmentalising everything, just now in this moment and then I can just get out of the bath and kind of get on.

During these distressing first two weeks following the birth of their second child where his normal safe haven was unavailable, Jack resorted to having baths as a way in which to attain a sense of felt security. This suggests that he achieved felt security by activating an internal secure base in order to help him to regulate his feelings of anxiety,

which then allowed him to carry on during this difficult time. Further, as a way in which to cope with his feelings of isolation, Jack felt comforted by the presence and rallying around of a larger group of acquaintances that fall outside of his network of close others whom he would normally feel soothed by:

lots of family and friends just sending their support and their congratulations, it really meant a lot, I mean even my boss sent us a lovely nappy-cake thing, which is like this big baby cake with nappies and stuff in it, so it's just nice to feel that people care and that people are out there and you can forget that because you do feel so isolated and vulnerable and tired, it's good to, to have that reassurance.

These adaptable coping strategies during a time of severe distress when his usual safe haven was unavailable show that Jack was able to draw comfort from resources other than those he would normally seek support from. This indicates that he is able to act flexibly and adjust to the specific needs of the situation, exemplifying secure attachment behaviour.

Jack's flexible coping strategies in response to stressful situations suggest that he is comfortable with being emotionally close to Claire and seeking support from her and close others. It also indicates that he happily behaves independently when situations require it. This shows that the ways in which Jack manages stress exemplify markers of secure attachment behaviours.

Non-defensive self-reflection. In addition to generally behaving non-defensively, Jack is able to reflect on his own current behaviour and how his past experiences may affect this. For example, this can be seen when he says:

I can see within myself how... I internalised a lot as an only child and from childhood where I developed tools of self-sufficiency and having to rely on myself and not having a huge crowd of people around and how that's carried forward into adulthood and I like to have, as I said, a couple of very special people that I confide in you know, if I can't deal with things myself and, that I've seen that, I've seen that kind of pattern.

When Jack was a young child, his parents divorced and his childhood became a difficult period in his life. He used to be confident and outgoing, and after the divorce he became unconfident and withdrew into himself. His mother and father were preoccupied with their own personal matters, and so Jack had to take care of himself and became self-sufficient during times of need. He didn't have anyone to share with and turn to for support until his teenage years where he made a few good friends which he could rely on. Jack's current coping strategies during times of distress are to attempt to manage on his own, which sometimes works. This present behaviour appears to have origins in his past.

However, if he is unable to comfort self-reliantly, Jack then seeks support from his small network of close others. This behaviour differs from his past actions, indicating that he now behaves in a more secure manner during times of distress. Nevertheless, Jack shows awareness of how his past experiences affected him at the time, as well as of how they continue to affect him and his current behaviour. Jack describes this in a non-defensive and undistorted manner, suggesting that he understands that these vulnerabilities still exist and has accepted them rather than protecting against them. This indicates that Jack's ability to reflect in this non-defensive manner on his past experiences and how they affect his current behaviour is also indicative of secure attachment behaviour.

Psycho-social reading summary. Claire is Jack's principal confidant and his attachment figure indicating the importance of their couple relationship for him. Jack seeks comfort from Claire for most of his support needs, and permits himself to feel soothed by her. This indicates he is relaxed about being vulnerable with her and expressing his dependency needs to her. Jack places Claire's needs first as a way of detaching from his own unsupported difficult feelings. These actions seem to be indicative of avoidant attachment behaviour. Nevertheless, Jack's vigilance of Claire's needs helps to repair ruptures in their couple relationship.

At times, Jack is able to sit with his difficult feelings and then find a solution to the issue and thus self-regulate his feelings. Once resolved, he will then share what happened to him with close others. However, he does not confide in them with the purpose of seeking support and soothing his difficult feelings. This indicates avoidant attachment behaviour. When Claire is unavailable during times of need, Jack draws on other resources in order to attain a sense of felt security. These actions indicate that he is able to act flexibly and adjust to the specific needs of the situation, exemplifying secure attachment behaviour.

Jack is able to reflect without distortion on his current behaviour and how his past experiences affect this. This non-defensive reflection is also suggestive of secure attachment behaviour.

Comparison between Phase Two Analyses

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found Jack to have a range of coping strategies in response to distress of initial self-reliance and then turning to others for support. However, the narrative analysis constructs Jack's initial response as being involuntary and bound by a historical process before moving on to construct

him as someone who has agency over his support needs in his actions of seeking comfort for these. The narrative analysis illustrates the multiplicity of identity construction when alluding to the same experience. Nevertheless, the psycho-social reading provides a differently nuanced understanding to Jack's process in response to distress. It demonstrates that he attempts to self-regulate and resolve the situation in the first instance and once he feels calm and it has been dealt with, Jack then shares his experience with close others. This sharing is not in a support-seeking capacity to help him find a solution to the circumstances, but simply to communicate what happened to him. However, if Jack is unable to self-regulate and resolve the situation, he will seek support from others to help him cope with it and with his distressed feelings. Both methods of analysis draw out different meanings to the same phenomenon and allow for a multi-dimensional understanding of it.

In a related matter, both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found that Jack acts in a flexible and adaptable manner when his normal support system is unavailable to him, by drawing comfort from resources other than those he would normally seek support from. This illustrates similarity in the findings.

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found that Jack understood his couple relationship to be supportive and he can turn to Claire during times of need. However, the narrative analysis offered further insight by its construction of Jack's sense of his couple relationship as a place where he does not feel alone during times of need, even when he is physically on his own. It also highlights his sense of his couple relationship as one that is valuable enough to invest time into, as well as constructing it as an actual couple relationship outside of parenthood. The narrative analysis presents further insight into this aspect of the similar findings than the psycho-social reading provided.

The psycho-social reading alone found that Jack is attentive of and shows understanding of Claire's current position of limited availability and preoccupation with their second child. It shows that although he understands this, Jack latently wishes that she were more available to him.

The psycho-social analysis also uniquely found that Jack is able to reflect on his past experiences to understand how they affected him at the time, as well as awareness of how they continue to affect his current behaviour. These findings are exclusive to the psycho-social reading, offering insights additional to those of the narrative analysis presented.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has presented the longitudinal and pluralistic analysis of Jack's prospective stories about himself and his couple relationship across the transition to second-time fatherhood. It has also discussed the similarities and differences between the findings at each phase, highlighting the complexity and multiple layers of this experience and its meaning.

The next chapter pluralistically examines Claire's and Jack's shared stories across the transition to second-time parenthood.

Chapter 5: Claire's and Jack's Joint Stories across Phase 1 and Phase 2

This chapter explores Claire's and Jack's joint stories about their couple relationship across the transition to second-time parenthood. The stories are drawn from the unstructured photo-elicitation interview which used photos taken by Claire and Jack to represent 'a day in their life together.' The photos were used as prompts in order to elicit narratives, and it is this narrative interview that forms the data for analysis. Although consent has been gained for reproduction of the photos in the thesis, the photos have not been included in the thesis for ethical reasons.

This chapter shows how the use of narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading of the data provide multidimensional insights to how Claire and Jack make sense of their couple relationship together. As in the previous two Findings chapters this chapter is divided into two sections representing the two phases of the research: Phase One when the couple is in the third trimester of the second child's pregnancy, and Phase Two when the second child is four months old. Each section presents the findings of the mono-method analyses. Some of the same narratives are looked at in each method of analysis, so that different meanings can be highlighted. Each section ends with a presentation of how the findings overlap with each other or draw out different meanings to enrich each other.

Phase One

Setting the scene: the interview. This is the first joint photo elicitation interview, which takes place when the couple are in the third trimester of pregnancy, four weeks after the separate interviews. I arrive at their house, where I am greeted by both Claire and Jack. Shane is also present, and we all go to the living room. Shane soon scurries off somewhere else in the house. Claire has sent me seven photos by email a

few days prior to the interview, and I give Claire and Jack their copy of the pictures to look over during the interview and I keep my copy by me. They fill out the photo-elicitation consent form and we begin the interview. Shane comes into the living room during the interview and stays with us.

The photos are of family days out, as well as a photo of a recently woken up Shane in the morning. There are two photos of all three of them together, and a photo which shows Claire and her pregnancy bump.

Claire's and Jack's Phase One Joint Narrative Analysis

Claire's and Jack's co-construction of their couple relationship before the second child. The following story illustrates how Claire's and Jack's couple relationship has different meanings for each partner of the couple (see Table 20):

Table 20

Claire's and Jack's story about the ease of losing focus of their couple relationship since having a child

A:	D: you said that Shane feels like a person now instead of like an appendage
	C: yeah
	D: how does that feel umm for yourselves as a couple? What does that mean for your relationship?
E:	C: it's definitely given us some breathing space
O:	whereas before when he was much smaller it was about right, have you changed the nappy, has he eaten, is he dressed warm enough, is he... if we go here, if we go out to a restaurant, how many toys do we need to bring, is he going to melt down, etc etc.

E: And it just, there is no room for anything besides really a co-parenting relationship in that very early stage and it's very easy to lose sight of your relationship that you had before you had a child

CA: whereas now, we have time to- he'll wake up in the morning and he'll go do his own thing for half an hour and leave us... be to- to just chat or whatever umm or you know, he.. is doing his own thing right now and he'll just go to the loo by himself and he'll just let me know when he needs (*chuckles*) when he's all done!

J: (*chuckles*)

E: C: umm you know, and like it's just, we can actually just (*inaudible*) or sit here and actually look at each other and then maybe a conversation happens where,

O: whereas you don't have that time when they're, when they're not really a person

E: when they just feel like this giant responsibility that you have
(*7 second silence - Jack is looking at Claire*)

C to J: what?

J: yeah, no it's true, yeah,

O: you and I definitely... get the opportunity to actually have a conversation now

E: because whereas before... you couldn't really have a conversation with a toddler

C: mm

CA: J: now... he is interested in things and he does questions and we can... have a conversation about it as a family

C: mm

E: J: I think that is interesting to you and I as well,
Jack's R: and I learn stuff from him all the time
C: yeah
J: umm
E: C: and it's just easier to like, logistically if we want to leave him with-
with Jack's mother to go out,
O: which we are doing on Saturday night, we're going out,
Claire's R: like it's not as big of a deal and he doesn't care, he's just like 'fine
Mummy, Daddy... have fun at the shops'

I formulate a question about the couple relationship drawing on an earlier mention about Shane's growing agency. This forms the narrative's Abstract. It provides the direction for what the story is about, and serves to construct me as a co-creator of this narrative.

Claire launches straight into the meaning of what this story is about; Shane's growing agency has permitted space and time for Claire's and Jack's relationship. This meaning is given context by the ensuing Orientation, which contrasts it with what it was like when Shane was "much smaller," illustrating that it was all about him at the time. An Evaluation follows the Orientation, setting the scene that there was only space to have a relationship between Claire and Jack that revolved around parenting together, with their couple relationship no longer a key focus. This is further emphasised by the events of what Shane currently does as a more grown and agentic child, permitting Claire and Jack to have time alone. Claire offers another Evaluation, illustrating the meaning of the story to be that Claire and Jack are able to give focus to their couple

relationship. This is also supported by the ensuing Orientation and Evaluation which serve to emphasise further what it was like when Shane was more dependent on them. The elements of the story build up to and highlight the main meaning of this narrative to be about the impact on Claire's and Jack's couple relationship when Shane was a younger and more dependent child. It also emphasises what it has meant for the couple relationship now that Shane is older and more independent. The text seems to illustrate Claire's awareness and understanding of Shane's changing impact on their couple relationship, and the account's continuous and repeated emphasis of this meaning appears to illuminate the importance for Claire of being able to focus on their couple relationship.

The narrative is broken up with a long silence when Jack is looking directly at Claire. After seven seconds of silence, Claire resumes the account with a direct and challenging "what?" towards Jack, which seems to reflect some anger towards him. Jack responds with immediate agreement; in fact, he affirms his concordance three times in the next sentence, which appears to function to dispel any anger towards him. The story is continued by Jack, with an Orientation and Evaluation which also serve to confirm Claire's perspective.

The narrative then appears to change track in the subsequent Complicating Actions, which are about Shane currently having a role in the couple relationship now that he has the ability to contribute meaningfully to it as he is older. The story has moved on to represent the three of them in their family relationship rather than just Claire and Jack in their couple relationship as Claire had been conveying. The narrative portrays Claire and Jack as both being interested in Shane's role in their relationship, consequently locating Shane as another member of it. The narrative proceeds to a Resolution, which further locates Shane being as such an interesting and worthy person

in his own right that Jack is able to learn from him. This seems to be the ending of Jack's own part and own meaning of the joint story. However, although this Resolution is also agreed with by Claire, the narrative swiftly changes track again with the subsequent Evaluation and Orientation returning the story back around to focus on the couple relationship rather than the family relationship. The narrative concludes with a second Resolution, which conveys the acceptability and adequacy of the focus on their couple relationship. This seems to be a different ending to Claire's own part and own meaning to the joint story.

The complexity of this co-created narrative is emphasised by its many components and repeated Evaluations following the other elements. This indicates the eagerness of each partner to convey their different and particular meanings of the co-constructed story. Despite it having the same events and orientations, it is the same story but with different meanings. The account illustrates Claire's focus on their couple relationship in the context of parenting a small child growing up into a more agentic child. It constructs Claire's understanding of their couple relationship as growing in conjunction with Shane's growth to also become more independent of him.

However, the account also illuminates Jack's focus on the familial relationship to include Shane, veering away from the narrative's focus solely on the couple relationship. It constructs Jack's understanding of their couple relationship to be inclusive of Shane's growing agency and thus worthiness of such inclusion. This is suggestive of Claire's views of Shane as an addition to the couple relationship of two, but it seems that Jack sees their relationship as being more unified and cohesive as a familial relationship of three. This indicates that the text constructs their couple relationship as one where each partner of the couple gives it a different meaning and different importance, illustrating divergence in the relationship's significance between the partners. This constructed

different meaning to the couple relationship seems to be further expanded on in the following:

C: it's also important for the relationship in general cos you forget how to...
(*chuckling*) talk to each other about things that aren't kid related, it's amazing...

J: mm, I think that's often seen as the cost of attachment parenting

C: mm

J: is that there's such a focus for the child that you... lose sight of each other, that the, you know, the child is the centre of the universe

Claire continues to emphasise her meaning of their couple relationship by discussing the impact on their relationship that having children has had. Jack then expresses his understanding of why this impact may have occurred, illustrating his acknowledgement that their couple relationship may have suffered as a result of focusing mainly on their child. This serves to construct the couple relationship as one where there is awareness and understanding of why one partner may feel a particular way even if it is different to the other partner's feelings. This illuminates the construction of their relationship as one where Jack empathises with Claire's own view. The account expands on this further:

J: there's that sense that it can be at the cost of the couple's relationship so we've always tried to be careful of that and always tried to, as I said from the very beginning, set the tone and have a concert or go to things for ourselves

C: mm

J: find that balance...

The text illustrates Jack's own understanding of the direct impact on their couple relationship having children has, rather than just showing his awareness of what it means for Claire. This appears to be the same understanding as what the text construes Claire's meaning to be.

Jack expresses that he has been aware of this from the beginning and has tried to avoid this from happening by actively engaging in activities that support their couple relationship. This serves to construct their couple relationship as one where there is shared meaning and agreement around the detrimental impact on it of having children. In this way, the text illuminates how the previous divergent meaning of their couple relationship is resolved by Jack, which seems to illustrate how he works to ensure that he and Claire concur. These different meanings also demonstrate the co-constructed multiplicity of their couple relationship.

The aforementioned constructed different meanings of the couple relationship seem to be resolved in the following narrative about how Claire and Jack feel anxiety when leaving Shane (see Table 21):

Table 21

Claire's and Jack's story of their separation anxiety when leaving Shane

A: C: whenever we go out, you know,

O: like and he never- he never had separation anxiety anyways but...

CA: I remember leaving him when he was sort of more of a baby versus like a- a child... it would make me anxious

E: J: (*interrupting*) we had separation anxiety but he didn't

C: yeah

J: yeah

C: we did but he didn't, so

J: yeah

C: umm yeah no,

R: it just makes everything easier and you actually get to the point where like oh yes, I am part of a couple... whilst being... in a family

Claire leads this story and conveys that it is about Shane when Claire and Jack go out alone together. The Orientation serves to portray Shane as never having experienced any issues when they would leave him alone. The events support this by illustrating that it was indeed Claire rather than Shane who would feel anxious at doing so. At this point, Jack interrupts the narrative, and takes it in the direction of Evaluation to emphasise that it was both of them who experienced separation anxiety rather than Shane. This is repeatedly affirmed by Claire and Jack. The story moves onto its Resolution, conveyed by Claire to illustrate that Shane's lack of anxiety at being left engenders a sense that there is indeed a couple relationship apart from, and as well as, the familial relationship. The text constructs the couple relationship, comprising of Claire and Jack, as standing autonomously from the familial relationship, which includes Claire, Jack and Shane; the couple relationship is not entirely swallowed up by the familial one.

