

A heuristic exploration into the lived experience of trying to “have it all” at 30: How do professional women experience desiring to mother and career planning against the backdrop of the finitude of their fertility?

A Pilot Study

“With virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal - significance” (Moustakas, 1990, p.15).

Abstract

A time of heightened anxiety arises for women who have careers and wish to be mothers around the age of 30. It seems that for this group of women, the experience of choosing when to become mothers is imbued with anxiety rich with existential themes such as, choice, freedom, meaning, temporality, mortality and finitude. In this heuristic pilot study, the author reflects on their own experience of this choice alongside another woman's in a similar situation as an investigation into the lived experience of the phenomenon. The study concludes with a depiction of the lived experience of a woman with a career trying to “have-it-all”. The research found that the experienced anxiety could broadly be divided across the existential themes of; uncertainty, meaning and temporality, and furthermore across the 4 existential worlds. Further research could open up the experience of women in a broad range of scenarios who are negotiating the decision to mother and gain deeper understanding into the factors that impact the experience.

Introduction and Background to the project

Approaching my thirties, as a woman who wants to have children, I began to feel a growing sense of urgency towards life, and more specifically time. I had spent much of my twenties taking advantage of my independence, living abroad and experiencing as much as I could. I was raised in a middle class, educated family and community, sent to an academically competitive private girls' school, and encouraged to consider what I wanted to 'do' for as long as I can remember. Raised by a mother who was influenced by the feminism of the seventies (e.g. Greer, 1970), I was encouraged to think about a career in exactly the same way that my brother was, I was not told that as a woman, my life trajectory and priorities could look different to my brother's. I knew I wanted a family, but I was not encouraged to think strategically about this part of my life, it seemed taken as a given that it would just fit in somewhere.

Turning thirty, I began to realise that I had not really made a plan for when I would have children, I was half way through a doctorate course and I wanted to get some career experience before having children and taking time out. Yet, I was increasingly aware of the inescapable fact that as a woman, I do not have forever to achieve this particular goal; my fertility has an end point. The varied information I had garnered regarding women's fertility from the media and popular culture seemed to suggest that at 30 our chances of conceiving naturally started to decline. My own internalisation of this metaphorical deadline seemed to create an increased awareness of the finitude of my fertility, which began to impact the way I approached different areas of life: relationships, study and work, and created an increased sense of temporality and urgency.

As such, one feature of the desire to mother for some women heading into their thirties may be time. With other priorities filling my life, I became increasingly aware of the finitude of my fertility, as I found myself narrowing the window of opportunity I may have to conceive. Moreover, this window of opportunity is uncertain and unknown, I do not know at what age my fertility will 'expire' or whether I am able at all.

This is a phenomenon that I believe needs more attention, both philosophically and practically. Women's experiences of life and living have been notably neglected by much of the existential literature. Moreover, academically the 'biological clock' has been researched to date mostly from more practical perspectives - investigations into egg freezing, single mothers by choice, balancing a career and motherhood and other such topics abound (e.g. Dillaway & Pare, 2008; Raspberry & Skinner, 2011), yet little has been said about how women who want children experience their lives as a whole against the backdrop of their finite fertility. Through this research I aim to shed light on and illuminate the various ways professional women who want children experience life and the desire to mother around the age of 30. I believe that this research is context specific, saying something meaningful about female experience in Western societies.

Research question

How do professional women experience desiring to mother and career planning against the backdrop of the finitude of their fertility? A pilot study.

Relevance to Counselling Psychology and Existential Psychotherapy

It has been a challenge to find academic work that is purely connected to the

phenomenon I wish to explore. A search entering the key terms “desire to mother” on PsycINFO, Google Scholar, Athens, OvidSP and Summon all return sociology, psychology and scientific research in related areas such as egg freezing by choice, fertility, managing work and a family, single motherhood (e.g. Dillaway & Pare, 2008; Martin, 2010; Sevon, 2005; Smith, 1997), and the desire for motherhood amongst specific groups of women such as those with a diagnosis of psychosis, women living with HIV, women with a known genetic disorder and women who are unable to have children (e.g. Chen, et al. 2001; De La Cruz, et al. 2011; Raspberry & Skinner, 2011; Tubert, 1991; Vacheron, et al. 2008). While some of this literature has something to say about different aspects of mothering and desiring to mother, it seemed that there was little to no information on the lived experience of simply desiring to mother in “normal” populations of women.

Furthermore, a PsycINFO search using the term “women turning 30” returns three results in total with only 2 of relevance (Klay, 2009; Schlesinger, 1989). While a Summon search on “women turning 30” returns 117,630 academic journal articles with it would seem none of relevance to my research question. There therefore appears to be a dearth in the academic literature regarding how women *experience* the desire to mother in light of their age and stage in life.

Moreover, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant in light of contemporary cultural changes. Women’s role in society is shifting (Klay, 2009): “Many women in high paying and high-powered jobs are leaving to raise families” (Ibid, p.12), the result of a move towards motherhood and out of the workforce by contemporary women (Slaughter, 2012), in stark contrast to the generation of women before. Furthermore, contraception and career opportunities have resulted in women considering motherhood much later in life; in 2010, nearly half (48 per cent) of all babies born in the UK were to mothers’ aged 30 and over (Office for National Statistics). Consequently, women around thirty who wish to be mothers are a growing group.

Much of what I have found that attempts to say something about this experience has been in popular press and culture (e.g. Edelhart, 2002; Moran, 2011; Slaughter, 2012; Star, 1998). A Summon search on “turning 30” returns 68,621 newspaper and magazine articles (e.g. Edelhart, 2002), many focussing on celebrities who are turning thirty, their tips around being thirty and the uniqueness of the experience of turning thirty for this generation as compared to the one before (e.g. Arkell, 2002). As such, the experience of this phenomenon is part of the public conversation and it would seem significant and important for many contemporary women. The relatively small

amount of research in the field of psychology and psychotherapy as compared to the abundance of expression in popular culture suggests that a study such as this can contribute much to both disciplines in terms of increased awareness of a truly contemporary experience, and deepened understanding of the challenges facing a particular group of women today.

This study will have relevance for the field of psychology and specifically women's psychology, broadening understanding of a facet of female identity and life-span. Additionally, I believe that this research has much to offer in terms of increased knowledge in general of women's psychology. This study may open up new understanding of other female experiences such as pregnancy and infertility, which are inherently connected to the experience I wish to illuminate.

The fields of clinical and counselling psychology and psychotherapy particularly would benefit from increased awareness of this stage, as many women faced with this experience may be good candidates for diagnoses such as depression and anxiety (Klay, 2009), without much awareness in the disciplines of the range of experience faced by young women. Enhanced awareness of an increasingly prevalent female experience would also contribute to the skill base of Counselling and Clinical Psychologists and Psychotherapists, giving them a more nuanced understanding of what a young woman may be faced with at a certain point in her life span.

Moreover, working existentially means being open to exploring the varied ontological anxieties experienced by clients. Throughout my learning I have become interested in discussions around boundary situations (Jaspers, 1951) that may give rise to anxieties around mortality and connect a person to their own being-towards-death (Heidegger, 1927), fertility and its finitude so far has not arisen or presented itself for discussion, yet it could also possibly be seen as a boundary situation. Therefore, research on this experience may open up new discussion in the existential psychotherapy field on the range of boundary situations and possible gender differences in the experience of being-towards-death.

Literature Review

Due to the scope of this pilot study, I have chosen to focus my literature review on the literature that sets the scene for the context in which I believe this phenomenon arises. However, I am aware that beyond this specific research question, there are questions to be explored with regards to the lived experience of desiring to mother amongst different groups. Studies that may enrich my findings could address similar

questions around the experience of desiring to mother for women of different socio-economic groups, women in different age brackets, women at various stages of fertility treatment or those who are unable to bear biological children. Of growing interest, should also be the experience of female-to-male and male-to-female transgender and non-binary people who desire to parent, and how their experiences are unique and can be supported better by the psychotherapeutic community.