Furthermore, this entire narrative seems to function as another Resolution to the previous story (Table 20), which constructed the couple relationship as having different meanings for each partner of the couple. In this story (Table 21), Claire's previous focus

on the couple relationship, and Jack's separate focus on the familial relationship is brought together in cooperation with each other to illustrate that the couple relationship is not ultimately sacrificed for the familial relationship. This account constructs their couple relationship as one where there is compromise and collaboration as well as shared meaning. The text illustrates how Claire resolves the aforementioned discordant meaning of their relationship, demonstrating how she also works to ensure that she and Jack concur. The account constructs their couple relationship as one where they both value being in agreement with each other, as well as both working to achieve this end. This also serves to construct their couple relationship as one where there is shared meaning and agreement around the detrimental impact to it of having children. Furthermore, the text also demonstrates the co-constructed multiplicity of meaning brought to the story by Claire and Jack about their couple relationship.

The following narrative about Shane's good behaviour on a family day out also exemplifies when both partners of the couple concur with each other (see Table 22):

Table 22

Claire's and Jack's story about a family day out

A:	J: it was a nice family day,
O:	you know, going and getting knitting stuff for the new baby and my mum being there, so there was
CA:	C: <i>(interrupting)</i> we had lunch and-
O <i>(continued):</i>	J: kind of three generations you know.
CA:	Yeah, we had lunch together
E:	C: it was a nice day, his behaviour was really good

O: and even- even though we were in the middle of a toy store

E: which for a kid it must be impossible not to like 'arr' like he did ok,

CA: he had a few wobbly like 'oh, I want this, this, and this' but he did listen to reason, I said like 'no, we're not getting that, that's too much money. No, let's go over here'

E: here' like it wasn't- it wasn't completely unmanageable. It was still stressful, but it wasn't like it would have been like two years ago

CA: when he just would have trashed the place, you know, he would have pushed that C3PO over

J: mm mm

C: and I'd be writing them a cheque (*chuckling*) to fix it

E: J: he's no, you know, he's not a tiny baby anymore, so he's learned boundaries and knows social norms

C: (*interrupting*) yeah, he still challenges you, but it's a- it's more of a discussion than a hostile takeover

J: (*chuckles*) yeah

CA: C: he does like pretend to listen and occasionally we win out

R: J: he's generally very good now

C: he is, yeah, he's definitely shown a lot of improvement

Jack conveys that the narrative is about an enjoyable day spent together as a family. The Abstract is followed by an Orientation stating the presence of Jack's mother and the action of purchasing products for knitting clothes for the baby. This serves to locate the story as a family event. Claire interrupts this scene setting to move the narrative onto the events of having lunch, which also supports the "nice family day" Abstract. The story is continued by Jack with an Orientation, setting the scene of it

being about a “family day” by highlighting the presence of three family generations before proceeding to the events of having lunch all together. The story is then led by Claire, and moves onto Evaluation explaining that it was a nice day because Shane behaved well. This is further contextualised and given significance by the following Orientation which locates them in a toy shop, as well as by the following Evaluation which conveys that it must therefore have been hard for him to behave so well. These elements, which are concordantly co-constructed by both Claire and Jack, all serve to support the Abstract of this narrative. This illuminates how they both co-construct their joint experience and its meaning together.

The subsequent Complicating Actions and Evaluations illustrate the moments when Shane’s behaviour, although manageable, may not have been deemed to be “really good” as well as its consequences. The story outlines how Shane currently behaves, as well as compares Shane’s current behaviour to his behaviour in previous years which would have been out of control and therefore stressful. The final Evaluation is harmoniously co-constructed in turns by Claire and Jack, highlighting how Shane’s good current behaviour is enacted, leading to a concordant and joint Resolution about his “really good” behaviour. The account illustrates that both Claire and Jack are in agreement about Shane’s behaviour as well as how they support each other in conveying this to me, and constructs their couple relationship as being concordant about this important issue. This is also illustrated elsewhere:

J: and, I think at times that's been difficult for you where you've said 'how come other children are so well-behaved?' and I've had to say 'well, I think it's because we do attachment parenting that he's unbelievably confident in himself and he knows that no matter what he does, we will love him' so- so

are the other children that we see whose parents are quite strict, quite harsh, don't do attachment parenting, the children are

C: it's more out of fear

J: yeah, there's kind of an underlying fear sometimes

C: yeah

J: and they know they're going to get spanked if they misbehave and

C: (*interrupting*) whereas I feel like when he listens

J: (*simultaneously*) and there's not that inner security

C: when he listens to us it's because we've explained 'this is why' and he takes it in and he accepts and he goes 'ok' and even though that sometimes takes longer than if I just said 'well, just because and I'm going to whack you' like, it feels better and it's more permanent because then I don't have to talk to him about that again

The account portrays Claire and Jack as working together to construct a joint perspective on the meaning of their parenting practices and how this comes across in Shane's behaviour. The text illustrates Jack's understanding of how Claire has felt when comparing Shane's behaviour to that of other children, as well as his response which explains his stance on this matter. The account also exemplifies Claire's understanding of Jack's explanation as well as demonstrating both their affirmations of each other's responses. The text illustrates how Claire appropriates the meaning Jack has conveyed, illuminating how they have negotiated shared meaning and understanding about Shane's past and present behaviour. Claire and Jack co-construct their couple relationship as one

where there is acknowledgement of each other's perspective. They also co-construct it as one where there is negotiation in arriving at joint meaning of their parenting practice, which ensures they are both in agreement about this.

Nevertheless, Claire and Jack are not always in agreement about the same shared experience, as is illustrated in a narrative about when they visited a large wooded location with Shane and Jack's mother. Unbeknown to them, there was a festival taking place and so the parking area was closed except for cars which had disabled badges. They didn't have this badge but Jack's mother was not able to walk from where they would have to then park. Nonetheless, Jack drove in and explained the situation to the people who worked there and managed to get a pass to park their car there. Claire expresses her perspective on Jack's acquisition of the parking pass:

C: But I would never have done that. I would have been like 'nope, sorry' I would have gone home because I just don't... I can't- I just, I don't know, I'm just

J: I think you're quite fearful of rules and consequences

C: mm

J: whereas I am much more of the opinion that actually if you are reasonable and you just talk to somebody and explain what's going on

C: yeah

J: that you can reason with people and that the world isn't such a scary place because I've had positive attachment experiences.

Claire regarded that she felt unable to act how Jack did in this story, with the result being that they would have had to return home if it were down to her, and thus their family day out would have been over. The account expresses Jack's insight into Claire's perspective and contrasts this with his own viewpoint and the reasons for it; the text also conveys that Claire affirms Jack's points. This illuminates that they each have different perspectives on the same situation and they do not end up yielding to each other's meaning in order to be in agreement. It seems that Claire and Jack co-construct their couple relationship as one where there is freedom to be agentic within the partnership. This is also exemplified elsewhere:

J: that's my experience, that when you speak to people, people are quite reasonable

C: mm

J: but I know that for Claire that anxiety kicks in and there's that fear of what could happen, there's the fear of authority or consequence

C: mm

J: and so often she will just avoid the situation or just say 'well forget it, we'll go home'

C: which I'm sure is not uncommon cos obviously they have those rules for a reason and it puts a lot of people off

The text illuminates Claire's and Jack's differing perspectives of the same experience, as well as Jack's insight into Claire's particular viewpoint. Despite her affirmation of the points Jack makes, the account portrays Claire as sticking by her particular understanding and she does not compromise on her meaning of the experience.

Furthermore, the text also portrays Jack as respecting Claire's beliefs and as not attempting to persuade her otherwise. This suggests that Claire and Jack co-construct their couple relationship as one where each partner has the freedom to be a unique individual with separate outlooks and opinions that are acknowledged and accepted by the other partner, unless they are talking about their own relationship.

Narrative analysis summary. Claire and Jack co-construct their couple relationship as one where each partner gives it a different meaning and different importance, illustrating some divergence in the relationship's significance. However, the account illuminates how the divergent meaning of their couple relationship is resolved by both Jack and Claire. Their couple relationship is co-constructed as one where there is acknowledgement of each other's perspective and negotiation from both partners in arriving at joint meaning.

In addition, Claire and Jack co-construct the couple relationship as standing autonomously from the familial relationship, as well as one where each partner of the couple has the freedom to be a unique individual. These varied and numerous characteristics of the couple demonstrate the co-constructed multiplicity of their couple relationship.

Claire's and Jack's Phase One Psycho-social Reading

The couple relationship as an entity. Claire and Jack discuss Shane's growing agency as he becomes older; Shane is no longer an "appendage" to them, but shows more interest in things and is increasingly independent "like a person", which has implications for their couple relationship. The following two extracts have been seen in the preceding narrative analysis; however the psycho-social reading draws out a different meaning from them which are presented here:

D: You said that Shane feels like a person now instead of like an appendage

C: yeah

D: how does that feel umm for yourselves as a couple? What does that mean for your relationship?

C: it's definitely given us some breathing space whereas before when he was much smaller it was about right, have you changed the nappy, has he eaten, is he dressed warm enough, is he.. if we go here, if we go out to a restaurant, how many toys do we need to bring, is he going to melt down, etc etc. And it just, there is no room for anything besides really a co-parenting relationship in that very early stage and it's very easy to lose sight of your relationship that you had before you had a child whereas now, we have time to- he'll wake up in the morning and he'll go do his own thing for half an hour and leave us... be to- to just chat or whatever

When Shane was a younger child, the things that Claire and Jack did revolved around him, which meant that there was a lack of space for a relationship between them other than one focused on parenting together. This suggests that in focusing to meet Shane's needs as his attachment figures, it may have been difficult to meet each other's needs as each other's attachment figures during that intense co-parenting period. Nevertheless, Shane's increasing agency means that presently there is more time to devote to Claire's and Jack's couple relationship. The following extract presents data which has been seen in the preceding narrative analysis, but provides an alternative understanding in the psycho-social reading:

C: umm you know, and like it's just, we can actually just (*inaudible*) or sit here and actually look at each other and then maybe a conversation happens where, whereas you don't have that time when they're, when they're not really a person when they just feel like this giant responsibility that you have

(7 second silence - Jack is looking at Claire)

C to J: what?

J: yeah, no it's true, yeah, you and I definitely... get the opportunity to actually have a conversation now

Claire elaborates on when Shane was younger and therefore so dependent on them that he was not seen as being “a person” and instead was seen as “a giant responsibility”. This further demonstrates how all-consuming it was to parent him at the time and the lack of time that she and Jack had for each other. In addition, this highlights Claire’s appreciation of their current ability to just be present with Jack and engage in simple things, such as having a conversation alone together. During this interaction in the interview (they are sitting beside each other on a sofa and I am sitting opposite them both on a chair) there is a 7 second silence where Jack is just looking at Claire in what looks like a thoughtful manner and I wonder whether Jack is at this point realising the full extent of Claire’s feelings on this particular matter. I feel tension in the room and dare not break it as it feels as though something is about to happen between them. Towards the end of the silence, Claire turns her head to look directly at Jack in silence for a few seconds before saying “what?” to him in what appears to be a confronting manner; it seems as though she is challenging him to disagree with her. This defensiveness suggests that she may feel as though he may negatively judge her feelings

around parenting Shane to be unacceptable, especially as it is Claire who has stressed his dependency and its implications considerably during the interview. Nevertheless, Jack quickly concurs with Claire, affirming his agreement multiple times in his next words, indicating that he wants to reassure her that he also shares the feelings around currently having more time together as a couple. The interview continues and there are no more confrontations, suggesting that Claire was soothed by Jack's response and may have felt as though he was on her side about this.

Shane's increasing agency means that they have more freedom to dedicate to their couple relationship, which includes the ability to leave Shane with someone looking after him in order for Claire and Jack to go out with each other. Furthermore, they stress that although Shane didn't experience separation anxiety at being left by them, they did:

C: he never- he never had separation anxiety anyways but... I remember leaving him when he was sort of more of a baby versus like a- a child... it would make me anxious

J: (*interrupting*) we had separation anxiety but he didn't

C: yeah

J: yeah

C: we did but he didn't, so

J: yeah

C: umm yeah no, it just makes everything easier and you actually get to the point where like oh yes, I am part of a couple... whilst being... in a family

Jack interrupts Claire saying that she felt anxious about leaving Shane when he was a baby to emphasise that they were the ones who experienced separation anxiety, but that Shane did not. This is followed by multiple affirmations from both of them, as well as repetition of this point from Claire, showing that they are both very eager to make this case. This over-enthusiasm seems to indicate that they may be defending against possible underlying feelings of guilt at leaving Shane in order to spend time alone together. It may also suggest that Claire and Jack are unconsciously possessing the feelings of anxiety that Shane may have had at being left alone and making it their own, as this may be easier to cope with than the knowledge that they may have caused Shane to feel anxiety as a result of their actions. Nevertheless, their ability to not consciously feel guilt over this seems to serve a purpose as it permits Claire and Jack to feel as though they actually have a couple relationship between themselves, which is apart from the familial relationship that includes Shane.

Claire and Jack recall two times that stand out to them when they felt separation anxiety over leaving Shane. On the first occasion, they left him with Claire's mother when he was a few days old in order to go to a concert together. They had discussed whether or not they should go, and decided that they should dedicate time to their couple relationship, as is illustrated by Jack "we said 'well we, you know, it is important that we are still a couple and that we try and have that time'" and Claire "we wanted to set the right tone".

Claire and Jack compromised their spending time alone together and not being away for too long by timing it so they missed the opening bands, arriving at the concert when the main band was playing, and leaving as soon as it was finished. Additionally, they were only 10 minutes away from their house, and were gone for around 90 minutes in total. However, during that time they both felt "very very anxious" (Claire's words)

and kept checking their phones and were not really present at the concert. Nevertheless, when they returned home, Claire's mother told them that Shane had been asleep the whole time and that "literally, it's fine" (Claire's words). They attribute their feelings of separation anxiety to it being the first time they had left him since he was born.

The second occasion that stands out to them was when they left Shane alone with Jack's mother shortly after returning to the UK. Claire and Jack went to a concert that was an hour away and so they were away for around three or four hours in total. They attribute their feelings of separation anxiety to Jack's mother's lack of confidence and that they were an hour away should they need to return in an emergency, rather than attributing their anxiety to Shane himself "cos the baby has always been very secure" (Jack's words).

These examples demonstrate that when Claire and Jack leave him, they do not consider that Shane feels anxiety about being left. Further, on the occasions that Claire and Jack experienced feelings of anxiety it turned out to be all fine, and so the anxiety has consequently become irrelevant as is illustrated by Claire: "it's not like even a thing anymore, I don't even think about it", as well as:

C: I think when we have the opportunity to actually go out, whether it's last minute or planned in advance, I'm just like... so excited to be able to do that, that overrides any sort of underlying anxiety becau- and also cos he's almost four now like, history has shown me that nothing bad will happen you know.

This account puts forward even more reasons as to why there is no reason to feel anxious when they leave Shane to go out together – previous occasions have demonstrated that everything has turned out to be fine and therefore there was no need to feel anxious. In addition, Shane is getting older and is thus better able to grasp that

his mother and father will return after a while. Further, it indicates that the feelings of delight over spending time together supersede any feelings of anxiety that may be lurking, suggesting that this excitement may also serve to defend against any unconscious guilt. However, despite claiming that separation anxiety is irrelevant when they leave Shane, Claire and Jack seem to spend a substantial amount of the interview emphasising that they feel “very secure and confident... comfortable” (Jack’s words) in leaving him, which is further elaborated upon in the following:

J: I think that- that probably passes onto him

C: yeah

J: I think he senses that we're comfortable and fine with it so he

C: yeah

J: also just picks that up so it's fine

C: yeah, I mean it's a non-issue

J: there's no anxiety really

In addition to the lack of felt anxiety highlighted multiply in this illustrative joint quote, Jack outlines that there is a positive implication for Shane. At this point in the interview I am feeling as though they are trying to persuade me of how wonderful it is that there is no anxiety either on their part or on Shane’s part when they leave him. This is especially so with the additional claim of its benefit to leaving him, which further supports the case for Claire and Jack to spend time alone together. This seems to be excessive, and I have ensured to respond empathically and non-judgementally both in my questions and in my body language, suggesting that this excessive argument may be

a way to unconsciously persuade themselves that what they are doing is indeed “fine”. This defence may also serve to block against potential underlying guilt at leaving Shane when they go out alone. Nevertheless, Claire and Jack’s defence of lack of felt anxiety at leaving Shane alone may also serve yet another purpose, which is explicated in the subsequent analysis.