For the purpose of beginning to answer this research question I will place this particular phenomenon in historical context, showing how this lived experience is made possible for women at this specific point in time. I also show how the experience arises in a geographical context, laying out how this aspect of female experience finds itself playing out specifically in Western developed societies. Through setting the scene for my research in this way, I attempt to illuminate the current climate in which young women find themselves making decisions about their careers and motherhood. Additionally, I give a brief overview and definition of the key terms in my research question in order to clarify why age “30” and the term “having-it-all” are significant and of interest for this discussion and phenomenon.

As a philosophical reflection on the lived experience of this phenomenon, I summarise some philosophical considerations that I feel are pertinent to my own experience of the phenomenon and therefore may contribute something to a discussion of the experience.

Women as wives and mothers

It seems that female identity has long been inextricably linked with the notion of mothering and reproduction. Stories involving female characters in religious texts such as the Old Testament often focus on them as mothers or not mothers, with those who are fertile and able to carry future generations in their wombs triumphing while the barren are pitied (Zornberg, 2009). Consequently, female narratives in such texts seem reduced to their biology and their ability or inability to mother, with other facets of their characters of little interest or relevance. As such, the internalised narrative for women seemed to be that we are mothers or not mothers and any other realm of female lived experience is of little or no consequence.

Such a stance persisted into the 20th century, seemingly promoted by Freud and the popularity of psychoanalysis, which further connected woman to her biology and

fertility (Freud, 1931). Freud's theories of female sexuality ultimately led to the notion that "normal" development resulted in heterosexual girls becoming mothers. Psychoanalytic ideas of female sexuality and neuroses begin with the notion that upon reaching the oedipal stage little girls became aware of their fundamental lack and positioning as lesser as compared to boys (Freud, 1925/1995). Freud maintained the idea that libido was "invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature, whether it occurs in men or in women" (Freud, 1995, p.287), as such Freud's understanding of female sexuality was always with male sexuality in mind. For example, he suggested that girls who seek sexual pleasure through clitoral stimulation have yet to come to terms with the notion that they do not have a penis, seeking pleasure in an immature way from the part of the genitals that behaves most like a penis. Freud's contention was that women mature to seek sexual pleasure through their vagina, as grown up women "should" experience an urge towards motherhood and therefore intercourse, finding compensation for lacking a penis through having children. Consequently, only once girls reach this stage can they be said to have developed *healthy* sexuality (Ibid):

"The woman who resists her sexual role and ignores the message of her vaginal bleeding, that she should be bearing children, remains fixated in an infantile, aggressive state of penis envy. She may be sexually active but her response is still masculine, attached to her clitoris, and not originating in the receptive orifice, the vagina". (Greer [on Freud], 1970, p.106)

Medard Boss, in his book *The Meaning and Content of Sexual Perversions* (Boss & Diethelm, 1949) wrote about "homosexuality as a sexual perversion" and in 1987 stated that "the healthiest state for a woman was to have children in a loving relationship with a man" (cited in Langdrige & Barker, 2013, p.148).

Rich (1980/2003) refers to this "man-made institution" as "compulsory heterosexuality" (p.637), proposing that women's emotional impulses and affection towards each other had been explained away by the patriarchy through the assumption of "mystical/biological heterosexual inclination" (Ibid). As such, heterosexuality maintains the status quo acting to keep women dependent on men, and accepting of their lot as wife and mothers. Similarly, De Beauvoir posits that in adolescence: "woman learns that for her there is to be no conquest, that she must disown herself, that her future depends upon man's good pleasure" (de Beauvoir, 1949, p.382).

Accordingly, motherhood and monogamous, heterosexual coupledness have become intertwined with understandings of female sexuality, and any sense that sexuality exists in females outside of these norms has seldom been considered.

Correspondingly, heterosexuality has persisted as “normal” sexuality, and mothering as inherently connected to the female expression of sexuality and adult female experience. Such a feeling endures in western societies such as the UK, where “heteronormative” or “pronatalist” societies continue to perpetuate the notion that having children is a natural and inevitable part of being a woman (Rowland, 1992) and position women who are not heterosexual mothers outside of the “norm” (Jackson, 2006). Hence, the idea that women are mothers and becoming a mother in some way fulfils an inevitable destiny prevails, many women have come to expect motherhood as a given:

“I had no idea of what I wanted, what I could or could not choose. I only knew that to have a child was to assume adult womanhood to the full, to prove myself, to be “like other women.... This is what women have always done”. (Rich, 1986, pp.25-26)

Indeed, in Jacques and Radtke’s 2012 study they showed that young heterosexual Canadian women, educated to degree level continue to project their future life trajectories along traditional notions of womanhood as wife-and-mother (Jacques & Radtke, 2012). Accordingly, Segal et al (2001) found that 100% of female college students anticipated that they would marry in the future and 96% anticipated having children (Segal, DeMeis, Wood, & Smith, 2001). As such, it is possible that in educated Western societal contexts, when women deviate from the standard model (i.e. legally married, heterosexual, and sharing a household with a man having the primary source of income), they remain at risk of being identified as defective or deviant (Arendell, 2000; Smith, 1993). Indeed, there is still societal stigma attached to women who choose not to mother or have not yet mothered by a certain age (Ireland, 1993). Examples of such stigma abound in popular press and culture (e.g. *Gone Girl*, 2012; *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 1998) where women who are not ‘on track’ to motherhood by a certain age are portrayed as unfulfilled and frustrated.

Of notable significance to a discussion such as this are the scientific advances that lead to the availability of contraception, abortion and fertility treatment which enabled a shift in the way we approach motherhood (Tardy, 2000). As a consequence of such advances, in recent years, motherhood has become a choice available to us, when

we choose it (Sevon, 2005). Indeed, in October 2014 in an interview with the Telegraph as Dr Geeta Nargund opened Europe's largest IVF clinic, she referred to fertility treatment as "the second wave of women's emancipation" (Peck, 2014). As such, one possible way of viewing the current circumstance is as a "third wave" of feminism, one where motherhood is beginning to become one facet of female identity but not the whole story (Ireland, 1993).

Markedly, the academic community has largely neglected women's lived experience of existing within Western, pronatalist societies. While Freud and his followers can be credited with attempting an understanding of female sexuality, Freud himself "lamented his inability to understand women, and became progressively humbler in his pronouncements about them" (Greer, 1970, p.104), leaving the work unfinished yet profoundly impactful. Additionally, in *The Second Sex* (1949) de Beauvoir's chapter on 'The Mother' focuses on biology: physicality, pregnancy, breastfeeding, abortion and contraception and has little to say about mothering and not mothering as experience. I believe this research could shed light on the lived experience of being a woman and making decisions about motherhood in such a societal context.

The significance of thirty

While models that saw anatomy as destiny for women have been cast aside with an acknowledgment that they have little to offer to the discussion in contemporary western society, anatomy and finite fertility remains a given for many women. Fertility is finite and this is something that we are more aware of in the modern world where we have choices and roles other than motherhood that may fill the years that we have to conceive. Although ideas vary around when is the time to 'panic' regarding conception, there is general consensus that the older we are the harder it is to conceive (Cohen, & Brenner, 2003). While an increasing amount of women are planning motherhood in their mid to late thirties, aging continues to be associated with compromised ovarian function and decreasing fecundity (Baird et al., 2005; Korula & Mohan S, 2010; Madankumar, Cohen, & Brenner, 2003). Indeed, fertility in women is known to decline after the age of 30, strikingly so after 35 (Navot & Bergh, 1991), as such biologically, there *is* cause for increased urgency regarding motherhood at age thirty (Kelsey et al, 2013). Klay (2009) proposes that statistics such as these are increasingly significant in the 21st century since more women in their middle to late 20s are developing the self through career and education and delaying reproduction until their 30s. Consequently, for some women, the transition from the 20s to the 30s can be difficult.

Accordingly, there seems to be increased anxiety around the desire to mother in women specifically approaching and turning thirty (Macko & Rubin, 2004). Macko and Rubin (2004) propose the emergence of a 'midlife crisis at 30' for women of the X/Y generation. Latest census data shows that "today's young women are getting married, having babies, and making major decisions about the directions of their careers at a very compressed juncture – right around their thirtieth birthdays" (Ibid, p.3). Consequently, it seems that increased pressure around this time to have each different part of their lives 'sorted' leads young women to question "what's wrong with us" when they don't (Macko & Rubin, 2004). With women's role in Western society continuing to shift, Klay (2009) advocates that symptoms associated with this increased pressure such as anxiety and stress must be acknowledged and recognized, not only in the field of psychology but also in the larger culture, in order to help decrease the symptoms and 'normalize' the experience (Klay 2009).