Fear of loss of the couple relationship. As Shane is becoming increasingly agentic, it has meant that Claire and Jack have been able to dedicate time and space to their couple relationship after not having had that the time to do so when he was a younger and more dependent child: “it's nice to know that we have that freedom again and that we have that time for each other again” (Jack’s words). However, thinking ahead to when the second baby arrives, Claire and Jack feel as though they will lose their newly acquired freedom and they compare it to starting all over again “I was, like happy that we finally reached that point but then I was like oh, we are about to go back to go back to zero again” (Claire’s words). This is further illustrated in the following:

J: a baby does feel like that [an appendage] at times, it's this thing that...

you are tied to literally and you have to lug it around all the time and cater

C: definitely

J: for its every need and it it can't do anything

C: mm

J: umm so it just feels like something that you kind of have to carry around,

can- can feel very burdensome at times

The baby will be utterly dependent on Claire and Jack, and its all-consuming and demanding arrival will impact on their couple relationship detrimentally as it will be

about meeting the baby's needs first. This is further illustrated by Jack "there's such a focus for the child that you... lose sight of each other, that the, you know, the child is the centre of the universe". Claire and Jack are keen to ensure that they spend as much time as possible now before their second child is born and it is no longer possible to do so:

J: I think also we are trying to make the most of it (*claps hands*) before the (*chuckling*) new baby comes along, so

C: yeah

J: trying to get, as much packed in as possible before then cos we know we're kind of resetting back to the beginning all over again

Claire further emphasises the point they are making about trying to spend as much time together as possible before the new baby's arrival and what it means for their couple relationship. This suggests that the advances they have made since having the first child will be erased and they will regress to the start again, rather than progressing in their couple relationship. The implication of this on their couple relationship is further illuminated in the following:

C: yeah I think it's- it's about fitting as much in now while we still have sort of like (*sniffs*) that... one less kid to worry about thing but... it's also important for the relationship in general cos you forget how to... (*chuckling*) talk to each other about things that aren't kid related, it's amazing...

This illustrates the importance for Claire and Jack of spending time together now while they have only their one child to think about as their focus will centre on the second baby when it is born, leaving little or no room for their couple relationship. It seems to be of even more significance for Claire and Jack to be able to leave Shane now

in order for them to spend time together. This indicates the importance of not having issues such as anxiety over leaving him as these feelings may impede on the little time they have left to dedicate to their couple relationship. The lack of consciously felt anxiety over leaving Shane appears to also function to facilitate Claire and Jack spending time alone together to meet each other's needs before they are both consumed by their new child. In addition, this lack of felt anxiety also facilitates their future ability to leave Shane and go out together with the baby, as is illustrated by Claire:

C: I- I think babies are- you can take- even if we leave Shane with his mum, we can take the baby out and- I remember when Shane was a baby he just slept... all the time, so we could go to a restaurant, we'd go to the park, whatever (*claps hands*) and he was asleep, so...

Claire draws on her past experience of when Shane was a baby to consider that it will occur similarly with their second child, with the implications of this for their relationship alluding that they will still manage to have some time together as a couple. Furthermore, Claire and Jack appear to have found a solution for when their second child is born by reframing their impending lack of time together into a more positive alternative scenario, as is illustrated by Claire in the following:

C: it's not like we'll then have two helpless kids, you know, we'll have a baby and a four year old and you know, he go- he's going to go to nursery for one more year, then he'll be in reception, and then by the time he's in reception then the baby, baby will be like two and.. it won't- I feel like the second lot of babydom is going to pass, feel like it's passing even quicker than because I mean we're busy anyways.

She emphasises that they will not have to devote much of themselves to Shane as he grows older and continues to go to nursery and will then attend reception the year after, at which point the baby will be older and therefore less all-consuming. Claire also highlights that they are busy people regardless of their children. All of this lends support to her argument that the time will pass quickly, which includes the period of time when the baby is like “an appendage” that has to be catered “for its every need”. Their outlook on this quick passage of time both leads to and means that Claire and Jack will be able to get to the point where they have time for each other and their couple relationship again, and are able to meet each other’s needs rather than just the baby’s needs. This suggests that they have reformed their perception of what it will be like when their second child arrives to make the thought of it more bearable for them now. This indicates that they may have done this in order to defend against unconscious anxiety about their lack of time for each other when the second baby is born.

Claire’s and Jack’s reformation of their perception of what it will be like when their second child arrives, their repeated points that they will still have time together as a couple as well as their repeated points of their lack of felt anxiety seem to function together to make them presently feel that the looming situation will be bearable. This suggests that it may also serve to defend against underlying anxiety about how their couple relationship will fare with the arrival of their second child. This anxiety may have roots in their shared relational past, when their couple relationship underwent serious problems which almost resulted in their separation shortly after Shane was born. At the time, they were living in the USA and were isolated from their respective families (Jack’s family was in the UK and Claire’s family was elsewhere in the North American continent) which meant that they didn’t have support with the childcare. In addition, Claire was feeling very depressed and Jack was busy completing his Master’s

degree and the situation felt overwhelmingly difficult for both of them. Nevertheless, they attended couple's therapy and got their relationship back on track. However, it may be that Claire and Jack associate Shane's birth and their all-consuming role as parents to him to have perpetuated their relational difficulties further, currently providing them with evidence that it can go wrong, and possibly causing them to feel anxiety about this happening again with the birth of their second child. In addition, they also have evidence for the failure of couple relationships following having children from Claire's sisters' experiences, whose relationships have ended in divorce once their children were born. Claire illustrates the meaning of this in the following:

C: they don't even know who they are married to at the end of the day because they didn't put any... effort into their marriage and that's a living thing and it will die (*3 second pause*) even if you still love each other (*thumps table*) it can still... (*claps hand on knee*) go away, like it's not enough

She attributes the failure of her sisters' marriages to the lack of effort they dedicated to their couple relationships. Claire understands that couple relationships require space and time, even when the partners are being consumed by their parenting roles. The strength of her feelings about this is further conveyed in her body language as she pauses to add significance to her words, as well as thumping the table and clapping her hand on her knee. The meaning of this is further elaborated when she says "cos it would be easy just to say 'oh well, we'll just come up for air when the kids are older' you know, but by that time you're strangers", indicating the vast importance for Claire and Jack to make time for each other even when it is really difficult to do so. Claire and Jack have evidence from their own history about how the relationship can go wrong, as well as from Claire's sisters' relationships. They appear to be striving to avoid the

possible future failure of their couple relationship by ensuring that they have time together when the second baby arrives, aided by the aforementioned techniques of defending against the anxiety that the threat to their couple relationship may arise in them.

Psycho-social reading summary. Shane's increasing agency means that they have more freedom to dedicate to their couple relationship. The frequency and eagerness with which Claire and Jack convey this seems to indicate that they may be defending against possible underlying feelings of guilt at leaving Shane in order to spend time alone together. This seems to serve a purpose as it permits Claire and Jack to feel as though they actually have a couple relationship.

Claire and Jack feel as though they will lose their newly acquired freedom with the arrival of their second child, and so the lack of consciously felt anxiety over leaving Shane appears to also function to facilitate Claire and Jack spending time alone together to meet each other's needs before they are both consumed by their new child. This also facilitates their future ability to leave Shane and go out together with the baby.

Claire and Jack appear to reframe their impending lack of time together into a more positive alternative scenario and where time will pass quickly to the point where they will have time for their couple relationship again. This suggests that they have reformed their perception of what it will be like when their second child arrives to make the thought of it more bearable for them now. This indicates that they may have reformed their perception to defend against unconscious anxiety about their lack of time for each other when the second baby is born.

Finally, Claire and Jack draw on their own relational history and Claire's sisters' relational histories to understand that the couple relationship may fail after having

children. Therefore, they appear to be defending against the anxiety that the threat to their couple relationship may arise in them in the aforementioned ways.

Comparison between Phase One Analyses

The narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found Claire and Jack have shared understanding within their couple relationship. However, the narrative analysis constructed their couple relationship as one where there is agreement over collaborative parenting practices and shared meaning about the detrimental impact of having children to the couple relationship. The psycho-social reading highlighted the couple relationship's shared meaning to focus on Shane's lack of separation anxiety when they left him to spend time together as a couple. This shared meaning defended Claire and Jack from feeling guilt at leaving Shane alone and so functioned to give space and time for the couple relationship.

Both methods of analyses found an emphasis on the couple relationship as being separate from the familial relationship. Equally, they emphasised the meaning of this to be that the couple relationship is not swallowed up by, or sacrificed for the familial relationship.

Uniquely, the narrative analysis alone showed different focus of the meaning of the couple relationship for each partner. This meant that Claire and Jack co-constructed their couple relationship as one where there is freedom to be an agentic and unique individual within the partnership.

Individually, the psycho-social reading found that there has been an increase in time and space for the couple relationship as Shane becomes progressively more

independent. This means that Claire and Jack have been able to dedicate more time towards each other, as well as being able to spontaneously spend time together.

A further unique finding from the social-reading is a fear of loss of the couple relationship. They draw on their relational histories as well as Claire's sister's relationship to understand that couple relationships may fail after having children. Claire and Jack defend against the possibility of this loss by ensuring that they spend as much time as they can together before their second child is born and it is no longer possible to do so. They also defend against this anxiety by reframing their perception from lack of time for each other when their second child arrives, to time passing quickly to when they will have time for their couple relationship again.

Phase Two

Setting the scene: the interview. This is the second joint photo-elicitation interview, which takes place four weeks after the individual interviews and when the second child, Henry is around five months old. I arrive at their house, where I am greeted by both Claire and Jack with baby Henry. Shane is attending his nursery. We all go into the living room to conduct the interview. Claire has sent me six photos by email a few days prior to the interview and I give them a copy of these to look over during the interview and I keep my copy by me. Claire and Jack fill out the photo-elicitation consent form and we begin the interview. Henry is breastfed by Claire when he requires it. When he falls asleep, they take him to another room and then bring him back to the living room later on in the interview.

The photos are of family days out, as well as a photo of a recently woken up Shane in the morning. There are two photos of all three of them together, and a photo which shows Claire and her pregnancy bump.

The photos are mainly of Shane and Henry together, with one of Shane in a playground, one with Henry and his paternal grandmother, and a co-sleeping scene of Claire, Shane and Henry. Notably, there is an absence of photos of the family together, and none of Jack. The photos centre around the children.

Claire's and Jack's Phase Two Joint Narrative Analysis

Claire's and Jack's co-construction of their couple relationship after the second child. When Claire and Jack speak about their couple relationship, they told stories about co-sleeping with their children. The following story illustrates how Claire and Jack approach transitioning Shane from co-sleeping with them (see Table 23):

Table 23

Claire's and Jack's story about co-sleeping with Shane

- A: D: what is that like for yourselves to kind of have the bed back and then... or in this transitional period?
- C: it's nice,
- E: I think it's nice to have the space... but more so I think it's nice because I realise that it means that he's, he's developing, he's getting older, he is moving forward in a healthy way um and it, to me it's just evidence of the way that we are doing things is working out in a good way for him cos he's not, he's not anxious about being-
- O: if we say... you know, with- with weaning him off when he stopped breastfeeding, I just had, after a while a don't offer, don't refuse policy
- CA: so if he wanted mummy juice and if he called it, he had it, I never said no but I never said 'oh, shall we have it?'
- E: you know, like it was always, it was his idea and when he didn't want it anymore, that was also his idea and I think... that's sort of the way we

approach the bed,

O: like every... day after bath-time

CA: I go 'oh, shall we-' I take him immediately to his room, we put on pyjamas and I'll put him in his bed and we'll start our bedtime routine but if any- any point he's like 'I want to go on your bed' I'll just sort of be like 'ok, let's go'

E: um cos at some point he will just be fine with that,

Claire's like some nights he is...

R:
(*C leaves the room*)

E: J: yeah, I agree with all of that, it's nice to see him transitioning and self-weaning. Um obviously it is nice to have the space in the bed and to have that space for ourselves but, you know we can do that anywhere

CA: or we make- we come in here and just make space in here,

Jack's but it's nice to see him get to that point, yeah.

R:
(*C returns to the room*)

The start of the story is co-constructed by my question and Claire's response, which forms the Abstract. My question asks what it is like for Claire and Jack as a couple to start having their bed back while Shane is transitioning to sleeping in his own bed, with Claire's response conveying that it is pleasant. The narrative moves straight into a lengthy Evaluation about the pleasantness of having the space back in reference to Claire and to Jack. This part of the Evaluation provides the meaning for Claire's part of the Abstract. However, the Evaluation then changes track and conveys the meaning of having the bed back to be about the progress of Shane's healthy development and what this suggests about their parenting. It moves the story away from being about the couple relationship as well as away from the Abstract, to being about the good parenting

choices Claire and Jack have made. The meaning seems to serve to construct good parenthood based on the evidence of Shane's healthy development.

This leads onto an Orientation, which continues to change the track of the story again as it refers to weaning Shane from breastfeeding and describes the manner in which Claire did this. Claire provides an example of this, before the story moves onto another Evaluation emphasising that weaning from breastfeeding was Shane's choice. This meaning is related back to Claire and Jack's approach to transitioning Shane to sleeping in his own bed, bringing the story back around to the matter of co-sleeping. However, it still falls short of returning to the couple relationship. These preceding elements of the narrative seem to function to illuminate Claire's success in weaning Shane from breastfeeding, and appear to construct Claire as a good mother. In addition, the elements seem to function to emphasise that Claire and Jack are now applying this successful approach to Shane's transition from co-sleeping, and also appears to construct both Claire and Jack as good parents.

The subsequent elements of Orientation and Complicating Action serve to illustrate Shane's bed-time routine which follows on from the past positive experiences of weaning from breastfeeding. Another Evaluation conveys that this approach will be effective, leading to the Resolution of the story that at times Shane has no problem sleeping in his own bed. These elements of the narrative appear to serve to lend support to Claire's and Jack's approach to weaning Shane from co-sleeping, constructing them as good parents who know what they are doing. In addition, the narrative's Resolution does not address its Abstract which serves to convey what the story is about – in this case about the couple relationship. Instead, the narrative and its outcome have focused on parenting the first child and on the construction of good and successful parenting practices with no reference to the couple relationship. Furthermore, it is Claire who has

recounted the story so far without any input from Jack; once she delivers the outcome of the story, she leaves the room. Henry is in another room at this point in the interview and although it is likely that Claire has gone to check on him, she waits until she has narrated her story before leaving. The structure of the story seems to illustrate that Claire regards that it has reached its conclusion, appearing to suggest that it is not a co-constructed narration between Claire and Jack.

Nevertheless, despite the story being seemingly at an end, it is revived by Jack with an Evaluation illustrating his agreement with Claire's part of the narrative regarding Shane's transition while Claire is still out of the room. However, the story changes track again to provide a meaning that is more in line with the Abstract concerning the couple relationship and regaining their space in the bed. The meaning takes this further to outline that they can have that space anywhere, followed by a Complicating Action which serves to illustrate this. This seems to construct Jack's sense of the couple relationship as being able to take place anywhere, regardless of their children. These elements in Jack's part of the narrative address the Abstract before ending with another Resolution. This final element functions to return the story to be about the pleasure in seeing Shane's development, and conveys Jack's agreement with Claire's part of the narrative.

Just as Jack finishes telling the end of the story, Claire re-enters the room – she has missed his contribution to the story, which seems to further emphasise the separateness in their accounts. This separateness is further highlighted by the narrative's overall structure composed of two independent sub-stories. It is firstly constructed by Claire's part and then by Jack's supplement. The two sections have different meanings which seem to be unrelated to each other, other than Jack's agreement with Claire's part of the story. They serve to construct different meanings of the same experience for each

partner of the couple. It seems that the account constructs Claire's sense of their couple relationship as enacting good parenting, and constructs Jack's sense of their couple relationship as being able to take place anywhere despite the demands of having children.

When Claire and Jack speak about their couple relationship, they tell stories about parenting their children. The following narrative illustrates how Claire and Jack have been teaching Shane to develop empathy (see Table 24):

Table 24

Claire's and Jack's story about what it is like for them when teaching Shane empathy

-
- A: D: what is that like for yourselves, as parents, as a couple to to be doing that with Shane at the moment?
- E: C: It's difficult for me probably more so than it is for Jack cos I was not, that was not my upbringing, my experience, so it- I feel- it's not- it doesn't come naturally to me I don't feel... a lot of the time, and I have issues with regulation... self-regulation because of my upbringing so,
- O: at the same- sometimes if he- if Shane's really... getting overwrought,
- CA: it's like triggering me
- E: so I've got to calm myself down before I can even attempt to have the conversation with him. Um but it feels- it feels good like,
- O: the day that he did that, that he was like 'ok, I need to calm down'
- CA: I was like 'oh! Something is getting through,
- R: like maybe I'm actually helping to raise a healthy human being' you know and (*inaudible*).
- E: J: so yeah, and it feels good for me, it feels kind of emotionally intuitive
-

The Abstract of this story is constructed by my question asking what it is like for Claire and Jack as a couple to be helping Shane to develop empathy. Claire immediately conveys the meaning of this, and makes a comparison between her and Jack's respective difficulties in their individual abilities to achieve this. The Evaluation provides a reason for this, relating Claire's current difficulty in coping with her feelings about her difficult childhood. The narrative moves onto Orientation which brings the story back to when Shane's own feelings become difficult. This element appears to function to situate the narrative's subsequent events of Claire's difficult feelings being set off by Shane's distress. Another Evaluation follows which outlines that Claire needs to settle her own feelings down before she can attend to Shane's.