However, while aging undoubtedly impacts fertility, for the most part each individual woman is unaware of exactly how much time she has to conceive and therefore it would seem that much of the experienced pressure attached to age thirty might be socially constructed. De Beauvoir posits: "no maternal 'instinct' exists: the word hardly applies, in any case, to the human species. The mother's attitude depends on her total situation and her reaction to it." (de Beauvoir, 1949, p.526). Indeed, culturally shared narratives regarding female life course and motherhood prevail in Western countries (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992; Meyers, 2001), it seems that at the level of cultural narrative there is a very narrow right time to become a mother. It would appear that these narratives adjust the thinking of women to consider the correct time to become a mother in relation to the right age at which it is permissible and, furthermore, to the right moment in the life course, e.g. only when at a certain career point (Woollett & Boyle, 2000).

The majority of available information exploring the experience of being a woman turning thirty is in popular culture. A Google search on "turning thirty as a woman" returns blogs, magazine and newspaper articles with advice, anecdotes and humour connected to this specific experience (e.g. Edelhart, 2002; Rosenblum, 2011; Slaughter, 2012). The general gist is that this is a female only experience. Indeed, one bloggers first piece of advice to any woman turning thirty is: "Don't look to men for turning-30 camaraderie" (Trunk, 2003). However, there is little academic work to be found on the same experience. I am intrigued as to why this may be. Are thirty-year-

old women being missed by the academia? Are they so present in popular culture because something has been missed that needs expressing by the arts?

Moreover, much of the research that has been undertaken to date on women turning thirty has been carried out in America (e.g. Macko and Rubin, 2004; Klay, 2009). It therefore has yet to be seen whether British women experience similar pressures around the age of thirty, or if British society somehow gives rise to an experience for women that is qualitatively different to their American counterparts. My hope is that my research in some way will shed light on this quandary.

Having it all

The approval of the combined oral contraceptive pill in the United States in 1960, made it easier for women to have careers through being able to control when and if they had children (Tone, 2001). As such, the availability of the pill in 1961 is often seen as a catalyst in making the second-wave of feminism possible, a wave that mostly focused on getting women out of the home and into the workplace (ibid). In 1963 Betty Friedan, influenced by de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), wrote her seminal book *The Feminine Mystique* which is credited as kick starting this new wave. In her book Friedan suggested that "occupation: housewife" placed women at home, limiting them and their possibilities. Instead, she advocated access to higher levels of education for women, showing through a survey she conducted that women who played roles in the work force and at home concurrently were more satisfied with life as compared to those who were sad and agitated by being housewives only (Friedan, 2001).

Consequently, the feminism of the 1970's focussed on getting women into education and the workplace and out of the home:

“Three-quarters of the eighteen-year-old girls in our society receive no training or higher education at all. The pattern that emerges is that of inert, unvalued female work force, which is considered as temporary labour, docile, but unreliable”. (Greer, 1970, p.133).

This specific wave of feminism made space for new conversations around how women could juggle motherhood and working life at the same time whilst succeeding at both. Such a notion became encapsulated and represented by the term “Having It All” which was coined by Helen Gurley Brown, the first editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine who published her book with the same title in 1982 (Gurley Brown, 1982).

The term, “Having It All” came to encompass the idea that women in contemporary society could aspire to have fulfilling, high-ranking careers and be mothers concurrently (Tropp, 2006).

However, the notion of ‘Having It All’, is currently experiencing a backlash from working women in the 21st century. There is a feeling that feminism is in need of reform and that ‘Having It All’ is a misnomer. Women are aware that their gender and age affects the career choices they make and the opportunities that are offered to them, a fact that many contemporary feminists are addressing (e.g. Sandberg, 2010). In an article in *The Atlantic* magazine titled “Why women still can’t have it all”, Ann-Marie Slaughter, the first female director of policy planning at the State Department wrote:

“I was increasingly aware that the feminist beliefs on which I had built my entire career were shifting under my feet . . . when many members of the younger generation have stopped listening, on the grounds that glibly repeating “you can have it all” is simply airbrushing reality, it is time to talk.” (Slaughter, 2012).

It seems that as this first generation of career women have passed childbearing age, many are sending a new message to the younger generation; think about the choices you are making while all the options are available to you. Indeed, in a survey undertaken for her book in 2002, Sylvia Hewlett found that in the USA 40% of women earning \$50,000 or more a year are childless at age 45 (Hewlett, 2004). Such a statistic would suggest that women have either chosen to be childless and have therefore focussed time and energy on furthering their career, or focussing on their career has distracted them from a previous desire to mother until it is ‘too late’; a form of childless female identity Ireland (1993) refers to as “Transitional Women” (Ireland 1993, p.41). Furthermore, such a statistic is highly suggestive that having a child severely limits women’s chances of earning a high level salary, which is in contrast to men who have children and women who do not, a fact that many women negotiating motherhood and career may be intuitively aware of.

Accordingly, in December 2014 – the same year that Apple and Facebook announced that they would be offering egg freezing as an employee “benefit” to female employees in an effort to attract more women to their workforces – the New York Times reported that the percentage of American women in the workforce has been

falling over the past decade and that 61 percent of nonworking women cite family responsibilities as the reason (Cain Miller & Alderman, 2014). Correspondingly, Carrie L. Lukas, a managing director of the Independent Women's Forum, wrote in her 2006 book about feminism: "*Feminist groups like to pretend that women can have it all without sacrificing time with families,*" (Lukas, 2006, p.141) suggesting that Brown's book now looks like a charming artefact from a more hopeful time.

Such an awareness of the challenges of juggling career and motherhood in contemporary western society is an important factor in considering my research question. Women who care about their careers and also want to be mothers are making decisions about timing motherhood possibly with this internalised sense that doing both roles successfully and concurrently may not be possible, a fact that may play into the decision making process.

Philosophical considerations

Temporality in Existential Philosophy

In considering the lived experience of the phenomenon I wished to explore, it became clear that a fundamental aspect of the experience was temporality, the experience of the passing of time and what that means for individuals in their unique existence. With temporality seemingly central to the exploration, I turned to the work of Heidegger since his understanding and conception of time informs much of my own understanding of the human condition and how we respond and react to our existence in time.

In his introduction to *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger explains the title of his work, proposing that *time* is the context or horizon against which Being is revealed, and therefore Being must be grasped '*in terms of time: our sense of what it is to be must depend on temporality*' (Polt, 1999, p.25). According to Heidegger, fundamentally humans are temporal, meaning we exist in time and in the process of existing, Being is revealed (Heidegger, 1927) . In existential philosophy, the term *temporality* is used to denote the way in which time exists and is experienced in human existence (Warnock, 1970, p.62). In addition, it is not just that as humans we experience time, but that we *care* about, and are concerned with, our existence and hence the time that we experience: 'temporality and care qualify human existence' (Weixel-Dixon & Strasser, 2005: 230).

Phenomenology is an attempt to understand the essences of human experience, life as it is lived by the subjective self, phenomena as they appear in human consciousness. Heidegger's phenomenology of time, understands time as a phenomenon to be experienced as other phenomena. Phenomenology sits alongside philosophical discussions of the perception of existence and time since it approaches the attempt to understand these concepts as they are lived and experienced by the experiencing person (Merleau-Ponty, 1956).

For Heidegger, the counting and measuring of time of Aristotle and the conception of it as a sequence of 'nows', which lead to distinct time dimensions, are false constructions that come out of humans' inherent need to compartmentalise and therefore attempt to understand existence, but it does not tell us anything about time itself and our relationship to it (Cohn, 2002, p.63). Instead, Heidegger proposed a conception of time where 'there is no linear move from past via present to future, as every present moment still contains the past it left behind while already pointing towards the future' (Cohn, 2002, p.64). Therefore Dasein's experience of the present moment will always contain elements of its past and future, a temporality that sets it apart from other existing things, this experience of time is uniquely human.