The Evaluation then changes track to give a more positive tone than the story has had so far, and seems to serve to provide the meaning for the ensuing Orientation and Complicating Action. The Orientation appears to serve to re-situate the narrative as focusing on a time when Shane calmed himself down on his own, with the Complicating Action highlighting the consequent realisation Claire had that she was achieving something positive, in spite of her own difficulties.

This leads to the outcome of the story conveying that Claire is having a positive influence on Shane. This Resolution appears to have been made particularly meaningful by the preceding structure of the narrative; the first half seems to function to emphasise the challenges that Claire faces in helping Shane to cope with his feelings as a result of her own difficult childhood. The second part of the story highlights the positive influence she has on their first child. This appears to serve to construct Claire as someone who has managed to have a positive influence on her child despite the challenges in her ability to do so. Further, the narrative has moved away from addressing the Abstract which enquired about Claire and Jack's experience of this as a

couple. Instead, the story has been solely recounted by Claire in relation to her individual self as a mother rather than as a partner of the couple relationship.

Furthermore, Jack has not had any input in the construction of the narrative so far. Nevertheless in a similar manner to the previous narrative (Table 22), it is revived by a final supplement to the story by Jack. This is in the form of Evaluation immediately following Claire's Resolution. This Evaluation conveys that as well as it being a pleasant feeling, teaching Shane empathy is also instinctual on his part. The latter part of this element seems to function to support the earlier Evaluation where Claire delineated that it was easier for him than it was for her.

This appears to construct Jack's sense of himself as someone for whom parenting practices are inherent and effortless. It also highlights the meaning of this story for Jack in the role of father rather than in the role of partner of the couple relationship. In addition, it is notable that the sole contribution to this story by Jack also moves it away from addressing the Abstract. This emphasises that the narrative is constructed by two separate individuals' respective experiences regarding parenting rather than a co-construction of the couple relationship. This is also illustrated elsewhere in the account when I ask about what it was like for them as a couple to spend their first entire night away from Shane since he was born:

C: I remember just sort of laying there and be like oh checking the time, what time was it, I wonder if... and then I started being a bit worried like 'oh, I wonder if she's tried to call but we haven't heard' even though our, both phones both on

J: mm

C: and stuff like that...

J: it was fine for me

The first response was provided by Claire, and she immediately moves away from the question about the couple relationship to convey her individual experience of lying awake and worrying about Shane spending the night away. Jack's ensuing response is about his own individual and different experience of this not being a problem for him. The account also serves to highlight the lack of joint construction of their couple relationship through its focus on their individual experiences of parenting their first child. The text seems to construct Claire and Jack's sense of their couple relationship as one that revolves around individual experiences of parenting; it appears that it is one that is not co-constructed but rather is constructed by two separate individuals.

When Claire and Jack speak about their couple relationship, they tell stories about how meeting the demands of parenthood leave little time for the couple relationship. The following narrative illustrates how they make efforts to find more time for their couple relationship (see Table 25):

Table 25

Claire's and Jack's story about actively finding time for each other

A: D: where does that leave kind of time for yourselves, as a...

J: It's really difficult

O: and I know looking at these photos it focuses on the boys

E: and I think that's indicative... of a lot

CA: and I- I thought about that a lot over the past month

O: cos obviously, you know, you asked us to, to kind of do our task and think about family time and write diaries and stuff and it literally, like there isn't a moment really to find that time,

CA: so we've talked about that.

O: I mean we sat down the other day

CA: and said how do we actually structure our routine or find the time for each other, um so we identified some times throughout the week, for example when Shane's at nursery and maybe the baby is napping or, you know date nights that we can do and things like that,

Jack's R: so this Saturday we're going to take time out to go for lunch for Valentine's Day, things like that.

E: But it really has to be a conscious thing

C: mm

J: it's not like when you were-

C: (*interrupting*) it doesn't just happen, you don't just find yourself sitting on the sofa with nothing to do and go 'oh, we're not doing anything, shall we go out?'

J: yeah

Claire's R: C: like that is never (*chuckling next three words*) going to happen, not for the next 15 years

The Abstract of this narrative is constructed both by my question, which asks about how their parenting demands allows time for the couple relationship, and by Jack's response that it is challenging to do so. Jack acknowledges that the photos have focused on the children, which sets the background to the story.

This is followed by an Evaluation highlighting that this is highly representative. This appears to serve to emphasise that Jack's and Claire's lives currently revolve mainly around their children, and also functions to provide weight to Jack's part of the Abstract. Jack describes that this has been on his mind a lot since I asked them to take photos a month ago for the interview. He provides further context to the story by outlining some the tasks of their participation in the research. This Orientation serves to highlight that there has not been any time to do some of the tasks. This leads to another Complicating Action describing that Claire and Jack have discussed this issue. These elements of the story together appear to set the scene for the subsequent part: they seem to serve to emphasise Claire's and Jack's current lack of time for their couple relationship.

This builds up to a subsequent Orientation and lengthy Complicating Action describing that Claire and Jack made time to talk about this issue, and they identified times to spend together. The ensuing Resolution outlines that the outcome of this narrative is that they will spend Valentine's Day lunchtime together this coming weekend. Jack's final part of the story outlines that spending time together as a couple has to be an active effort, and he starts to make a comparison but is interrupted by Claire. This is her first appearance in this story, and she interrupts Jack to give her own meaning that time together does not spontaneously happen. This also seems to function to support their shared meaning that they need to make an active effort to spend time together. The story then moves onto a second and final Resolution, this time recounted by Claire, which denotes that their ability to spontaneously spend time together happen will not happen for many years yet.

This story also appears to be constructed by two separate individuals rather than being a joint endeavour, this time firstly narrated by Jack and then by Claire. However,

in spite of the separateness of the story's narration by Jack and Claire, both parts have a constructed shared meaning about the importance of finding time to spend together as a couple. Nevertheless, Jack's construction of this meaning is conveyed in a positive manner regarding what can be done. On the other hand, Claire's construction of this meaning is depicted in a more negative manner concerning what does not happen. Furthermore, each part of the story has its own Resolution which addresses the Abstract. However, Jack recounts a more positive outcome about what they can do to spend more time together as a couple. In contrast, Claire recounts a more negative ending about what they cannot currently do about this.

It seems as though the text constructs Claire and Jack's sense of their couple relationship as one that they both want to invest more time into despite the demands made on them as parents. Nevertheless, in spite of shared meaning and similar outcomes, the account appears to divide this construction of their couple relationship to connote Jack's sense as being more positive and hopeful than Claire's sense. This further highlights the construction of their couple relationship as one that has separate understandings. This is also illustrated elsewhere:

J: for me it feels really positive and healthy.

C: No, I know it's positive and healthy, it's just difficult for me to get to that point because I've got all sorts of mixed feelings of guilt about... you know because I already feel guilty all the time about not being able to 100% for Henry, 100% for Shane, 100% for Jack and then have some 100% left for me and like I- I'm not four people unfortunately. Um, so I just always feel guilty and I feel like I'm failing everyone... so I know it's healthy and positive to sit down and have those conversations and I like that we do... cos

obviously if you don't put work into something it will... disintegrate. But it's just difficult for me cos I have those other feelings going on...

The text illustrates Jack's and Claire's differing perspectives of the same experience of sitting down to discuss how they can fit in dedicated time for their couple relationship. It constructs Jack simply as having a positive view of this conversation. Conversely, it constructs Claire as more complex and having a negative outlook due to her conflicting feelings, despite the acknowledgement that it is a positive thing to do. This suggests the construction of two individuals who are in a couple relationship and who share the same experience, but who have very different understandings. This further indicates that Claire and Jack co-construct their sense of the couple relationship as one that has separate meanings for each of them, and as one that is constructed by two discrete individuals rather than a united one.

Despite the difficulties that Claire and Jack face regarding finding dedicated time for their couple relationship, they tell stories about how they support each other through parenthood (see Table 26):

Table 26

Claire's and Jack's narrative about supporting each other

-
- A: C: we're both in the trenches together
- E: and there's not, there's not room for... even though we say don't- you shouldn't keep score, you shouldn't say 'oh, I did this' or 'I did this' or 'you did them, I did this many nappy changes',
- CA: just you know, if I ask him 'honey can you change the baby's nappy' he doesn't go 'why?' you know, he just does it. Um you know if he's like 'can you hold the baby so I can do this' 'yes',

E: like just... just help each other and just be

J: mm

C: compassionate, it's not, like I'm NOT asking you to do this to inconvenience you, like I'm just asking you to do it cos it would be helpful and just understand that.

J: Yeah, and having that, just having that communication I think really helps, so just being able to go to the other person and say 'look, I'm really struggling this week' or 'I'm absolutely at my limit, I'm so exhausted'

C: mhm

O: J: even if they're so tired that they can't,

CA: step in and say 'well you know what, you sleep in tomorrow'

C: yeah

R: J: just being able to verbalise that is helpful

Claire starts recounting the narrative, and the Abstract conveys that it is about her and Jack being in a charged and challenging situation together. This serves to liken parenthood to being in a war. The narrative moves on to provide the meaning of this, where Claire outlines that there is no space for division or ruptures. She then describes their mutual reliance on each other regarding parenting; this Complicating Action lends support to the Abstract concerning being in the war of parenthood together. This is followed by another Evaluation about being supportive and considerate to each other. It also highlights the converse meaning, that it is not about bothering the other partner.

Jack continues the story, outlining that the ability to communicate facilitates mutual support and enables the ability to be vulnerable with each other. Claire agrees to

what Jack is saying. Jack describes a situation when one of the partners is so tired that it stops them from being able to provide support in the moment. This provides an example of the preceding Evaluation, and also serves to set the scene for the ensuing Complicating Action. This element serves to highlight what can be done instead, which is to offer support in an alternative manner. This part of the story appears to function to exemplify that there is always a way to show support for each other. It also functions to exemplify their mutual agreement on this.

Jack ends the story by describing that having the ability to communicate this is valuable. This suggests that it is not just the immediate actions that are seen to be supportive, but the articulation of intention to provide support is also important for the couple relationship. This narrative seems to be the most co-constructed one of them all, and appears to be connected through Claire's and Jack's shared meaning as well as the sole outcome which addresses faring through parenthood together. Claire and Jack seem to co-construct their sense of the couple relationship jointly as one which is mutually supportive regarding parenting their children together. This is also illuminated elsewhere:

C: it's just important to realise you're both human and you're both going to screw up and if you turn against each other, that's not going to do any good, that's like the snake eating its own tail... cos you're just, you're one unit and if you are attacking each other you are just ultimately... you know attacking yourself... you're not doing yourself any favours.

J: mm absolutely, so kind of being compassionate to each other and ourselves, yeah.

The text illustrates Claire's understanding of the value in having a cohesive and unified couple relationship, as attacking each other equates to attacking oneself. The account also illuminates Jack's agreement with this, as well as his similar perspective on the importance of being considerate to both each other and oneself. This indicates his shared understanding of having a unified couple relationship. This further appears to co-construct Claire's and Jack's sense of their couple relationship jointly as one which places great importance on having mutual support and as well as on being a united one.

Narrative analysis summary. Claire and Jack co-construct their sense of the couple relationship as one where each partner of the couple is a separate individual with distinct understandings of shared experiences. In addition, the account suggests the construction of two individuals who share the same experience, but who have different understandings. Their accounts also highlight the lack of joint construction of the couple relationship.

Furthermore, Claire and Jack co-construct their sense of the couple relationship jointly as one which is mutually supportive regarding being parents together, and as one which places great importance on having mutual support as well as on being a united one.

Claire's and Jack's Phase Two Psycho-social Reading

Joint parenting practices. The interview dedicates little time to Claire's and Jack's couple relationship. This seems to be because of their present focus and preoccupation on parenting their children, and is something they are aware of "I know looking at these photos it focuses on the boys and I think that's indicative... of a lot" (Jack's words). It appears as though Claire's and Jack's focus on the couple relationship has been currently put aside to emphasise on the more pressing matter of parenting. This

suggests that they may be finding it difficult to meet each other's needs as each other's attachment figures.

Claire and Jack speak of the ways in which they parent together. They present themselves as a cohesive team when it comes to their parenting practices, demonstrating shared understanding and agreement. For example, Claire and Jack show joint awareness of Shane's wishes of wanting to be involved with the new baby and they both act accordingly in order to take his feelings into account. This is illustrated when Jack says "we know that it's important that he is so... we're trying to have that set-up where he can sit with the baby and hold him." They also present themselves as being in mutual agreement with regards to what they want to teach Shane, which can be seen when Claire says the following "when Shane gets overexcited we try to make him mindful". This is also illuminated when they both discuss this together during the interview:

J: I think we try and get him to be mindful of what other people are feeling and thinking so he might want to climb all over you and be a dinosaur, but then there's that thought of 'ok, well what's that like for the other person?'

C: (*interrupting*) right, we try to say like 'this is my body, you're hurting my body and I said no' and trying to teach him about consent in that way as well just, and sort of foster empathy

When speaking about this throughout the interview, Claire and Jack on individual occasions, respectively emphasise what they do together with regards to their parenting practices. They both use the word "we" when separately alluding to their co-parenting, reinforcing their self-presentation as a unified team. The emphasis of their joint parenting practices is also apparent when Claire and Jack discuss this together, with the word "we" pervading throughout their collaborative accounts, which provides examples

of what they both do. This seems to further strengthen that they are united and in harmony with regards to how they parent their children. During a time in their lives when Claire and Jack have so little time for each other or for their couple relationship, this emphasis on their joint parenting practices may serve as an anchor that keeps them together as a “we”. It may also function to defend against underlying anxiety of their awareness of these constraints and what it may mean for their relationship. This situation is something that they cannot do much to change at present, indicating a sense of not being in control over what may happen to their relationship, which can be anxiety-provoking for them. Focusing on what they can do together may be a way of keeping these difficult feelings confined, as well as a way to be a joint unit. This is even if the focus is not on the actual couple relationship unit but rather on the parenting unit. Paradoxically, the children are what keep them apart as a couple but are what bring them together as parents.

Nevertheless, it may be that Claire and Jack enact their couple relationship through joint parenthood. They recognise that parenthood can be very difficult and so parenting together as a team in agreement is a way that they can provide support to each other. This is another way of taking care of each other and of meeting each other’s needs. Claire and Jack appear to be aware of this, which can be seen in Claire’s words and her emphasis on this understanding “we GET it, we’re both in the trenches together.” Claire and Jack see parenting as a team effort and understand that they should support each other through this challenging endeavour:

C: I think cos we both realise and we both sort of agree that... we’re going to screw up sometimes, we’re going to lose our tempers, we’re going to be running on empty and you’re going to snap that... you know, if that happens and one of sees the other one losing it, rather than... taking that person aside

and going 'well this is exactly what you did wrong and this is how you need to avoid it' like giving them a lecture, it's just like ok, let me try and segway into 'Shane, why don't we go somewhere' um you know, or Jack can say 'Shane, let's do this and leave mummy be for a bit' and try to run interference and that way, you're realising that's why there's two of us

This illustrates the mutual understanding Claire and Jack have that things are not always going to go well with regards to parenting, and they sometimes react in ways that they prefer not to. Rather than judge each other for what they consider to be inappropriate behaviour, Claire and Jack recognise when the other is having a hard time and provide support for each other. They do this by inserting themselves into the situation and gently taking it over so that the other person can have some time and space to them self. This “interference” is helpful, and highlights to Claire and Jack the necessity to be a unified parenting team.

This account illustrates that Claire and Jack are both in tune with one another and receptive to each other’s frames of mind during stressful parenting situations. They are able to react and respond appropriately by providing each other with support that meets their needs. The reciprocal quality of their comfort-giving illuminates that they are able to act as attachment figures as well as safe havens for each other.

Further, there is an additional reason Claire and Jack seem to be currently more focused on parenting their children than on their couple relationship. They have a shared understanding that their current parenting practices and choices have an impact on the future of their children:

C: this is going to grow into a human who has to function in a world full of other humans, and what you do to them every single day from the day they

are born is going to stay with them, even if they can't remember it cognitively, it creates a neuro pathway which creates uhh behaviour, you know which is going to stay with them and might take a lot of therapy to undo if you screw it up...

J: yeah... yeah I definitely think of you know, what... for me it's not just about how- are our children happy today?, but actually the bigger picture is what kind of people are they going to be in the world?

C: yeah

J: you know, hopefully we're setting them up to- to be a force for good in the world

Claire understands that their daily parenting choices influence the development of their children. She also considers that this impact on Shane's and Henry's development to be quite definite and fixed, and will affect them for the rest of their lives. Jack also seems to understand their current parenting choices in this way and agrees with Claire. However, Jack likens the influence of their current parenting to the impact that their children will have on society in the longer term. On the other hand, Claire's understanding seems to stem from a fear of failing and of causing hard to repair lasting damage to Shane and Henry. This may be due to her past experiences. Claire's own childhood was fraught with perceived abuse and neglect from her parents, and she recognises that her past experiences still affect her, despite her awareness and efforts to change this:

C: the stuff that Shane does when he's having a tantrum, if I did that when I was his age, I would just have got spanked and like sent to my room and

essentially what happened because of that, now as an adult I understand that means that I have a really hard time regulating ANY kind of emotion and I internalise everything and I just, I feel a lot of shame and guilt whenever I have any feelings because that's what I was sort of demonstrated

Claire relates Shane's current behaviour to what would have happened when she behaved similarly as a child, showing that she holds her past experiences in mind when parenting her own children. Claire understands the negative effect that her parents' past child-care practices have on how she copes with her difficult emotions, and so understands that the ways in which she parents will influence her children in the future. Claire uses this knowledge to ensure that she does not affect her children the way in which her parents influenced and continue to influence her. She does this by consciously making an effort to parent in a contrary manner to how her own parents raised her "you need to do the opposite of what your parents did". It seems that Claire's motivation for her current parenting choices is driven by attempts to revise what was done to her during her own childhood so that her children do not go through what she experienced.

However, despite the different understandings, this transforms to a joint understanding that their current parenting practices and choices have an impact on the future of their children. During the interview, Claire and Jack discuss several instances of the success of their parenting practices. This highlights to them that they are doing it right, which is important for them. For example, Claire and Jack decided to give Shane the choice regarding weaning from breastfeeding and he has now stopped breastfeeding without any problems in doing so. Claire and Jack also decided to give Shane the choice as to when to stop co-sleeping with them and to allow Shane to choose when to sleep in his own bed. As a result, Shane has been spending increasing amounts of the night in his

own bed; he spent the entire night in his bed on Christmas Eve; and he has just stayed at his grandmother's for the whole night for the first time. In addition, Claire and Jack have been teaching Shane how to cope with his difficult feelings, and Shane has been effectively self-soothing, as well as recognising when he loses his temper and apologising for it. These examples of Claire's and Jack's successful parenting reinforce to them that their current parenting practices and choices are having a positive effect on Shane in the immediate future. This is illustrated when Claire says "Something is getting through, like maybe I'm actually helping to raise a healthy human being".

Nevertheless, until the children are older in many years' time, Claire and Jack will not know whether Shane and Henry will develop into the people that they wish them to become. However, the numerous effective parenting examples weaved throughout the interview highlight Claire's and Jack's shared keenness to emphasise their success. This may be a way to jointly defend against anxiety about whether they are parenting well enough. As Claire and Jack consider that their current choices affect their children long term, this may be a way to reassure themselves and each other that they are co-parenting satisfactorily in the more immediate sense. This suggests that Claire and Jack are aware of each other's anxiety about whether they are parenting well enough, and these reassurances may be a way of soothing and providing support to each other. This also indicates that they are in tune with each other's state of mind with regards to parenting anxieties, and they are able to act as safe havens for each other during these stressful times. Nevertheless, Claire's and Jack's current parenting efforts seem to take precedence over their couple relationship:

J: maybe this is 10 years of our lives that we sacrifice in a way... for the kids and they are really hard, but if it is 10 years of our lives, hopefully you

know, it's a hundred years of their lives that they're going to have, so when you look at the maths, that's a fair trade

C: yeah

J: but it is really hard when you're in it

Claire's and Jack's priority to successfully parent their children takes up a lot of their time and resources, suggesting that there is little left to dedicate to their couple relationship. However, although it is very difficult whilst they are living this, Claire and Jack view their choice as a reasonable investment and short term sacrifice for the benefit of their children's longer term futures.

In order for this to happen, Claire and Jack also have a shared understanding that they need to put their children's needs first and before their own. This is illustrated when Claire says the following:

C: I think you can't force, as nice as it would be to be like 'right! You're this age now and I've decided you're old enough to go sleep-aways so that I can have a break that would be great, but it's no good forcing that on a kid who's not ready cos then it's just going to be harder and... traumatising for them, and it's just, I don't... to me that's not a very parental thing to do, to force your kid into something to make your life easier

J: it's very different isn't it, doing something because you have to than because you really really want to

C: mm

J: and for a child to be able to make that choice and get to that place themselves

C: (*interrupting*) they- yeah, I mean they don't- they have so little agency and control over their own lives, when you... give them the... a choice or an illusion of a choice or just make them

J: yeah

C: sort of feel that they have an input, I think it just makes everything much better, much better for their development

Claire and Jack put their children's needs before their own needs, and they are led by Shane's and Henry's choices which give them a sense of agency, rather than by Claire's and Jack's own preferences. They do this even though it may mean that they would have a less stressful and less difficult life. Claire highlights their awareness of the negative and detrimental impact that forcing their own preferences on their children could have, and she does not believe this to be a suitable way of parenting. This is also likely to be due to her past experiences with her own parents.

Jack adds to this by emphasising their understanding that children should be able to decide when they are ready to do things (such as weaning from breastfeeding and sleeping in their own bed), as this would be conducive towards their healthy development.

Taken together, this illustrates that Claire and Jack place importance on putting their own needs aside in the service of meeting their children's needs first, including before their couple relationship. It indicates that there is a lack of time for the couple

relationship at the present time because much of their efforts are going into co-parenting their children. It seems that the couple relationship is now the parenting relationship.

Locating the couple relationship. The following analysis has been seen in the preceding narrative analysis; however the psycho-social reading draws out a different interpretation which is presented here. Claire and Jack try to make an active effort to find time for their couple relationship outside of parenting; they acknowledge that the scarcity of connection between them can cause difficulties for their relationship.

Claire and Jack realise there is a danger of living their lives perfunctorily as unconnected individuals and of getting “stuck in your separate worlds, go through the motions” (Claire’s words). This potential disconnect between them may mean that Claire and Jack would no longer be able to understand each other in the ways that they currently do, indicating a fear of emotional distance.

This is also illustrated by Claire: “you get away from each other's wavelengths and if you don't check in, then you- you're not attuned with one another anymore.” Claire and Jack also recognise that they already missed each other, suggesting that distance has come between them. It is important for them to try to do something about these insights into the increasing disconnection in their couple relationship, within the constraints of placing their children as priority.

Claire and Jack recently dedicated a conversation to specifically finding and structuring time that is solely devoted to their couple relationship. It was important for them to identify not only one-off events such as Valentine’s Day but to also include more regular occasions in the hopes of reconnecting with each other as a couple.

Most recently, they went on a date the night prior to this interview, where they did not talk about their children:

J: it's a reminder that you're a person and that you're a couple and that all that stuff is really important to foster and I think it's so important to check in with each other and... keep seeing how things are going and talk about what you need from each other...and that's really important, so it's nice

C: mm...

This time that Claire and Jack spent together actively focused on their couple relationship and not on their children. It served as a reminder that they are individuals and are a part of a couple relationship, in addition to being a part of a co-parenting relationship. This dedicated time for their couple relationship brought to the fore for them the importance of investing quality time in each other, such as by ensuring that there is open communication between them. It also reminded Claire and Jack of the importance of treating each other as individuals in their own right; individuals who are worthy of asking for their respective needs to be met by the other partner. These reminders are indicative of their awareness of or perception of growing distance between them as well as their anxiety about this. However, Claire and Jack did feel safe enough to express their needs to each other as well as being available to listen to the other. This suggests that they were both able to offer and receive proximity, indicating that they each enacted both roles of support-giver and the role of support-receiver. Further, this is suggestive of reciprocal secure attachment behaviours within the couple relationship.

However, despite their intentions to invest quality time into their couple relationship beyond their co-parenting relationship, Claire and Jack find it difficult to do

so. This seems to be because of the other roles they each enact that presently take priority over being an individual in their own right, much less a partner in their couple relationship. For Claire, the role that currently takes precedence is that of being a mother “I forget how to talk to people outside of the context of children”. This means that she has no time to just be herself as an individual with her own wants and needs “I spend very little of my time just being Claire... in any way”, let alone time to be a partner to Jack outside of her mother role “So to switch off... and to talk to Jack about things that have nothing to do with... essentially what I spend all my time doing is difficult for me”.

The identities that take precedence for Jack are those of being a worker and a father, which is illustrated in the following:

J: I get into the work role

C: yeah

J: (*clears throat*) so I'm constantly in that mode and like equally feel like I've never got time to just be me

C: yeah

J: I'm either in the work-role or then I'm home in the dad-role

C: yeah

J: so again there's no time for us just to connect, so it's really important to put that time aside.

When Jack is at work he is in the role of being a worker and the sole income provider to the household. When Jack is at home, he is in the role of being a father.

Jack's multiple roles impede on his time to be himself as an individual with his own wants and needs. It means that he has not got time to be a partner to Claire outside of his worker and father roles. Claire and Jack are both consumed by their other identities, suggesting that their individual needs are not being met, and neither are the needs of their couple relationship, except when they specifically create time for them. This also indicates distance in their couple relationship which can also be anxiety-provoking for them.

Nevertheless, Claire and Jack recognise that the roles they both enact are in response to the more immediate and constant demands of their daily lives, such as parenting their children and earning a living. They understand that these demands are unceasingly pressing and need to be met, which means that other issues such as meeting their own individual needs and the needs of the couple relationship currently take a secondary position "things have to be put on the back-burner and when you're a parent... you tend to put yourself on the back-burner" (Claire's words).

Nevertheless, Claire and Jack acknowledge the importance of making time for their relationship particularly *because* there are so many other unrelenting requirements at present that will not simply stop or pause. This suggests that they want to make an effort to remain intimately connected by investing in each other, and thus in the couple relationship. Claire and Jack enjoy spending time together and being a couple relationship outside of parenthood "it's nice to have that conversations and just realise that... you know, not everything has to be about the kids". This illustrates that they wish to achieve intimacy and to identify themselves as being a couple in addition to the other roles they enact, which reinforces to each other the value of their bond.

The emphasis Claire and Jack place on actively making an effort for their couple relationship indicates that there may be an underlying fear of loss driving this. This is an extremely demanding time of them as individuals as well as a time which hardly permits space for the couple relationship. It seems that Claire and Jack may unconsciously feel that there is a threat to the continuity of their bond and so they defend against this by attempting to re-establish a sense of harmony through actively making opportunities for emotional reconnection. This also seems to reinforce the importance of their couple relationship.

Psycho-social reading summary. Claire's and Jack's focus on the couple relationship has been put aside to focus on the more pressing matter of parenting. Claire and Jack present themselves as a unified team when it comes to their parenting practices, demonstrating shared understanding and agreement. It seems that they enact their couple relationship through joint parenthood; the couple relationship is now the parenting relationship.

Claire and Jack have a shared understanding that their current parenting practices and choices have an impact on the future of their children. Claire's particular understanding of this seems to stem from a fear of failing and of causing hard to repair lasting damage to Shane and Henry. Claire's motivation for her current parenting choices is driven by attempts to revise what was done to her during her own childhood. Claire and Jack emphasise where their co-parenting has been successful, which reassures them that their current parenting practices and choices are having a positive effect on Shane in the immediate future. These reassurances may be a way of soothing their anxiety about the effect they are having on their children, and as a way to provide each other with support. This indicates that Claire and Jack are in tune with each other's

state of mind with regards to parenting anxieties, and are able to act as safe havens for each other during this stressful period.

Claire's and Jack's current parenting efforts seem to take precedence over their couple relationship; they have a shared understanding that they need to put their children's needs first and before their own. However, Claire and Jack try to make an active effort to find time for their couple relationship outside of parenting. However, finding time for their couple relationship remains difficult due to the many other demanding roles they must enact, such as mother, father and worker. Claire and Jack may feel an unconscious fear of loss of their bond and defend against this by actively making opportunities for emotional reconnection. Claire and Jack wish to identify themselves as a couple in addition to the other roles they enact, which reinforces to each other the importance of their couple relationship.

Comparison between Phase Two Analyses

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found an emphasis on parenting with a limited focus on the couple relationship outside of this, suggesting that it has been currently put aside to focus on the current more exigent matter of parenting. They both understood that they placed importance on finding time to spend together as a couple. However, the psycho-social reading went beyond this to show that there was an underlying anxiety that the scarcity of connection and increasing emotional distance between them can create difficulties for their couple relationship. It also found that Claire's and Jack's unconscious fear of loss drives them to actively make opportunities for reconnection and increase intimacy within the couple relationship.

Both methods of analyses showed good and successful parenting to be an important issue for Claire and Jack. The narrative analysis constructed Claire

individually as a good mother, Jack individually as a good father and both together as good parents who know what they are doing and see strength in doing it together. The psycho-social reading also found Claire's and Jack's parenting successes to be key, however it emphasised the meaning of this to reflect that that they are having a positive influence on Shane in the immediate future.

Both the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading found the couple relationship to be a unified team with regards to Claire's and Jack's shared parenting practices. The narrative analysis constructed their couple relationship as one which is mutually supportive and has shared understanding and agreement in this respect. However, the psycho-social reading went beyond this to understand that the couple may be defending against underlying anxiety about constraints to their relationship. By focusing on what Claire and Jack are able to do together keep these difficult feelings confined. The psycho-social reading also found that parenting together is a way for Claire and Jack to provide support to each other, and so they enact their couple relationship through joint parenthood.

Uniquely, the narrative analysis showed that each partner constructed different meanings of the same experience. It constructed Claire negatively as someone who focuses on the obstacles to spending time together. Nevertheless, it constructed Jack positively as someone who focuses on what can be done to spend time together. This highlighted the construction of the couple relationship as one that has separate meanings for each partner. In addition, the narrative analysis constructed Claire's sense of the couple relationship as enacting good parenting, and it constructed Jack's sense of the couple relationship as being able to take place anywhere despite the constant demands of having two children. This emphasised the separateness of constructions of their sense of the couple relationship.

Individually, the psycho-social reading found that Claire and Jack put their children's needs before their own needs. This means that the needs of their couple relationship take a secondary position as most of their efforts are directed towards co-parenting their children.

Further, another unique finding from the psycho-social reading is that it drew out Claire's fear of causing her children lasting emotional harm through her parenting. The analysis understood her underlying motivations for these choices to be driven by attempts to revise her own negative and damaging childhood experiences.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has presented a pluralistic analysis of Claire's and Jack's joint stories about their couple relationship across the transition to second-time parenthood using narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading of the interview text. It has also presented how the findings complement each other or stand alone at each phase, emphasising the complexity and multidimensionality of this experience and its meaning.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Previous analytical chapters have analysed a couple's transition to second-time parenthood. I have discussed the analytical methods that have been adopted, and the analytical chapters have presented detailed findings at both the individual and dyadic level. This chapter aims to enhance the findings with theoretical knowledge to further enrich how they may be understood.

The chapter presents a summary of the key findings. In writing about each method's findings together, I have not tried to tidy it up or to present it neatly. I have also tried to give justice to the tensions and contradictions and discuss them as they are, rather than trying to make them fit together tidily. The chapter then relates the findings to the existing literature, and weaves into the discussion of these its strengths, its limitations and some implications for future directions. The chapter ends with some of my reflections on the research process.

The thesis asked:

How can attachment behaviours be understood in the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship?

By using a single case study, the narrative analysis asked:

- How does each partner of the couple (re)construct their sense of self as an individual through the stories they tell?;
- How do the stories that each partner narrates (re)construct their sense of their couple relationship?;
- How do the stories that the couple narrate together co-construct their relationship?

By using a psycho-social reading of the data, it asked:

- Why does each partner of the couple self-present their self and adult others in the way that they do?
- Why do both partners present their couple relationship together in the way that they do?

In bringing these questions together, they addressed the overarching research question. Through the innovative application of a pluralistic single case study to attachment theory research, the thesis claims the following contributions:

- Individuals can engage with a variety of attachment behaviours at any given moment, suggesting that attachment is not a fixed feature; multiple working models exist, where a person can engage with secure, avoidant or anxious attachment behaviours depending on the context and relationship, and even different behaviours within the same relationship. This means that couples work in conjunction to influence the patterns of interaction within their relationship.
- Attachment history plays becomes more salient after the transition to second-time parenthood in the sense that there is more awareness of one's own history and how that affects current parenting. This lends support to the revisionist or continuity/discontinuity model of attachment.
- All attachment strategies are present both before and after the birth of the second child, however, the insecure attachment behaviours (mainly avoidant ones) tend to be more marked.
- Relationship satisfaction decreases following the birth of the second child.
- The parenting relationship becomes the couple relationship after the birth of the second child.

- The present study found increased insecure couple attachment behaviour across the transition to second-time parenthood and decreased satisfaction within the couple relationship.

In light of these findings, this thesis fills noteworthy gaps in knowledge and further the understanding of attachment behaviours in the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship.

These conclusions do not generalise to all couple relationships who become parents for the second time, but are instead considered within the particular context of the couple under investigation.

Summary of Phase One Findings

These findings pertain to the period of time when Claire and Jack were in the third trimester of their second child's pregnancy, and they outline the insights gained through each interpretative lens (narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading). The findings presented for each individual have been generated from the separate semi-structured interviews. The findings for Claire and Jack together were produced from the joint unstructured photo-elicitation interview.