For Heidegger, authentic existence is an escape from the "theyness" of everyday existence, confronting and engaging in the wholeness of our being in a way that brings existence into our conscious moment: "Dasein inevitably moves between our day-by-day enmeshment with the they and a seizing upon glimpses of our truer, uniquely individual possibilities for existence" (Sherman, 2009). For Heidegger, our openness to and awareness of our ability to transcend time, and the presence of time as a backdrop to our lives is authentic living: 'in inauthenticity, the past and future are *subordinated* to the present, whereas in authenticity the present gains a fresh and deeper meaning from the past, and especially, from the future' (Polt, 1999: 100). Indeed, for Heidegger our temporality is "ecstatical", we stand-out (Polt, 1999: 97), as opposed to present-at-hand entities, with a definite past and present, we have the ability to transcend our immediate situation, meaning we are able to be in a present that contains the past and points towards the future (Cohn, 2002: 66).

Of pertinence to my research question is the notion that for humans time is always finite, it comes to an end with our death. If authentic existence is an openness to and acceptance of the way in which time exists for Dasein, to live authentically we must constantly project our lives onto the horizon of our death, and live with a profound understanding of our inevitable finitude, Heidegger terms this "being-towards-death"

(Heidegger, 1927). Indeed, time only exists for us from a mortal vantage point, time has meaning for us through our finitude. For Heidegger my mortality is my “ownmost” possibility (ibid), it is my own, I cannot die someone else’s death or escape my own, and it is this that gives my life meaning, as with death, my life is mine to live, I cannot live another (Polt, 1999: 87). Heidegger proposes that authentic living is a way of being in which Dasein is truly itself, when we are not absorbed in the they-self but instead live with integrity and clarity and an awareness of the ‘givens’ of existence, it requires ‘facing up to mortality - not by worrying about when demise will come, but by accepting the finitude of one’s possibilities and choosing in the light of this finitude’ (Polt, 1999: 87).

Jaspers (1951) emphasised ‘limit situations’, situations that enhance our awareness of this finitude and our finality and may create angst that when explored reveal our relationship to our mortality. Situations such as endings, change such as ending a psychotherapeutic relationship act as “limit situations” and may bring a person closer to their authentic response to their own mortality and existence. As such, these situations will create space for Dasein to react and explore his/her own sense of finitude. Accordingly, Heidegger maintained that: ‘When we sense the fragility of life, we also sense its significance’ (cited in Polt, 1999, p.86), such a stance leads to the idea that in order to live in a meaningful way we must respond authentically to such “limit situations”, allowing them to open us up to our own “being-towards-death” and “authenticity”.

On beginning my studies at NSPC it struck me that perhaps due to the scarcity of female existential philosophers, there was little to no writing on the finitude of fertility as one of the *existentials* or givens of existence for women. I wondered whether the uncertainty around the finitude of our fertility acted as a limit situation (Jaspers, 1951) for women who want children, and in turn meant that we were confronted with our mortality and temporality earlier than our male counterparts. The anxiety that I was feeling around my fertility reflected much of my anxieties connected to my life as a whole, such as feeling an ever-present awareness of limited time; consequently these anxieties heightened my awareness of myself as a being-towards-death (Heidegger, 1921). I am curious as to whether women’s experiences of the finitude of their fertility enables them to engage in and connect with their mortality and finitude sooner than their male counterparts.

Methodology

Epistemology

Creswell, et al (2007), suggest that researchers should begin their inquiry process with their own philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and how they believe they know what is known (epistemology). Willig (2008) proposes that in thinking about research method, one must consider the kind of knowledge the method aims to obtain, the assumptions the method makes about the world and how the role of the researcher is conceptualised by the method, in order to find a method that fits best with the researcher and the question. Indeed, each research methodology has its own unique and nuanced epistemological and ontological roots, and therefore the method that I have chosen has been informed by my own epistemological and ontological beliefs about knowledge and the world.

I believe that there is not a world *out there* to be measured, discovered and predicted, instead I connect with the notion that humans have a unique way of existing which is subjective and made up of experience. Each person has their own world-view that is informed and influenced by their unique position in history, culture and society. This means that the world that is interesting to me as a practitioner and hence researcher is the world as experienced by an individual or particular group of people. Therefore, research for me aims to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of a person or group of people in a certain situation, it does not aim to prove a fact or make statements about people as a whole. Instead through research, I am interested in uncovering how people experience and make sense of their world.

Qualitative methodology fits well with a phenomenological-existential perspective of existence. Heidegger's Dasein (1927) emphasises the human being's relatedness and openness to the world. Dasein stands 'in' the world, not alongside it and its phenomena, the being-in-the-world of Dasein is the unique way of Being for humans, different to objects. However, quantitative research methodology in psychology that measures, categorises and draws conclusions regarding human behaviour seems to disregard the notion that humans have a *unique* way of Being. 'If we turn our attention to a person's inner world as if it were an object for scrutiny we end up depersonalising the human being in front of us and deprive her of her vitality and responsive flexibility' (van Deurzen, 2010: 237). Indeed, reducing Dasein's lived experience to measurable scales and categories - as quantitative methodology often tends to - reduces Dasein to an object among other objects in the world and overlooks Dasein's distinct mode of existence.

I would therefore like this research to reflect human experience as revealed through a person's unique lived experience. My research is not motivated by proving or disproving a hypothesis, I do not wish to explain or predict human experience, instead I believe I can contribute greater insights and understanding through attempting to illuminate and describe experience as lived. With this perspective, I have chosen to use a qualitative rather than quantitative research methodology.

Research Method

I would like to carry out research that gains a deeper understanding of how timing motherhood is experienced in the lifeworld (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological research methodology, aims to explore and describe human lived experience. Phenomenological methods do not try to explain or predict experience, instead they attempt to illuminate what a phenomenon is like as it is experienced and lived. While many different research methodologies have sprung from this notion, heuristic research methodology seems to fit best with the way in which I have come to my research question and the personal meaning this exploration has for me:

“The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries.”

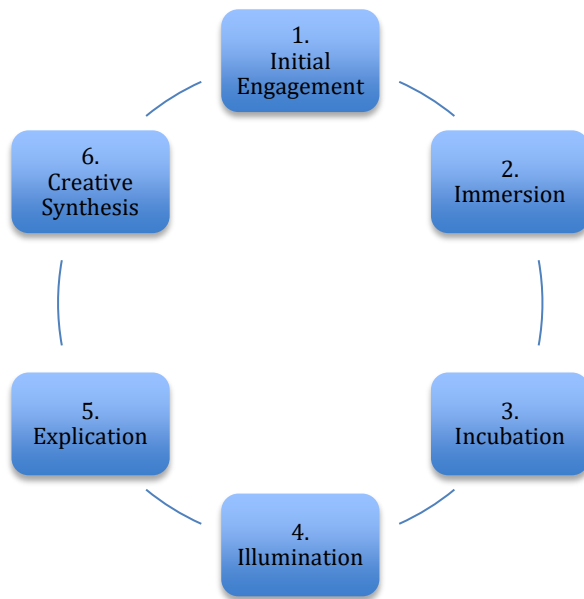
(Moustakas, 1990, p.9)

In considering methodology, I felt strongly that including a chapter on reflexivity in my final write up could not give the necessary weight to my own personal experience and process in my research. It was clear that a method that allowed the self of the researcher to permeate all aspects of the research process would best allow me to be open and honest about my place in the question. Heuristic enquiry, with its links to hermeneutic phenomenology, emphasises the investigator's internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristics require the researcher to explore and divulge their inevitable biases and links to the phenomenon being explored as part of the research data. The personal connection the researcher has to the question is seen to imbue the process with an added depth of information and richness rather than act as a limitation.

Moreover, the heuristic approach to research embraces creativity and spontaneity, an attitude that fits well with my own way of working. Douglass and Moustakas (1985a) posit: “heuristics offers an attitude with which to approach research, but does not provide a methodology” (p.42). Moustakas (1990) proposes that the process of heuristic research requires a degree of openness in order to allow for choosing directions and techniques not always foreseeable at the outset of a research project. As such, the method of data collection in research that proceeds heuristically is more fluid and less structured than other forms of research methodology.