Narrative analysis of Claire. Claire enacted a range of secure and avoidant attachment behaviours. Her initial reactions to stress were to behave in avoidant ways. However through exerting awareness, Claire was able to make an effort to behave in secure ways by seeking comfort. Nevertheless, during times of distress when she was alone and her first child was reliant on her, Claire behaved avoidantly. Behaving in such a manner allowed her to be a good mother to her child. When Jack became available to provide her with support, Claire felt soothed, denoting secure attachment behaviour.

Claire viewed herself in both a positive and negative way depending on the context. Nonetheless, she had a positive view of Jack and of their couple relationship.

Psycho-social Reading of Claire. Claire enacted a range of insecure attachment behaviours, although these were mainly avoidant attachment behaviours. These avoidant attachment behaviours could be seen when Claire placed constraints on who she allowed to become close to her. She also behaved very independently, dealing with stressful situations in a very self-reliant manner while suppressing her feelings. Nevertheless, Claire also engaged in anxious attachment behaviour when she sought support from her mother, who has historically been consistently unavailable and rejecting of her. In order to manage with these anxious feelings, Claire behaved avoidantly by suppressing these distressing feelings. Claire also engaged in avoidant attachment behaviour in her couple relationship with Jack. She did not seek support from Jack during times of need, although she understood that he offered her comfort. Instead, she suppressed her feelings. Nevertheless, Claire had a positive view of their couple relationship as a safe and supportive place.

Narrative Analysis of Jack. Jack mainly enacted secure attachment behaviours, and illustrated a positive view of himself, of Claire and of their couple relationship. He was able to self-soothe, seek proximity from Claire and use her as a safe haven. Jack understood their couple relationship to be a place that was mutually care-giving and care-receiving. However, there was some insecure avoidant behaviour when cognitively making sense of his feelings and behaviour through the distancing lens of his professional identity.

Psycho-social Reading of Jack. Jack enacted a range of secure attachment behaviours and avoidant attachment behaviours. Jack was able to self-soothe through

the activation of an internal secure base, and was also able to seek support from Claire and close others. He was able to use them as a safe haven and as a secure base, illustrating secure attachment behaviours. At other times, Jack avoided disclosing his difficult feelings to others, suggesting avoidant attachment behaviour. Some of his attachment history of previous avoidant attachment behaviours in significant relationships with his mother and with Claire manifested in some of Jack's present attachment behaviour. Further, Jack also enacted secure attachment behaviour within the couple relationship by moving flexibly between the care-giving and support-seeking positions depending on who happened to be in a state of need.

Narrative Analysis of Claire and Jack Together. Claire's and Jack's couple relationship enacted secure couple attachment behaviour. Even though Claire and Jack together form a dyad, there was space to be agentic as individuals within the relationship. When they each had divergent meanings of their couple relationship, they collaborated and co-operated to resolve these differences by acknowledging each other's perspective and negotiating to arrive at joint meaning. They shared the understanding that their couple relationship (comprising of Claire and Jack) stood autonomously and apart from the familial relationship (Claire and Jack and Shane). In other instances, each partner had a different perspective on the same situation. They did not yield to each other's respective meaning in order to be in agreement with each other, nor did they attempt to change the other partner's view. These interactions within the interview denoted secure couple attachment behaviour.

Psycho-social Reading of Claire and Jack Together. Claire's and Jack's couple relationship enacted insecure couple attachment behaviour. This was comprised mainly of behaviour which suppressed their underlying anxiety, illustrating avoidant couple attachment behaviour. Claire and Jack defended against feeling guilt at leaving

Shane to spend time alone together, which allowed them to feel as though they had a couple relationship in its own entity, which stood apart from the familial relationship. This lack of consciously felt anxiety also permitted Claire and Jack to meet each other's needs before they both became consumed with their new baby. They reformed their perception of the impending lack of space for their couple relationship when the second child arrives to mean that time will pass quickly and that they would return to the place where they felt that they were a part of a couple relationship again.

Claire and Jack drew on their relational history and on Claire's sisters' relational histories to understand that relationships can fail after having children. They defended against the anxiety this raised by distancing themselves from these feelings and by focusing on what they have done and what they can do.

Summary of Phase Two Findings

These findings pertain to the period of time when Claire and Jack were second-time parents, and their second child was four months of age. Again, the findings draw out the understandings gained through each interpretative lens and represent both the separate and joint interviews.

Narrative Analysis of Claire. Claire mainly enacted avoidant attachment behaviours through the suppression and restraining of her difficult feelings in response to stress. Claire also had a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. In this context, she engaged in anxious attachment behaviours, viewing herself in a negative manner. Claire also engaged in avoidant attachment behaviour in her couple relationship with Jack. She did not seek support from Jack during times of need, although she understood that he offered it to her. Nevertheless, Jack had to make a big effort to break past Claire's defensive barriers to where she could feel soothed by his support. This illustrated how

suppressed her feelings were during these times, denoting deactivating attachment behaviours.

Psycho-social Reading of Claire. Claire enacted a range of insecure attachment behaviours, although these were mainly avoidant attachment behaviours. She put aside her own needs in the service of meeting the needs of everyone else and portrayed an image of competence. This denoted a negative view of Jack and avoidant attachment behaviour. Deactivating her feelings was a way for Claire to remain in control. However, when there were one too many stressors, Claire lost control and could not regulate her feelings, suggesting hyperactivating attachment behaviour. Claire did not seek support from Jack although he persistently offered it to her and she accepted it, indicating a somewhat positive view of him. However, Claire's defensive support-receiving and lack of care-providing denoted avoidant attachment behaviour. Claire also suppressed her difficult feelings despite being aware of where they may stem from, and despite her intention to change these. This also indicated deactivating attachment behaviour.

Narrative Analysis of Jack. Jack engaged in some avoidant attachment behaviour. Jack's past avoidant attachment behaviour came into play in his initial self-reliant response to stressful situations. However, he mainly enacted secure attachment behaviours, with a positive view of Claire and their couple relationship. During the times when his initial strategy of self-reliance did not work in soothing him, Jack sought support from close others, which was mainly Claire. However, when Claire was preoccupied with their second child, Jack self-soothed when stressed. Jack understood their couple relationship to be a place he could access emotional and practical support when needed. Jack also felt that Claire was a part of him, and their couple relationship provided Jack with a sense of support and of not being alone, even when he was physically on his own. This suggests that he was able to draw on a mental representation

of Claire as his attachment figure and safe haven, and use it for these functions when alone.

Psycho-social Reading of Jack. Jack enacted a range of secure attachment behaviours and avoidant attachment behaviours. He sought support from Claire during times of distress, illustrating a positive view of Claire and their couple relationship. When she was unavailable, Jack was able to act flexibly and effectively self-soothe or draw on other resources to meet his support needs. This also denoted secure attachment behaviour. However, Jack was vigilant of Claire's mental state and placed her needs over his, indicating deactivating attachment behaviour. In addition, Jack did not confide in close others as a way of seeking support, indicating avoidant attachment behaviour. However, he was able to undistortedly reflect on the impact of his past on his present behaviour, suggesting secure attachment behaviour.

Narrative Analysis of Claire and Jack Together. Claire's and Jack's couple relationship enacted insecure couple attachment behaviour. These insecure behaviours were comprised mainly of distancing behaviour, illustrating avoidant couple attachment behaviour. Claire and Jack were two discrete individuals in a couple relationship who shared the same experience but who each had separate understandings of it. They constituted two separate parts rather than one united whole encompassing two individuals. They each had distinct versions and different meanings of the same experiences regarding their couple relationship, with no effort made to understand the other's perspective.

However, Claire and Jack were united regarding parenting their children together and were mutually supportive in this matter. They were able to put aside the separate meanings of their couple relationship. Nevertheless, they enacted this through

distancing strategies within the relationship rather than cohesive strategies, indicating avoidant couple attachment behaviour.

Psycho-social Reading of Claire and Jack Together. Claire's and Jack's couple relationship enacted a range of secure and insecure couple attachment behaviours. These insecure behaviours were comprised mainly of distancing behaviour regarding the couple relationship as they focused on parenting. The couple relationship became the parenting relationship. This was enacted through avoidant couple attachment behaviours as they put their relationship needs aside in the service of meeting the needs of their children.

As an individual within the relationship, Claire's particular motivation for her parenting choices was driven by attempts to revise what was done to her during her own childhood. Nevertheless, the unity of Claire's and Jack's couple relationship and the support they provided each other regarding parenting anxieties denoted secure couple attachment behaviour.

Differences between findings in attachment behaviour across the transition to second-time parenthood

Differences between narrative analyses in Claire's findings. In Phase Two, Claire had a more negative view of herself. She did not feel as though she was a good enough mother or wife. In addition, she felt powerless to make changes to her behaviour in reaction to stress despite being aware of where this behaviour originates from. This illustrates anxious attachment behaviours. These anxious behaviours did not manifest in Phase One, showing that this is a change across the transition to second-time motherhood for Claire.

In Phase Two, Claire did not feel in control of her environment and so she suppressed her feelings as a way of coping with this distress, illustrating deactivating attachment behaviour. This is in contrast to Phase One where Claire would initially react in an avoidant manner but then engage in alternative secure attachment behaviours, such as self-soothing or accessing support from Jack when he offers it.

In both Phases, Claire viewed her couple relationship as a place where support and safety were available. However, in Phase Two, Claire no longer accepted easily the support Jack offered her. She feared that he would agree with her negative view of self and so built up defensive walls to protect her against this, denoting more deactivating attachment behaviour. This meant that Jack had to offer Claire support in a more persistent manner than in Phase One.

Overall, across the transition to second-time motherhood, Claire has moved from more secure attachment behaviours with some avoidant attachment behaviours to more insecure attachment behaviours. These insecure behaviours include anxious attachment and avoidant attachment behaviours. There also seems to be a lack of secure attachment behaviours across the transition.

Differences between psycho-social readings in Claire's findings. In Phase One and Phase Two, Claire did not seek support from Jack during situations of distress and instead suppressed her feelings, denoting avoidant attachment behaviour. However, she accepted the support he offered and allowed herself to feel soothed by it, indicating a positive view of Jack. Nevertheless, in Phase Two Claire behaved more defensively and in turn, Jack had to be more persistent with his offer of support, signifying that her avoidant attachment behaviour is more marked.

In both Phases, Claire suppressed her feelings during times of distress and she placed constraints on closeness as a way to remain in control of relationships, indicating avoidant attachment behaviours. However, in Phase Two the avoidant behaviour appeared to be more marked as it included pushing aside her own needs in the service of meeting the needs of her family first. Further, in Phase Two, when there were one too many stressors for Claire, it became more difficult to remain in control of her suppressed feelings and so she lost control, leading to escalated distressed feelings which she could not regulate. This seemed to denote hyperactivating attachment behaviour.

In Phase One, Claire used a combination of anxious and avoidant attachment behaviours during an experience involving her mother. Claire turned to her historically rejecting mother for support during a stressful situation which resulted in escalated distressed feelings which she could not regulate. This indicates anxious attachment behaviour. In defence of these escalated feelings, Claire suppressed her emotions, enacting avoidant attachment behaviour. (This combination of anxiety and avoidance is not seen in Phase Two).

Nevertheless, in Phase Two, Claire appeared to be more aware of the impact her relational history has on her and how it could affect her children than in Phase One. However, Claire was unable to make any changes in her attachment behaviour despite her intentions to do so. Claire suppressed these difficult feelings in response, indicating avoidant attachment behaviour.

Overall, across the transition to second-time motherhood, Claire's attachment behaviour does not seem to have moved much. Her attachment behaviours were mainly insecure avoidant attachment behaviours with some anxious attachment behaviour in

Phase One. This continues to be the case in Phase Two, but with some salient differences in the quality of the avoidant and anxious attachment behaviours.

Differences between narrative analyses in Jack's findings. In Phase Two, Jack's initial response to stressful situations was to behave self-reliantly due to the habit of having no one to turn to when he was younger, suggesting deactivating attachment behaviour. He was then able to seek support from others when this initial self-reliant strategy did not work in soothing him. Nevertheless, Jack was able to engage in a range of either self-soothing or support-seeking behaviours in Phase One, illustrating secure attachment behaviour.

In both Phases, Jack had the same positive view of the couple relationship as being a place where he could access support when he needed it. However, in Phase Two there were more constraints on accessing support from Claire than there was in Phase One, as she was preoccupied with their second child. Jack did not place his demands on her and instead self-soothed, illustrating secure attachment behaviours. Additionally in Phase Two, Jack made a point of conveying the importance to him of making time for their couple relationship.

In contrast to Phase One, Jack did not engage in distancing behaviour such as drawing on his professional identity to make sense of his feelings and behaviour.

Overall, across the transition to second-time fatherhood, Jack's attachment behaviour did not seem to have moved much. His attachment behaviours were mainly secure with some avoidance in Phase One, and continue to be so in Phase Two.

Differences between psycho-social readings in Jack's findings. In Phase One and Phase Two, Jack sought support from Claire during times of distress, indicating a

positive view of her and their couple relationship. Jack was also able to act flexibly and draw on other resources for comfort when Claire was unavailable, indicating secure attachment behaviour.

In both Phases, Jack avoided making too many emotional demands of others when he was feeling stressed. He did not always confide in others and instead shared his anxiety with them once he had resolved it himself. This denotes avoidant attachment behaviours.

In Phase One, Jack's avoidant relational history can be seen to have an impact on his avoidant attachment behaviours. However, he did not verbalise this during the interview; it came to the fore through the analysis. In contrast, in Phase Two Jack reflected in a non-defensive manner about the effect his relational history had on his current behaviour. This indicates secure attachment behaviour.

Overall, across the transition to second-time fatherhood, Jack's attachment behaviour does not seem to have moved much. His attachment behaviours were mainly secure with some avoidance in Phase One, and continue to be so in Phase Two.

Differences between narrative analyses in the Joint findings. In Phase One, Claire's and Jack's couple relationship was comprised of two agentic individuals who formed a cohesive unit. They had a shared view of the meaning of their couple relationship as standing as a separate entity from their family relationship. This seemed to denote secure couple attachment behaviour. However, in Phase Two there was little time for the couple relationship due to parenting demands. The couple relationship was fragmented and each partner had different views of the meaning of their relationship. Each partner is a distinct individual that did not form together with the other to be part of a united whole, indicating insecure couple attachment behaviour.

In Phase One, Claire and Jack collaborated together to resolve divergence between them regarding the meaning of their couple relationship, and acknowledged each other's respective views, illustrating secure couple attachment behaviour. However, in Phase Two, no effort was made to understand each other's perspective, signifying insecure couple attachment behaviour.

Overall, across the transition to second-time parenthood, Claire's and Jack's couple relationship has moved from secure couple attachment behaviours to insecure couple attachment behaviours. These insecure behaviours seem to be comprised of avoidant attachment behaviours.

Differences between psycho-social readings in the Joint findings. In Phase One, Claire and Jack focused on their couple relationship by defending against the joint underlying anxiety concerning threats to it. They did so by collaboratively suppressing their feelings of anxiety, denoting avoidant couple attachment behaviour.

In contrast, in Phase Two, the needs of their couple relationship were put aside in the service of meeting the needs of their children. Claire and Jack had shared understanding regarding their co-parenting and focused on this in a unified manner, which further detracted from meeting the needs of their couple relationship. This illustrates avoidant attachment behaviours.

In Phase, Two Claire and Jack were in tune with each other's feelings of anxiety regarding parenting anxieties, and provided support in a mutual and reciprocal manner. This denotes secure couple attachment behaviour.

Overall, across the transition to second-time parenthood, Claire's and Jack's couple relationship has hardly moved from insecure avoidant couple attachment

behaviour. However, there is some behaviour which denotes markers of secure couple attachment behaviour in Phase Two.

Locating the Findings in relation to Existing Literature

The thesis claims that each individual enacted a range of attachment strategies. At the intra-individual level, Claire engaged in both secure and avoidant attachment behaviours with some anxious attachment behaviours in Phase One. In Phase Two, she engaged in insecure attachment behaviours, which were mostly avoidant but with some anxious attachment behaviours. In Phase One and similarly in Phase Two, Jack enacted mainly secure attachment behaviours with some avoidant attachment behaviours. This illustrates that an individual can engage with a variety of attachment behaviours at any given moment, suggesting that attachment is not a fixed feature.

These findings support previous literature which found that partner attachment is relationship specific rather than solely a fixed personality construct (Baldwin et al., 1996; Kobak, 1994; Lehnart & Neyer, 2006). The findings that an individual can use more than one attachment strategy also supports the notion that attachment behaviours can be thought of continuous rather than absolute (Johnson, 2003).

In line with Feeney's (2002) findings, the attachment behaviours of both Claire and Jack worked in conjunction to influence the patterns of interaction within the couple relationship. At the inter-individual level, Claire and Jack engaged in both secure couple attachment behaviours and insecure avoidant couple attachment behaviours in both Phases. These behaviours were mainly enacted towards each other, and thus with the same attachment figure and within the same relationship.