For clarity, I have structured my research process on Moustakas’ six-phase model (1990), which provides a guide and loose structure for carrying out heuristic research. As I have depicted in the diagram in Figure 1, this six-phase heuristic research process is cyclical rather than linear and relies on the researcher’s own process of discovery and intuition to move back and forth between the phases. Moustakas (1990) posits that the: “freedom of the researcher or therapist to shift perspectives and methods at any point in the process recognises the contribution that subjectivity and immediacy make to knowledge” (p. 103). As shown in the complete circle in my diagram below, heuristic research enables the researcher to revisit each phase of the process as new information or meaning comes to light. As such, these stages are not linear, but may blur and cross into each other as I move through my research. As I lay out the process of answering my research question below, I will say more about each heuristic phase and how it manifested in my particular research process.

Figure 1: The cyclical nature of Heuristic Inquiry



Terminology

My aim in this study is to shed light on the experience of a woman who is around the age of 30 and wants to be a mother. I am interested in illuminating this experience for a professional woman, as from my experience and from talking to others, it seems to be a new and increasingly common decision that women perceive themselves to be faced with; do I advance in my career or do I become a mother? The key terms in my study are therefore “professional woman”, “career choice” and “desire to mother”.

Below I define these terms as they pertain to my research project:

- Professional Woman: for the purpose of this study I will define a professional woman as woman who achieved at least a first degree and is working full-time in a job she experiences as a ‘career choice’.
- Career choice: due to my interest in how women juggle motherhood and careers I am interested in interviewing a woman who feels as though there is a tension between the desire to further their career and the desire to mother. For this reason I will not interview someone who is in a job they do not experience as a career choice and instead experience it as a means to an end as I feel this may give rise to a wholly different experience. For the purpose of this study I define “career choice”, as working in a field one wishes to progress in, and plans to remain in for the foreseeable future.

- Desire to Mother: I define a 'desire to mother' as a felt sense that at some point in the future a woman wishes to have children. I acknowledge that this felt sense may look and feel different for different women and for this reason will ask my participant to express how it feels for them in order to enrich the research data.

Recruitment and Sampling

I am interested in the twenty-eight to thirty-three age range as it is the lived experience of wanting a child against the backdrop of age thirty that I am most interested in. My hope was that by interviewing a woman who sits in a small age range around the age of thirty, I would gain an insight into the response she has to this time period: approaching thirty, turning thirty or having recently turned thirty. I did not limit my recruitment to women who are currently thirty as based on the literature I have reviewed, I believe this milestone can also have meaning for women who are approaching or have recently turned 30 (Dockett & Beck, 1998; Macko & Rubin, 2004), and this range of experience could add richness to my research.

Exclusion criteria: I did not wish to interview women who knew that they cannot have their own biological children as I believe that this experience is qualitatively different to the phenomenon I am interested in. In addition, I did not wish to include anyone who has experienced a pregnancy (that likely ended in a miscarriage, still-birth, abortion or giving a child up for adoption) in the last 6 months, as this may have brought up feelings of distress.

In order to manage my exclusion criteria sensitively, I asked any interested participants to take part in a brief 10-minute phone conversation where I explained, along with questions around the inclusion criteria a little about what the conversational interview will cover. This conversation gave potential participants the opportunity to decide whether the conversation could give rise to potentially difficult feelings for them. If this phone call resulted in a woman being excluded from the study, I handled rejections sensitively by offering information about where to seek further support (UKCP, BACP, Mind and NHS). I ensured that my participant fulfilled all the criteria before arranging a face-to-face interview in order to avoid any unnecessary distress that may result from rejecting somebody face-to-face.

My participant was recruited through the forwarding of an email containing recruitment information (Appendix A) sent to friends and colleagues to circulate around their

workplaces and social networks. The participant in my study received the information through an e-mail forwarded around their workplace and contacted me via e-mail to show their interest in participating. We then had a brief 10-minute phone conversation as outlined above, whereby we both felt that she met all the criteria to participate in the research I am carrying out.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (*British Psychological Society, 2010*), my primary concern was to protect my participant from harm and preserve her autonomy and dignity. As such, in addition to the 10 minute phone conversation carried out at recruitment, prior to consenting to participation the participant was shown the recruitment form (Appendix A) once again, which encompassed the project aims, confidentiality procedures, time commitment expected, method of data collection and the right to refuse information or withdraw from the study. The BPS (2010) specifies: “*consent, whether in a verbal recording, electronic or hard copy form, should include an explicit statement confirming that information about the research has been given to the participant and has been understood*” (BPS 2010, p.19). Upon confirming that my participant understood all that was entailed in participating in my research project, she gave informed consent by signing a “consent to participate” form (Appendix B).

Additionally, as the topic I am researching is highly personal and may bring up some difficult feelings for my participant, a debriefing letter (Appendix C) was given to the participant containing my details as well as those of my primary supervisor and details on how to find a therapist through the UKCP and BPS registers should the interview have brought up any distress.

Furthermore, the BPS code of human research ethics suggests that psychologists undertaking research “*consider all research from the standpoint of the research participants, with the aim of avoiding potential risks to psychological well-being, mental health, personal values, or dignity*” (BPS 2010, p.11). As such, I asked my personal therapist to carry out a similar conversational interview on myself that I recorded and transcribed, in order to consider how each part of the process may feel for my participant and adjust protocol accordingly.

In considering how I would record and communicate the data collected from my participant, I took into account the BPS guidelines on confidentiality: “*participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be*

treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs” (BPS 2010, p. 22). Accordingly, the conversational interview was recorded digitally and stored on a password-protected file on my computer. I transcribed the interview myself and changed all identifying information about the participant. In addition, I was explicit about changing identifying details of significant others spoken about during the interviews (Etherington, 2004).

Answering the research question using Moustakas' 6 phases of heuristic inquiry: (1990, p. 27-37)

Below I will outline and expand on Moustakas' six-phase model with reference to my research question and how I moved back and forth between and through each stage.

1. Initial engagement

The task of the first phase is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications. The question lingers with the researcher, awaiting the disciplined commitment that will reveal its underlying meanings. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27)

The stage of 'initial engagement' began with the consideration of my research question and writing of my research proposal. It took me twelve months to get a clear sense of the phenomenon I am passionate about illuminating, one that has personal significance and I believe a wider social relevance. I arrived at my research question through considering how I experience life at present with regards to desiring to mother, and speaking to others who feel similarly. The more I considered my own experience as having some connection with others' experiences and wider social meanings, the more I became aware of connected conversations in the media, literature and art. Throughout these months I kept a research diary and a record of everything I have read, heard and watched, as well as the conversations I had that have brought about deeper understanding. This stage was the preparation required for

launching the process of discovery. When I completed my research proposal I sensed that I had begun to move out of the 'initial engagement' stage and into the immersion stage.

2. Immersion

Once the question is discovered and its terms defined and clarified, the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping and even dream states. The researcher is alert to all possibilities for meaning and enters fully into life with others wherever the theme is being expressed or talked about – in public settings, in social contexts, or in professional meetings. Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion.

(Moustakas, 1990, p.28)

The stage of immersion is "more of a being than a method of doing" (Moustakas, 1985, p.47). Douglass (1990) identified the main processes by which the researcher comes to a deeper understanding of the question as: 'identifying with the focus of enquiry', 'tacit knowing', 'focusing', 'indwelling', 'intuition', 'self-dialogue' and 'internal frame of reference'. During the immersion stage, through a combination of these experiences I gained a deeper sense of the structure and richness of the phenomenon I was exploring. The 'immersion' stage of my research overlapped with the 'initial engagement' stage. Throughout initial engagement I began to immerse myself in 'anything connected to my question', and therefore began to get a sense of the nuances of the experience and the breadth and reach of the phenomenon.