This provides further support for understanding attachment behaviours as being continuous and partner specific rather than a fixed personality feature (Baldwin et al., 1996; Johnson, 2003; Kobak, 1994; Lehnart & Neyer, 2006). The present study's findings suggest that multiple working models of attachment operate within an individual with respect to their couple relationship. These claims lend support to Alexandrov et al.'s (2005) investigation which found partial overlap in scales of insecure and insecure adult attachment, demonstrating that attachment security and insecurity are not mutually exclusive and can be considered as a multi-dimensional construct. This means that it is not necessary to reduce a complex phenomenon to mutually exclusive and simplistic categories and instead can be understood in a more holistic manner.

When Claire and Jack engaged in secure couple attachment behaviours, they displayed more positive affect towards each other and were more supportive. This is in contrast to when they enacted insecure couple attachment behaviour and displayed more negative affect and were more distant towards each other. These findings support Tidwell et al.'s (1996) study which found higher levels of intimacy and lower levels of negative emotions in secure individuals' interactions with their partner than did insecure individuals. These claims are also in line with Kobak and Hazan's (1991) findings that secure partners were more supportive and less rejecting than insecure partners. However, unlike the discussed studies, the present study's findings cannot make any causal claims. Future research could extend the current conclusions regarding an individual's multiplicity of attachment behaviours at any given moment within a couple relationship to investigate their associations with levels of positive and negative affect, as well as levels of support.

The findings of the present research are challenging to relate to the studies which compared couple attachment orientations to each other and the qualities of their relationship, such as secure couples, insecure couples and mixed couples (Creasey, 2002; Cohn et al., 1992; Senchak & Leonard, 1992). This is because they did not distinguish between the dynamics of couple attachment behaviour within their respective studies, whereas the present study does, and found a range of attachment behaviours within one couple relationship. This makes it difficult to compare like for like. However, the variety of attachment behaviours can be compared to the findings of the couples' exclusive attachment orientations in the aforementioned studies. The findings of the present thesis shows that the variety of attachment behaviours in each partner, and thus the couple relationship, means that Claire and Jack displayed more intimacy, less conflict and better functioning when enacting secure couple attachment behaviour. They also exhibited more distancing and withdrawal when engaging in insecure couple attachment behaviour. These claims are in line with the findings of previous research on attachment and couple relationships (Creasey, 2002; Cohn et al., 1992; Senchak & Leonard, 1992).

This thesis claims that attachment history becomes more salient after the transition to second-time parenthood. In Claire's findings after the birth of the second child, she showed her awareness of how her past childhood experiences affected her adversely as well as how she has tried to work to change her negative ways of coping. John Byng-Hall (2008) discusses the concepts of family scripts. He considers that the past is brought into the present by bringing what he calls *scripts* for family life from the family of origin. The past is likely to be repeated, and he calls these *replicative scripts*. Claire's past avoidant attachment behaviour was present in both phases of this research, while pregnant with the second child and after the birth of the second child. However,

since becoming a parent for the second time, Claire's attachment behaviour became increasingly avoidant, in line with Byng-Hall's (2008) replicative scripts.

Since becoming a parent for the second time, it became even more important for Claire to make changes as she was aware that her attachment behaviour would affect her children's experiences. She wanted her children to have a different childhood experience to her own. Attempts to alter the experience of present family life from the experience of past family life are known as *corrective scripts* (Byng-Hall, 2008), which is in line with Claire's experiences after the birth. Byng-Hall (2008) also found that most parents are aware of the experiences from their childhood they would like to not repeat and are determined not to do so. However, they find themselves doing the very things they wanted to change and not impose on their own children. This is also in line with Claire's findings that she found it extremely difficult to change her behaviour after the birth of the second child due to the incessant demands made of her as a mother.

Jack's attachment history also became more salient across the transition to second-time parenthood. Although some of his past attachment behaviours were present prior to the birth of the second child, these issues became more apparent after the birth. Jack still engaged in some avoidant attachment behaviours after the birth, but this may also have been influenced by Claire's increased unavailability due to her preoccupation with the new baby. However, he seemed to become more aware of his past relational behaviours and reactions to stress, along with the origins of some of his present behaviour. Nevertheless, there was no mention about attempts to correct these. Further, it seems that issues of attachment history were more salient for Claire across the transition to second-time parenthood than they were for Jack.

These findings demonstrate that attachment history continues to play a role in present attachment and relational behaviours. However, the findings also show that current attachment history is not solely dictated by the past. For example, although Claire engaged in mainly avoidant attachment behaviour throughout her early attachment history, she showed some secure attachment behaviour both before and after the birth of the second child. However, these attachment behaviours veered more towards insecure avoidant attachment after the birth. These findings are in line with studies which have found that attachment patterns are likely to change following a life event (e.g. Hamilton, 2000; McConnell & Moss, 2011; Waters et al., 2000), and support the model of continuity/discontinuity or revision (Castellano et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, as this study did not make a direct comparison between past and present attachment behaviours, it is difficult to conclude that the present attachment behaviours that are similar to the ones in the past are as a direct result of said attachment history. Simpson et al. (2015) consider that present attachment reflects the accumulation and combination of entire relational histories rather than just early attachment experiences.

Although the present study collected data on the participants' entire relational history, it was only used to provide context for their current attachment behaviours. This is a limitation as it might be the case that certain attachment representations (such as for parents) may be more dominant than others (such as for past romantic partners) (Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2006). Future research could include the analysis of participants' combination of attachment history in order to explore how this affects present attachment behaviour.

The present study found increased insecure couple attachment behaviour across the transition to second-time parenthood and decreased satisfaction within the couple relationship. This supports previous research which found that individuals with insecure attachment representations reported having the worst adjustment levels across the transition to parenthood (Velotti et al., 2011) and reported lower couple relationship satisfaction levels (Castellano et al., 2014).

Kohn et al.'s (2012) study found that avoidantly attached individuals reported less satisfaction in their couple relationships when they perceived threats to their independence. Couples also reported less satisfaction when they perceived family demand to be high, especially if they had avoidant partners. This lends support to the current study which found that Claire and Jack increasingly behaved in avoidant attachment behaviours after becoming parents for the second-time. Each partner was also dissatisfied with the level of demand being placed on them.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that Claire and Jack had less time to focus on their couple relationship after becoming parents for the second time, and so felt less content with it. This suggests that the addition of a second child placed additional strain on the couple relationship. Previous research supports these findings (e.g. Hiser, 1987; Nichols et al., 2007; Moss, 1981). Hiser's (1987) and O'Reilly's (2004) research provided further support to this study's findings concerning Claire's main area of concern was meeting the needs of the family.

The findings of the present study is in contrast with Krieg's (2007) findings that second-time mothers reported greater role differentiation in the household and family, but had relatively stable satisfaction with this. The present study found that Claire had a greater role differentiation, however she was not content with the incessant demands

this placed on her. However, Krieg (2007) did not explore the role of attachment behaviours across the transition to second-time parenthood, which affects how an individual behaves during stressful times, as is the transition to second-time parenthood. The differences in findings may be due to divergences in attachment behaviours at both the individual and dyadic level. Future research could broaden the present study's findings to look at more couple relationships across the transition to second-time parenthood, and how attachment behaviours influence this transition.

The findings of the current research are also in contrast with Vollig et al.'s (2015) findings that couples had adapted back to pre-birth marital satisfaction levels four months after the birth of the second child. The current research found more dissatisfaction in the couple relationship at the four month time-point following the birth of the second child. However, Vollig et al. (2015) found variations in their large sample size in the patterns of marital quality across the transition to second-time parenthood. They did not explore in-depth the reasons for these individual differences and did not include measures of attachment within their study design. In contrast, the present study provided richer and more detailed insight to the transition to second-time parenthood than either Vollig et al.'s (2015) or Krieg's (2007) respective studies. Nevertheless, future research could extend the findings across couples with different attachment behaviours as this may affect marital quality after the birth of the second child.

Furthermore, the current study found that following the transition to second-time parenthood, the couple relationship became the parenting relationship. The participants' couple relationship after the birth of the second child focused mainly on co-parenting issues and appeared to be what kept them united during a difficult period of time. These findings were in contrast to the findings of when they were expecting their second child, when there was a united focus on their couple relationship and investing in it. Previous

studies have found that co-parenting mediates the relationship between marital functioning and parenting (Bonds & Gondoli, 2007; Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001). The present study's findings were not in line with these studies. However, this may have been as a result of only examining the couple relationship just four months following the birth, which may still be a period of adjustment. It may be that investigating a longer period of time following the birth would demonstrate other findings. For example, Durtschi, Soloski and Kimme's (2017) recent study found that supportive co-parenting predicted relationship quality two years later. Future research could explore this further. This may be especially important as other research has shown that better child outcomes are seen in families in which co-parenting is more supportive (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

Methodological Innovation/Strengths and its Contribution to Attachment Theory

Each of the chosen analytical approaches produced a distinct understanding of attachment behaviours across the transition to second-time parenthood in both partners of a couple relationship. While the narrative analysis focused on the participants' expression, the psycho-social approach was my reading of their data. By bringing together the linguistic and the affective, it brings insights to attachment behaviours and the importance of understanding these behaviours in a more nuanced and fluid manner.

Some of the findings produced were unique to each method. For example, in the findings of Claire's and Jack's Joint Phase One, the narrative analysis found that they understood their couple relationship to be a place where there is freedom to be an agentic and unique individual within the partnership. The narrative analysis also found that they enacted secure couple attachment behaviour together. Differently, the psycho-social reading of the same data found that Claire and Jack increased time and space for

their couple relationship as their first child became increasingly independent and before their second child arrives. The psycho-social reading found that they enacted insecure avoidant couple attachment behaviour. These findings emphasise how some of the findings of each method stand alone and together create distinct layers of meaning.

Some of the findings completely overlapped across the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading. For example, in Claire's Phase Two findings, both methods of analyses found Claire's awareness of the impact of her past relational behaviours on her present ones. They both also showed her sense of inability to change these behaviours despite her intentions to do so, as a result of the demanding situation of being a mother for the second time. These findings highlight the resemblance between the methods and how layers of meaning are augmented.

Some of the findings overlapped but drew out different meanings across the narrative analysis and the psycho-social reading. For example, in Claire's and Jack's Joint Phase Two findings, both methods of analyses found the couple relationship to be a unified team relating to their shared parenting practices. On the one hand, the narrative analysis showed the couple relationship to be mutually supportive with shared understanding and agreement regarding parenting, denoting secure couple attachment behaviour. On the other hand, the psycho-social reading went beyond this to understand that the couple relationship was defending against underlying anxiety about the constraints placed on their relationship by focusing on what Claire and Jack are actually able to do together. With this focus, they were able to suppress these difficult feelings, illustrating insecure avoidant couple attachment behaviour. These findings demonstrate how the respective insights to the same phenomenon of each analytical method enrich

one another, highlighting the complexity and multi-dimensionality of human experience².

Rather than attempting to force the findings of each analytical method to the same data to fit with each other, the pluralistic readings can be seen as creating multiple layers of meaning-making around attachment behaviours in a couple relationship across the transition to second-time parenthood. Although some of the findings may have been achieved by use of each method on its own, together they produced multi-perspectival, holistic, richer and more detailed and nuanced understanding of attachment behaviours (Frost, 2011; Frost & Nolas, 2011; Josselin, 2013; Willig, 2013). Another value of this pluralistic approach is that it also acknowledges and upholds the ‘experiential loose ends’ (Gabb, 2009) of the at times fragmentary attachment behaviours within the individual and within the couple relationship. It allows for the retention of the messiness, uncertainties, and contradictions of human experience without the need to tidy it up. Future research could look across the couple relationship, integrating the findings pertaining to attachment behaviours of each method in order to produce a more coherent story. However, this was not the aim of the present study.

The pluralistic approach produced a range of insights to Claire’s and Jack’s couple relationship, both as individual people and as partners of the relationship, that were at times competing and also complementary. By paying attention to both linguistics and affect, the pluralistic approach was able to access what was manifest and what was latent, representing both conscious and unconscious processes. This in contrast to how research into adult attachment is generally conducted.

² For a more detailed discussion of how the findings of each method overlapped and drew out different meanings alongside each other, refer to the comparison sections of Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

On the one hand, the typical self-report attachment measures used by social and personality psychologists tap into adults' conscious appraisals of themselves. This assumes that they have the level of awareness to make such evaluations (Jacobvitz et al., 2002). On the other hand, the typical standardised semi-structured interview which classifies attachment patterns used by developmental psychologists assesses adults' unconscious processes associated with their overall state of mind (George et al., 1984; Hesse, 2008). These different attachment measures tap into different processes and ignore the value that the alternative stance can add. Thus, they cannot be expected to produce a holistic understanding of adult attachment behaviours.

However, one of the strengths of the present study is its use of a pluralistic approach using narrative analysis and a psycho-social reading which overcomes this issue by accessing both conscious and unconscious processes. This innovative methodological approach to researching adult attachment contributes to attachment theory in an original manner by offering an enriched account which represents the complex variation and multi-dimensionality of adult attachment experience.

Another methodological strength of the present study is the depth and multi-perspectival insights to adult attachment behaviour produced that were possible due to the adoption of a single case study. This approach enabled me to zoom into the varied and different attachment behaviours that each individual enacted within the context of a couple relationship across the transition to second-time parenthood.

Through the use of a single case study, it was possible to garner insight into the fluidity and dynamics of the intra-individual and the inter-individual processes that shaped the attachment behaviours within the couple relationship. This approach enabled

a multi-layered production of context-dependent insights which contributes knowledge to the nuances of adult attachment behaviour.

In addition, this approach made it possible to focus on the manner in which attachment history influences present attachment behaviour. Previous research looking into attachment stability and change tends to be outcome focused and correlational, and tend to focus on early child-parent relationship experiences (e.g. Fraley, 2002; Hamilton, 2002; Pinquart et al., 2013; Waters et al., 2000). The findings in the present study illustrate the manner in which attachment history is enacted in present attachment behaviour, as well as demonstrating that these issues become more salient following the transition to second-time parenthood. This is both a strength and original contribution of the present study.

The adoption of a single case study contributes to attachment theory by amassing knowledge that goes beyond this specific case (Ghesquière et al., 2004). However, future research could extend these findings by moving beyond single cases.

An additional key strength of the present research is that it explored both partners in an attachment relationship and their respective past relational histories and present attachment behaviours. This permitted in-depth insight as to how the dynamics of attachment behaviours were displayed at both the intra- and inter-relational level. Furthermore the application of an innovative approach to researching adult attachment through the use of a pluralistic single case study facilitated the richness of understanding these attachment nuances and dynamics which are difficult to achieve using typical attachment measures.

Counselling psychologists advocate the tailoring of therapeutic work to the unique needs of each client (e.g. Cooper & McLeod, 2011). As shown in this study, a

pluralistic approach can enrich the understanding of human experience, both individual and relational. A nuanced approach will help therapists to understand that attachment behaviours and both their presentation and underlying motives can be competing yet complementary within the same person. By bringing this understanding to therapeutic sessions, therapists may be better able to support their client.

Final Reflections

Undertaking a pluralistic approach to explore the transition to second-time parenthood in a couple relationship was an extremely challenging process. Data collection was lengthy and demanding, both of me as the researcher and of the participants. It was also quite anxiety provoking for me as I worried that the participants might withdraw from the research, which I felt may have been an understandable possibility especially in the phase after they had their second child. However, they stuck with me for which I feel extremely grateful for.

This then meant that I could focus my attention on the data analysis. The pluralistic analysis was also very demanding and at times exhausting. However, I learnt so much from this approach. It allowed me to engaged with the philosophical assumptions underpinning the analytical approaches and I unexpectedly found myself enjoying this.

However, applying a pluralistic approach to a single case study left me with a sense of responsibility to do my participants, and their valuable data, justice. At times I felt that I was not doing so, particularly through the psycho-social reading where I felt that they might not even recognise themselves or the claims I have made about their sense of selves and behaviour. Nevertheless, the more I engaged with the data, the more

I felt confident as I gathered a sense of ownership over the analyses and ensuring that they were rigorous.

Overall, this research process has helped me to develop as an academic. But it remains to be said that the adoption of a single case study with the application of a pluralistic approach has ensured that I take from this the valuable life-lesson that although I am analysing data, this data represents real human beings, with real life experiences that are meaningful to them and so they should be thought of as more than just participants or data. This approach has enriched my understanding, not just at the academic level, but also at the personal level.

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Appendices

Appendix A

How do couples experience the transition to second-time parenthood? A psychosocial application of attachment theory.

BNIM SQUIN

Hello, my name is Deborah Rodriguez, a Postgraduate Psychology student at Middlesex University. Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research exploring couples' experiences of the transition to second-time parenthood. I just want to reiterate that this will be a confidential conversation, and that you may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

As you know, I'm researching relationships...

So, can you please tell me the story of your life and relationships.

All of those events and experiences that were important for you, personally.

I'll listen, I won't interrupt, I'll just take some notes for afterwards. Please take your time. Please begin wherever you like.

Appendix B

Interview Schedule 1: For participants pregnant with their second child

AFTER BNIM: Now I would like to ask you a few general questions:

1) Can you tell me about any close relationships in your life right now?

(IF NOT YET DETERMINED) Who are you close to at the moment?

FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: In what ways are you close to X / to this person in particular?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

2) Can you tell me whether it's important for you to have someone close to you?

PROBE: Why do you say that? / What do you mean by that?

3) Can you tell me what you do when you experience difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: How do you cope/deal with this?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

IF NEED FURTHER PROBING: What role do people play in helping you cope/supporting you when you experience difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

Why do you say this?

(IF PEOPLE DO PLAY A ROLE) Who would you turn to for support?

FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: For what sorts of support would you turn to X / to this person in particular for?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

For what sorts of support would you not turn to X / to this person in particular for?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

4) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

5) Can you tell me about another particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

6) Can you tell me about another particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

7) Can you tell me about a time when you were on your own and feeling distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

8) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you spent some time with your partner?

PROBE: What happened? What did you do? Why did you do that? Who else was involved? And then what happened? What happened in the end? Can you tell me what was going on for you during this experience? How did you feel about it at the time? How do you think your partner felt about it at the time? How do you feel about it now? How do you think your partners feels about it now?

9) What are the important aspects of your relationships?

PROBE: What do you imagine life will be like when the baby is here?

How do you see yourself then?

How do you feel you will feel like?

10) Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add with regards to your experiences of relationships?

Appendix C

Interview Schedule 2: For participants with a second child aged around four, eight and twelve months old

Thank you for your continued participation in my research exploring couples' experiences of the transition to second-time parenthood. I just want to reiterate that this will be a confidential conversation, and that you may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

1) Can you tell me about any close relationships in your life right now?

(IF NOT YET DETERMINED) Who are you close to at the moment?

FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: In what ways are you close to X / to this person in particular?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

2) Can you tell me whether it's important for you to have someone close to you?

PROBE: Why do you say that? / What do you mean by that?

3) Can you tell me what you do when you experience difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: How do you cope/deal with this?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

IF NEED FURTHER PROBING: What role do people play in helping you cope/supporting you when you experience difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

Why do you say this?

(IF PEOPLE DO PLAY A ROLE) Who would you turn to for support?

FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: For what sorts of support would you turn to X / to this person in particular for?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

For what sorts of support would you not turn to X / to this person in particular for?

Why do you say this? / Why do you think this might be?

4) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

5) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

6) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you may have experienced difficulties, feelings of stress or distress?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

7) Can you tell me about a time when you were on your own and feeling distress?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY: Can you tell me about a time when you were ill / experienced difficulty in looking after yourself?

PROBE: What happened? What was it about? What did you do? Who was involved? What role did other people play if any? Why do you think they did that? What makes you say that? And then what happened? What happened in the end? How did you feel about it all?

8) Can you tell me about a particular recent time when you spent some time with your partner?

PROBE: What happened? What did you do? Why did you do that? Who else was involved? And then what happened? What happened in the end? Can you tell me what was going on for you during this experience? How did you feel about it at the time?

How do you think your partner felt about it at the time? How do you feel about it now?
How do you think your partners feels about it now?

9) Can you tell me about a recent time when you had an argument or disagreement with your partner – how it all happened?

PROBE: What happened? What did you do? Why did you do that? Who else was involved? And then what happened? What happened in the end? Can you tell me what was going on for you during this experience? How did you feel about it at the time? How do you think your partner felt about it at the time? How do you feel about it now? How do you think your partners feels about it now?

10) Can you tell me about a recent time when you had an argument or disagreement within another relationship– how it all happened?

PROBE: What happened? What did you do? Why did you do that? Who else was involved? And then what happened? What happened in the end? Can you tell me what was going on for you during this experience? How did you feel about it at the time? How do you think the other person felt about it at the time? How do you feel about it now? How do you think the other person feels about it now?

11) What are the important aspects of your relationships?

PROBE: How do you see your life over the next few months?

How do you see your life developing?

How do you see yourself?

12) Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add with regards to your experiences of relationships?

Appendix D

Diary-keeping Instructions

I would like to invite you to fill out this diary, where you can write anything you like about your experiences.

This is so I am able to capture everyday experiences at times when I am not there to follow your journey.

Appendix E

Research Flyer



HELLO PARENTS!

ARE YOU EXPECTING YOUR SECOND CHILD?

IF SO, I NEED YOUR HELP!

Would you like the opportunity to express your own views and experiences on becoming a parent for the second time?

My name is Deborah Rodriguez and I am doing a PhD in Psychology at Middlesex University. My research will follow couples on their journey to and through the transition to second-time parenthood, capturing the addition of your new family member.

I am interested in how you experience this new period in your lives, and you can help by sharing your story with me.

The research primarily involves interviews, where you can talk about whatever you like with regards to your relational and parenting experiences. It is very flexible, and will be arranged around times and locations that are convenient for you. Information provided will be completely confidential and anonymised.

If you are interested in participating, or would like to know more about the research, please feel free to contact me.

Or if you know any couples who are currently pregnant with their second child and think they may be interested in sharing their experiences, please pass them my details.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

d.rodriquez@mdx.ac.uk

0208-411-5802

Appendix F

Information Sheet

Second-time Parenthood and Relationships

Research Participant Information Sheet

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

I am interested in exploring the issues that are of importance to couples who are having a second child together and so the research will follow couples on their journey to and through the transition to second-time parenthood, capturing the addition of your new family member. This is an area of research that has hardly been explored, and will help to provide some insight into what parents' experiences are of their relationships when they have a second child.

What will participation involve?

I would like to talk to both partners of couples individually, and these interviews will start when the pregnancy of the second child is at around the 6 month stage. This first interview will consist of a biographical interview about your life story, lasting around 1.5 hours approximately. The following individual interviews will also take approximately 45 minutes at roughly 3-4 month intervals after the birth of your second child.

The research will be based on a few open-ended questions, so it will feel more like a conversation where you are free to talk about whatever you would like to express in relation to your relational experiences. The interviews are flexible, and can take place at times and places that are convenient for you. Although I do not anticipate it, if you feel uncomfortable at any point, we can take a break or stop the interview.

I will ask whether you would fill in a diary where you can write anything you like about your experiences. This is so that I am able to capture everyday experiences at times when I am not there to follow your journey. Diaries will be provided by myself and be collected every time we meet.

In between interviews, I will ask you to take 4 - 6 photos that represent 'a day in your life.' I will then arrange separate interviews where we will discuss the photos you have taken.

Although I ask that both partners of couples complete the biographical interview and following interviews, it's up to you whether you also take part in the other methods, and how often (e.g.: diaries, photo-based interview). You may wish to do some but not others at different times. It is entirely up to you, and there is no pressure whatsoever. There will also be opportunities for you to provide feedback on the work should you wish to.

Confidentiality

Interviews will be audio-recorded and then I will write up them up. These files will be stored securely on a password protected computer. The information you provide will be kept completely confidential and your identity will remain anonymous throughout the research process. I will ask you to choose your own pseudonym (made up name to hide your identity).

Information discussed in individual interviews will not be shared by me with your partner.

The data from this research will be used for my PhD thesis and ensuing academic work. It will also form part of academic papers, presentations and publications. I would be happy to share the outcome of my research with you.

Although there currently are no plans, I would not like to rule out any follow-up research and so in the consent form you will be asked whether you would be willing to be recontacted at a later date. Even if you agree now, at the point of the future contact you may decline with no obligation.

The study will be conducted by me, Deborah Rodriguez, and I will be supervised throughout by a senior academic, Dr Nollaig Frost, at Middlesex University. You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and will be asked to sign a Consent Form before taking part in the study. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The Middlesex Psychology Department's Ethics Committee have reviewed this proposal.

Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions, either before, during or after the research process, and thank you very much for considering participation in this study!

Deborah Rodriguez

d.rodriguez@mdx.ac.uk

0208-411-5802

Supervisors: Dr Nollaig Frost

n.frost@mdx.ac.uk

Dr Andrea Oskis

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Middlesex University
Psychology Department
School of Health and Education
The Burroughs, Hendon
London NW4 4BT

Appendix G

Consent Form

Middlesex University School of Health and Education

Psychology Department

Written Informed Consent

Title of study and academic year: How do couples experience the transition to second-time parenthood? A psychosocial application of attachment theory – 2014.

Researcher's name: Deborah Rodriguez

Supervisors' name and email: Dr Nollaig Frost n.frost@mdx.ac.uk and Dr Andrea Oskis a.oskis@mdx.ac.uk

I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.

I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

Please tick here if you would be willing to be recontacted at a later date for follow-up research: _____

Print name

Sign Name

Date: _____

To the participant: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Health and Education Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures.

Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: _____

Appendix H

Written Informed Consent for Photo Elicitation Interview

Middlesex University School of Health and Education

Psychology Department

Title of study and academic year: How do couples experience the transition to second-time parenthood? A psychosocial application of attachment theory – 2014.

Researcher's name: Deborah Rodriguez

Supervisors' name and email: Dr Nollaig Frost: n.frost@mdx.ac.uk; Dr Andrea Oskis: a.oskis@mdx.ac.uk

Photo-elicitation task: Participants are asked to take 4 - 6 photos that represent 'a day in their life.' An interview will follow to discuss the photos participants have taken. Participants will choose to do this task individually or together with their partner.

Please tick relevant option:

This is an individual interview

This is a joint interview

The researcher asks for consent to use the photographs for several purposes as detailed below. All photos will be treated respectfully and sensitively. Please also note that advice will be given at all stages by the supervisory team. Both participants must give consent for the intended purpose. Please tick the options that you would be willing to give consent for:

	1 st Participant	2 nd Participant
Use for analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use in presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproduction in thesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproduction in publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The researcher asks for consent for the following photographs to be used in agreement with the purposes ticked above. Both participants must give consent in order for the photograph to be used:

	1 st Participant	2 nd Participant
Photograph 1:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photograph 2:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photograph 3:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photograph 4:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photograph 5:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photograph 6:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other photographs taken:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please state which ones: _____

1st Participant: _____ 2nd Participant: _____

Print name _____ Print Name _____

Sign name _____ Sign Name _____

Date: _____

Appendix I

Debriefing Sheet

How do couples experience the transition to second-time parenthood? A psychosocial application of attachment theory

Thank you for participating in this research study. The information you have provided is extremely valuable to understanding the issues that are of importance to couples who experience the transition to second-time parenthood.

Should you wish to contact any support services, I am including the details of a few organisations:

- SANE is a UK charity that provides emotional support, practical help and information. They provide a helpline, an email service and a support forum. Their helpline number is: 0845-767-8000, and their website is: www.sane.org.uk.
- Relate offers advice, relationship counselling, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face, by phone and through their website. Their website is: www.relate.org.uk or can be contacted on 0300-100-1234.
- Action for Children provides a range of support for parents in the shape of parenting support programmes, advice and support for families, and from psychological counselling to housing support. Their website is: www.actionforchildren.org.uk or can be contacted on 0300-123-2112.
- NCT (National Childbirth Trust) provides assistance for parents by offering practical and emotional support in all areas of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood including help with feeding. The NCT Helpline 0300-330-0700 costs the same as any local call, however, if you have free 'inclusive' minutes on

a landline or mobile, it will be included in those. Their website is:
<http://www.nct.org.uk>.

If you have any questions now, or at a later time, please do not hesitate to ask me or get in touch with me.

Thanks again,

Deborah Rodriguez

d.rodriquez@mdx.ac.uk

0208-411-5802

Supervisors:

Dr Nollaig Frost

n.frost@mdx.ac.uk

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NW4 4BT

List of Published/Presented Material

Articles

Rodriguez, D., Frost, N. A., & Oskis, A. (2016). The application of a qualitative approach to adult attachment research: A short report. *The Quarterly*, 100, 10-14.

Rodriguez, D. (2015). A qualitative analysis on John Bowlby's final interview on attachment theory. *Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis*, 9, 158-164.

Frost, N. A., & Rodriguez, D. (2015). "And it was all my choice but it didn't feel like a choice": A re-examination of interpretation of data using a 'rhetoric of choice' lens. *Women's Studies International Forum. Special Issue: Choosing Mothering? The gendering of agency*, 53, 192-199.

Elichao, F., Rodriguez, D., & Murphy, A. (2014). More than just a method: Doctoral students' perspectives on the place of qualitatively driven mixed methods. *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Bulletin. Special Issue: The Place of Qualitative Methods in Mixed Methods Research* (17), pp. 17-22.

Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2017). *Using a pluralistic qualitative approach to bring enhanced understandings of attachment behaviours in couple relationships*. Manuscript in preparation.

Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2017). "Even though I always wanted to be a mum, it is not all that I wanted to be." *Experiences of mothering more than one child, with and without disability*. Manuscript in preparation.

Book Chapters

Hesse-Biber, S., Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2015). A Qualitatively-Driven Approach to Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research. In B. Johnson and S. Hesse-Biber (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research Inquiry*, (pp. 3-20). New York: Oxford University Press.

Frost, N., Rodriguez, D., & Elichaooff, F. (2018). Narrative Analysis. In M. Forrester and C. Sullivan (Eds.), *Doing Qualitative Research in Psychology: A Practical Guide*. Manuscript in preparation.

Book Reviews

Rodriguez, D. (2015). Marga Vicedo, *The nature and nurture of love: From imprinting to attachment in cold war America*. *Feminism and Psychology*, 23, 423-425.

Commentaries

Rodriguez, D. (in press). A short report on the QMiP Conference 2015. *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Bulletin*.

Wanat, M., & Rodriguez, D. (2014). Audience reflections on the PsyPAG Psychotherapy Section symposium July 2013. *Psychotherapy Section Review*, 51, 69-70.

Blog Posts

Rodriguez, D. (2016, February 16). Reflections on pluralism in qualitative Research. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://npqr.wordpress.com/2016/02/16/reflections-on-pluralism-in-qualitative-research-by-deborah-rodriguez/>

Rodriguez, D. (2014, March 11). Upcoming thoughts on pluralistic research [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://npqr.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/upcoming-thoughts-on-pluralistic-research-deborah-rodriguez/>

Conference Papers

Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2015, May & September). Presionando los límites de la investigación cualitativa: El avance de innovación en métodos cualitativos mixtos. (Pushing at the boundaries of qualitative research: The emergence and development of qualitative mixed methods innovations). Paper presented at both *A Day in Spanish at the Eleventh International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA and at the *2015 BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section Biennial Conference*, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK.

Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2015, May & September). A methodological reflection on the application of qualitative pluralistic research to couple relationships. Paper presented at the *American Psychological Association's Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology Second Annual Conference*, City University New York, New York, USA and at the *2015 BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section Biennial Conference*, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK.

Rodriguez, D., Frost, N. A., & Oskis, A. (2015, May & June). Rethinking the adult attachment paradigm: The application of a qualitative pluralistic approach to couple relationships. Paper presented at both the *Eleventh International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA and at the *Research Students Summer Conference*, Middlesex University, London, UK.

Rodriguez, D. (2014, September). Comparando las metodologías clínica y empírica en la investigación sobre el apego a lo largo del ciclo vital. (Comparing clinical and empirical methodology in attachment theory across the lifespan). Paper presented at the *International Attachment Network Iberoamerican Attachment and Psychotherapy Conference*, Hospital Clínico San Carlos, Madrid, Spain.

Rodriguez, D. (2014, September). Empirical Pluralistic Research. Roundtable discussion at the Afternoon of Pluralism Event, Middlesex University, UK.

Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2014, June). The application of a qualitatively-driven multimethod approach to the reformulation of identity in mothers of children with and without disability. Paper presented at both the *Mixed Methods International Research Association Inaugural Conference*, Boston College, Boston, USA and at the *Troubling Narratives: Identity Matters Conference*, Huddersfield University, Huddersfield, UK.

Rodriguez, D. (2013, September). Adult attachment: It's about time qualitative methods made an appearance. Paper presented at the *2013 BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section Biennial Conference*, University of Huddersfield, UK.

Rodriguez, D. (2013, July). "Even though I always wanted to be a mum, it is not all that I wanted to be." Experiences of mothering more than one child, with and without disability. In A. W. Griffiths (Chair), *Caring for Caregivers: Exploring Mental and Physical Health in Caregivers, and its Impact on Patient Outcome Symposium*. Symposium conducted at the *PsyPAG Annual Conference*, Lancaster University, UK.

Rodriguez, D. (2013, July). "Even though I always wanted to be a mum, it is not all that I wanted to be." Experiences of mothering more than one child, who are and are not identified as having a disability. Paper presented at the *BPS Psychology of Women Annual Conference*, Cumberland Lodge, UK.

Rodriguez, D. (2013, June). The application of narrative analysis to the changes in the sense of identity in mothers of children with and without disability. Paper presented at the *Applied Qualitative Research in Psychology Annual Conference*, University of Derby, UK.