2.1 Acquisition phase

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) proposed an acquisition phase whereby the researcher actively sets out to acquire data that will shed light on the phenomenon. This stage situates itself in the immersion stage and is when data collection becomes useful. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggest that 'acquisition' begins at an unspecified point once the researcher has gained a clear sense of the research direction and what may be required to illuminate the phenomenon. The data collected through heuristic enquiry is "broadly construed to mean that which extends understanding of or adds richness to the knowing of the phenomenon in question" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p.48). Moustakas (1990) suggests "a typical way of gathering material in heuristic investigations" is in the "form of dialogues with oneself and one's research participants" (p.46). He further explains that these dialogues, ordinarily take the form of "genuine dialogue" rather than more structured "interviews",

permitting “ideas, thoughts, feelings and images to unfold and be expressed naturally”, with the inquiry deemed complete “only when the individual has had an opportunity to tell his or her story to a point of natural closing” (p.46).

As such, having immersed myself in varied expressions of the phenomenon, I set out to acquire data that may answer my research question through self-dialogue and dialogue with another person who could share their experience of the phenomenon with me. Moreover, as this research aims to contribute knowledge to the psychotherapeutic and counselling psychology community, I thought it most useful to show how the phenomenon is experienced on a personal level through a one on one interview that can illuminate the lived experiencing.

Data Collection

I recorded one session with my personal psychotherapist where we reflected conversationally on my own experience of the phenomenon of timing motherhood against the backdrop of considering career progression. This conversation gave me the opportunity to engage in “self-dialogue” and consider my own present place in the phenomenon in order to ensure the process of answering the research question remained reflective and heuristic. Additionally, I interviewed one woman who fit my inclusion criteria: between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-three, has a first degree, is working in a profession she defines as a career choice and identifies herself as desiring to mother. I aimed to keep the definition of ‘desiring to mother’ as open as possible in order to encourage the participant to talk about and describe their unique experience.

The conversational interview

Conversational interview or dialogue as a method for data collection is “most clearly consistent with the rhythm and flow of heuristic exploration and search for meaning” (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985, p. 47). As such, Lavery (2003) suggests that in heuristic enquiry the specific question asked is very open in nature, with the participant leading the follow up discussion. This form of interviewing is assumed to enable the interview process to stay as close to the lived experience as possible: “Dialogue involves cooperative sharing in which co-researchers and primary researchers open pathways to each other for explicating the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990. p, 47). Consequently, I aimed for the dialogue to be open and non-directive in order to give space for topics that felt most poignant for the

participant to emerge organically.

Additionally, I self-disclosed when appropriate throughout the interview in order to inspire “richer, fuller and more comprehensive depictions” (Moustakas, 1990, p.47), from the participant. This technique is in line with Moustakas’ conversational interview method whereby: “dialogue is the preferred approach in that it aims toward encouraging expression, elucidation, and disclosure of the experience being investigated” (Ibid). It was important to maintain a clear boundary around self-disclosure in the interview in order to avoid influencing the direction and information elicited. I planned to self-disclose only where I believed it could encourage the participant to open up an aspect of their experience they are struggling to explain by creating a sense of shared experience and understanding. The boundaries I maintained around self-disclosure are similar to those I maintain when working as a therapist, using self-awareness and reflection to ask myself whether self-disclosure would benefit the interview participant and therefore serve a productive purpose.

I met the participant at their work place at a time convenient for both of us. I had informed the participant that the conversation would take between 60 to 90 minutes and would need to be conducted in a space that could be confidential and undisturbed. The participant had booked a small meeting room for us to sit in and conduct the interview. Before beginning the interview I clarified once again the purpose of the study for the participant and asked her to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B), confirming that she understood what she was taking part in and consented to the recording of our interview. Once consent had been signed I began recording our conversation on an application on my iPad.

While the interview was not carried out in question and answer form, and in fact was structured more as a conversation- in keeping with the heuristic method- for clarity, throughout the interview I kept in mind the following broad questions as a guide to ensure I covered the different aspects of my research question.

1. How does she experience the desire to mother at present?
2. How important is her career at this point in her life?
3. What does being a mother mean to her?
4. What does being a career woman mean to her?
5. What does/did turning 30 mean to her?

I used my skills as a therapist to aid the conversational process, in order to ensure the participant felt able to express whatever was most pertinent to their experience and open up the finer nuances of her lived experience. My interventions were inspired by phenomenological interventions in an attempt to elicit well-rounded, comprehensive depictions of experience. For example (Appendix D):

- (00:07:03) *“What does “ready” look like for you?”*
- (00:11:17) *“Can you say more about that?”*
- (00:43:30) *“Hmm... When you say, work to be solid, what does that mean?”*

In many ways my experience of conducting the conversational interview felt similar to being in role as a therapist. While my skills as a therapist meant that it felt quite natural to be eliciting lived experience material from my participant and creating opportunities for her to open up as much as possible, this role may also have led to me forgetting my place as a researcher. As such, I found myself sporadically glancing at the points I had laid out in preparation, attempting to ensure we were covering what I was looking for without getting swept away with what felt like a session of psychotherapy. This experience showed me that the conversational interview elicits enough data without referring to the specific points I had written previously to keep in mind, brief glances or a recap at the end were enough to confirm that naturally and freely we had covered all angles through our dialogue.

Transcription

From the audio recording I transcribed the interview into a word document (Appendix D). I felt that it was important to try and depict long pauses and contemplation through my transcription, as these moments in dialogue depict a feeling around what is being talked about and therefore might contribute something at the analysis stage. I split my transcription into time chunks so that each part of the conversation is marked by which time in the recording it was said.

In order to ensure confidentiality, when transcribing the interview I blocked out all obvious identifying features such as name, age and occupation. Additionally, I asked the participant to specify which parts of their experience they would like to be kept confidential (e.g. partner’s gender, home town and specific career considerations). Following transcribing the interview I sent a copy to the participant to check that they gave permission for the information transcribed to be shared, the participant

responded with her explicit permission confirming that it felt like an accurate depiction of our conversation.

Upon completing the transcribing I felt that I was moving out of the acquisition phase, however I was aware that I may return to the broader immersion phase in a cyclical way as I began to consider analysing my data.

Incubation and Illumination (Data Analysis)

3. Incubation

Incubation is the process in which the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus on the question. This period allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside immediate awareness. Through the incubation process, the heuristic researcher gives birth to a new understanding or perspective that reveals additional qualities of the phenomenon, or a vision of its unity. (Moustakas, 1990, p.28-29)

4. Illumination

The process of illumination is one that occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition. The illumination as such is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities into themes inherent in the question. The illumination process may be an awakening to new constituents of experience, thus adding new dimensions of knowledge. (Moustakas, 1990, p.29)

I have combined the incubation and illumination phases as a way of attempting to show my process of data analysis and how it fits into the heuristic process. In keeping with the cyclical nature of the heuristic process, my experience showed me that the data analysis stage of my research could not fit tidily into one of the heuristic phases. The data analysis stage moves across the immersion, incubation and illumination stages of the research process, requiring the researcher to move back and forth between moments of clarity, feelings of not-knowing and new discovery with regards to the data. As such, trying to depict my process of analysis as sitting neatly in one phase felt insincere and inauthentic. Instead I believe that my initial stages of data analysis straddled both the incubation and illumination phases and therefore I explain below, under both these headings how I carried out data analysis in this study.

Analysis

I decided to embark on a purely heuristic research journey in order to maintain clarity and coherence throughout the process. I have therefore loosely been guided by Moustakas' (1990) *Outline Guide of Procedures for Analysis of Data* (p. 51) in order to create a type of structure in identifying "qualities and themes manifested in the data" (Moustakas, 1990, p.51). While this guide is more suited to wider research projects, I found its stages helpful in giving a framework for approaching the analysis of one conversational interview. In keeping with the heuristic attitude, my analysis was spontaneous and creative, evolving from a felt sense of how the analysis needed to proceed intuitively.

To begin with, Moustakas suggests entering "into the material in timeless immersion until it is understood" (Moustakas, 1990. p.51). As such, I read over the transcript of the interview several times and listened to the original recording repeatedly until I felt that I had a thorough sense of the experience as expressed by my participant. The incubation phase requires the researcher to step away from the data and leave a space for "new understanding or perspective" (p.51) to arise. My rereading, listening and stepping away from the data took close to 2 months. In these 2 months I experienced different feelings, images and conceptions of the experience of timing motherhood. In particular, I found myself returning to the experience of anxiety and the image and feeling of trying to reach a crucial deadline that was obstructed or unclear in some way. These feelings stayed with me throughout the process and became pertinent in my final findings.

Once I felt I had understood the core themes expressed by the participant I created an "individual depiction", this "individual depiction" summarized the experience as it was expressed by the participant, using examples and original language to illustrate the summary (ibid). My individual depiction took the form of an excel spreadsheet, outlining initial themes that I felt were expressed by the participant and labeling the exact point in the transcript where I believed the participant to be expressing each theme (Appendix E). Examples of such themes and their accompanying quotes are shown below.

Considering how I can live the most meaningful life.

00:11:36: *"Whereas for me, it's like... I genuinely feel like it is what I'm here to do... And I love my career, I love my career, love my job, I love my life without a baby... But I feel like there is something in me that has to do it, I have to do it... And it's kind of, it's like it's not even my choice, it's something that... It's a bit like when people say they have a faith in God or something, or whatever and they just know, and I kind of feel like that. I feel like it's just a knowledge for me that it has to happen and it will happen... In my life span."*

Uncertainty and unknown

00:22:40: *“Yeh, you don’t know how it’s going to work... you’ve got no idea if it’s going to work, and I don’t think, I don’t think a lot of people think... well I don’t know, I don’t know if a lot of people think that way... um... but it is a big worry factor in my head, if I wasn’t so worried about if I could, I don’t know... I don’t know... because I am worried about if I could so that makes it more of a desire, because I want to do it and I want to make sure it gets done, it’s like ticking a box... in a weird way... it’s something that has to happen, on my life path, so...”*

Following the creation of this individual depiction, I once again set aside the data “encouraging an interval of rest” in order to awaken “fresh energy and perspective” (Moustakas, 1990. p.51). According to Moustakas, this stage of the research process is one that is spontaneous and natural. I found myself contemplating the data frequently, feeling as though although I had managed to identify themes in my participant’s experience I hadn’t quite managed to make sense of all of the themes together in order to say something meaningful about the data. Through conversations with friends who identified with the experience and orientating myself to popular culture, art and literature connected to the phenomenon, I felt that while I was stepping away from my data I was also cyclically going back to the “immersion” and “incubation stages” in order to gain new understandings.

I found myself moving more clearly into the illumination phase following a conversation with a colleague. According to the heuristic process, *illumination* “is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities into themes inherent in the question” (Ibid, p.29). In my our conversation I mulled over where I had come with my research question so far, the various themes that had arisen and what they all might mean when considered together as a whole. At this point a unifying theme that seemed to bring together all of the themes became apparent, and I began to move back and forth between illumination and the next stage, Explication.

Findings

5. Explication

This involves a full examination of what has been awakened in consciousness. The researcher brings together discoveries of meaning and organises them into a comprehensive depiction of the essences of the experience. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31)

The explication phase enables the researcher to expand and explain the essences of the experience as discovered through the data collection phase, and move towards putting them together into a “whole experience” (p.31). The researcher is required to once again visit their own awareness, thoughts, feelings and judgements in order to create a clear and detailed explanation of the understandings reached. In this phase I first attempted to make sense of the data collected in the interview with my participant through a form of thematic analysis (figure 2). Subsequently, I revisited the transcript of my own interview on the topic carried out with my therapist and my research diary to date in order to reflect on where my experience of the phenomenon resonates and feels different to my participants, and how the research process has enabled a new understanding for me of the different experiential components of this phenomenon. This process is uniquely heuristic, requiring me as the researcher to put my whole self into the research journey, making my own world-view and new understandings central to the research findings.

Data Analysis

Following a period of incubation; moving back and forth between periods of engagement in the data and periods of stepping away and allowing the data to incubate mentally and emotionally, I came to a felt sense that there was a connecting theme that brought together all of the overarching themes discovered so far. It seemed that much of what had come out of the data connected in some way to a lived experience of anxiety; anxiety in the unknown, anxiety in meaning making and anxiety in temporality and finitude. For this reason, to try and give my analysis a sense of structure and a story I decided to organise the presentation of my interview data along these 3 anxiety related themes and tell the story of my participant’s lived experience through this lens.

In addition, when revisiting the transcript with these broad themes in mind I noticed that my participant’s experience of anxiety could further be shown to exist on different levels of lived experience sitting in the 4 existential worlds. As such, to give my data a further sense of structure and therefore clarity, I decided to use van Deurzen’s Structural Existential Analysis (SEA) (2014) as it “provides clear structures as a framework for investigation, so that the observations we make are systematic rather than haphazard or impressionistic and subjective” (van Deurzen, 2014, p.76). Van Deurzen maintains that SEA should not be used as a “map” for data analysis but instead should be employed as a “structural heuristic device to facilitate our

systematic observations” allowing the researcher “to be more thorough” (ibid, p.78). Indeed, SEA as a method acknowledges the complex nature of human lived experience, recognising that structures and tools for understanding that complexity can be helpful while not assuming that experience will fit neatly and tidily into such structures. As such, SEA provides “a framework that helps us place and locate the particular tensions a specific person is struggling with at any one point” (ibid).

Accordingly, I constructed a table (Appendix F) that depicts the 3 anxiety related themes along the top with the four existential worlds down one side. I then filled in the table with verbatim quotes from the participant interview transcript that show the participant’s expression of these themes and where they seem to sit in the 4 existential worlds. Additionally, I have attempted to summarise at the top of each column what existential theory or thinkers I believe these expressions hold a connection to and hence show the relationship between the theoretical underpinning of my analysis and the concrete lived experience. Through the creation of this depiction I felt that a clear picture could be shown of the different aspects of how the experience is lived. A simplified version of this table with examples of verbatim that express these different themes is shown below in *Figure 2*. In addition to these anxiety related themes, I attempt to show in my analysis below how the key terms in my research question: “having-it-all” and the age 30, are touched upon consistently across the findings.

I am both aware and reflective of the fact that this lens and structure for analysis comes from my worldview and own lived experience of the phenomenon. As a heuristic researcher I am always striving to be mindful of how my experience of the phenomenon impacts both how I make sense of the data and how I choose to depict the data. Additionally, in a cyclical sense, my findings impact my own knowing of the phenomenon and bring new understanding to my sense of the experience. As such, in conducting this analysis heuristically, I aim to persistently reference what I see in the data against my own experience of the phenomenon. To make this process possible and rigorous I will use the verbatim from the session I recorded of myself (Appendix G) talking to my psychotherapist about my own experience as comparison data.

ANXIETY

“The paradox of freedom and finiteness”

	Uncertainty	Meaning	Temporality / Finitude
Uberwelt (Considerations of larger existentials)	00:23:36 “Yeh... and that’s really stressful, because that’s like a... it’s like constant... you can’t just say, ok I’m going to quit my job on this day and go and do this, it’s not my choice...”	00:11:36 “Whereas for me, it’s like... I genuinely feel like it is what I’m here to do... And I love my career, I love my career, love my job, I love my life without a baby... But I feel like there is something in me that has to do it, I have to do it...”	00:29:30 “Up until that stage [30], you’re kind of, it’s a free for all, you can do what you want, you can go anywhere, you can be with whoever you want and then you get to the age and it’s like ok, well what the hell... if you want kids and you want a family you have to think about it and it becomes like this necessity...”
Mitwelt (The role of the social world / context)	00:09:51 “And it never really struck me, I never thought about the logistics of things like ... we’ve gone through our mortgage application, we know how much we can afford, but what happens when we have a baby? Like, how do we afford the mortgage then?”	00:09:51 “Yeh... I would like to be in a certain place... But not only that, I mean there are things like... We’re trying to buy a house and that’s just been a fucking nightmare... It’s so expensive and so hard to get on the ladder ... and ... And that’s kind of also in flux, and I’d want to have a nice house, like I’m very traditional... I want to be married, owning a home, before we have a baby...”	00:46:07 “Yeh... So it’s like ok well I want to be at the pinnacle of my career or the place that I really want to be at... It’s kind of like a goal, I’ve set myself this goal and I have to reach it before we start trying and... so I’ve basically put myself under immense amounts of pressure to get to this goal before September.”
Eigenwelt (Psychological)	00:34:55 “but yeh... it’s like a minefield, it’s like trying to work your way through a minefield, it’s like a maze, a mouse in a maze, um... and even though you have a husband or a partner... you’re kind of on your own because it’s your career, your desire, your passion and you have to decide, it’s not up to anybody else...”	00:13:35 “caring for something entirely is the most important thing in the whole world, and I have this big desire to do that, and I think a lot of that comes from... that I didn’t really have, I was never spoilt and I didn’t really have all the stuff that everybody else had.”	00:44:35 “... and I can’t be on fluoxetine and have a baby so that’s one whole situation, the second is that I’m also aware of post natal depression because depression runs in my family, um... so it’s kind of being pushed back and back and I’m thinking what am I going to do because I don’t want to be here when I’m on maternity, I want to be where I know I’m going to stay with my career when I go on maternity, so I’m now in this kind of race to get out before we start trying...”
Umwelt (Physical – the body and biology)	(00:22:00) And we’ve had conversations before where, she’s said don’t go into anything thinking about when you’re going to have a baby because you haven’t got a fucking clue where you’re going to be... um... and the same with houses, I was saying about houses and she was saying, well we thought we were going to have a baby in this house and we don’t even know		00:49:25 “...he was putting together this book on fertility, and some of the stuff, I remember him coming home one day and saying I cannot believe how fast our eggs, well your eggs deteriorate... 35 there’s a 70% chance that something will go wrong and how fast it goes to crap from 30 to 35, and so you kind of... don’t want to be in the danger zone, you want to be in the green bit and not in the red bit and the red bit is 30 to 35 and then you know... extreme... I

	any more! So... that's kind of thrown it into turmoil in another way and it also makes me want it more, because I think, what if I can't do it, what if it doesn't happen for me...		<i>don't even know what comes after that... so... I don't know..."</i>
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Anxiety

For the purpose of this analysis I will refer to the interviewee as Sarah which is not her real name but is an attempt to maintain the feel of a whole person without compromising her right to confidentiality.

Uncertainty

A recurring theme expressed by Sarah around her lived experience of timing motherhood seems to be a felt sense of uncertainty and unknowing. I gained a clear appreciation of her anxiety around the unknown nature of trying to plan and time motherhood while at the same time trying to make very definite decisions about her career progression. Sarah expresses the tension she experiences between her desire to plan and attempt to control the circumstances around becoming a mother and at the same time experiencing an awareness of the uncertainty of fertility and therefore timing conception.

In the following quote, Sarah shows her “worry” around her ability to conceive and her sense of not knowing when and if she will become a mother when she would like to:

(00:22:40) “Yeh, you don't know how it's going to work... you've got no idea if it's going to work, and I don't think, I don't think a lot of people think... well I don't know, I don't know if a lot of people think that way... um... but it is a big worry factor in my head, if I wasn't so worried about if I could, I don't know... I don't know... because I am worried about if I could so that makes it more of a desire, because I want to do it and I want to make sure it gets done, it's like ticking a box...”

She then continues to show how this uncertainty seems to impact the way she experiences other areas of her life, specifically career planning. A sense of anxiety is shown in the next quote as she explains how the uncertainty around when she will be able to conceive impacts how she feels about her ability to make decisions around her future career progression:

(00:23:36) “Yeh... and that’s really stressful, because that’s like a... it’s like constant... you can’t just say, ok I’m going to quit my job on this day and go and do this [have a baby], it’s not my choice... it’s my choice to say ok lets start trying, but that’s not to say that it’s another 3 years down the line before we do anything, so then do you carry on looking for jobs in the time that you’re trying? Do you sit pretty in the time that you’re trying? Do you just get on with your life? Am I stuck at fucking **** [current employer] while I’m trying or what... you know, what the hell do I do?”

Moreover, while Sarah has her own sense of anxiety in the uncertainty of timing motherhood, she also refers throughout our conversation to the impact of other women’s experiences on her understanding of the uncertainty. In the quote below she refers to a colleague who recently experienced a miscarriage and how watching her colleague’s experience has in some way validated or supported her own sense of uncertainty and anxiety to make plans:

(00:22:00) “And we’ve had conversations before where, she’s [colleague] said don’t go into anything thinking about when you’re going to have a baby because you haven’t got a fucking clue where you’re going to be... um... and the same with houses, I was saying about houses and she was saying, well we thought we were going to have a baby in this house and we don’t even know any more! So... that’s kind of thrown it into turmoil in another way and it also makes me want it more, because I think, what if I can’t do it, what if it doesn’t happen for me...”

In moving back and forth between the data and my own experience of the phenomenon, it became clear to me that Sarah’s expressions of anxiety in uncertainty resonated with my own. The extract below is taken from the session I recorded of myself speaking to my psychotherapist about my experience of the phenomenon. This extract shows a similar anxiety in the uncertainty and unknown nature of timing motherhood while at the same time attempting to make career decisions:

(00:04:47) Me: “Well... it’s still that thing about private practice not being enough for me, wanting to do another job, I’m looking at jobs... but very much still thinking – oh but what if I get pregnant... and you know, thinking about maternity leave, or not wanting to take on a job to just leave a few months later and let people down, um... But also knowing that just being in private practice at the moment isn’t really enough for me...”

Finitude and temporality

The experienced anxiety in the uncertain nature of the phenomenon seems intrinsically linked to the inevitable finitude of fertility. For all women fertility has an end point, we are aware that there will come a time when conceiving and carrying a child will no longer be biologically viable. Yet, while we are aware that this time will come, exactly when it will be upon us is unknown and unknowable with any sureness. For this reason, there seems to be anxiety expressed by Sarah and

experienced by myself around a sense of time passing, the inevitability of this finitude and therefore an anxiety in the experience of aging and temporality. In particular, age 30 has come to hold some significance for Sarah when conceptualising this anxiety. Age 30 was also significant for me in considering timing motherhood and hence shaped the research question I found myself wanting to ask. As such, Sarah references this age as a marker for her own positioning and understanding of where she is in her experience of the phenomenon. The extracts below shows how Sarah conceptualises age 30 alongside the finitude of her fertility:

(00:27:31) *“Yeh... um... there is the fear, the ever growing fear that once you hit 30 your ovary’s start to die, and everybody tells you this and everybody is screaming it and you get your mother who’s from the baby boomers generation who’s convinced of it, and is very much; you know you should really start thinking about it now. And it’s kind of... I think for most women is like it’s an age, you get to that age and people start to ask “are you thinking about kids” or “why aren’t you thinking about kids” and it’s kind of the pressure around that age and I don’t think it would be there if it wasn’t for science and if it wasn’t for the fact that our ovaries are starting to die at 32-35 and you kind of know that at 30, if stuff goes to shit you’ve got 2 years before it’s really gone to shit to really try, otherwise, you know if you’re at 34 and you’re having IVF you’ve got less of a chance than if you’re 30 and having IVF, so there’s like a time stamp age limit.”*

(00:46:57) *“Yes... 30 is like, it really is like D-Day, it is like ... that’s it, whatever stage I’m at in career, whatever stage I’m at in my life, that is the deadline, and I have to start trying at that point, and if I’m not... I wanted to be pregnant at 30, and if I’m not at least trying... that’s just not... that’s not ever... it’s just been my.. it’s just been... 30.”*

Sarah shows how her age connects her to her own temporality. Age 30 seems to act as a marker and symbol in giving her a heightened sense of urgency in her decision around timing motherhood. In our conversation Sarah explains how at this particular point in her life she feels as though all decisions need to be made quickly as there is a sense of time running out with the perceived deadline of age thirty hanging over her:

(00:46:07) *“Yeh... So it’s like ok well I want to be at the pinnacle of my career or the place that I really want to be at... It’s kind of like a goal, I’ve set myself this goal and I have to reach it before we start trying and... so I’ve basically put myself under immense amounts of pressure to get to this goal before September, even though September is probably not when we’ll start trying anyway, so... but I’m 30 next June...”*

Throughout our conversation Sarah expresses this felt sense of a deadline, and the resulting pressure she experiences as a result. Age thirty is conceptualised as a fertility marker, an age by which she feels her chances of conceiving a child will drop dramatically and for this reason the opportunity must be seized before the

deadline. Moreover, Sarah's idea of the way in which childrearing and having a career interact and can co-exist lead her to feel that her career must reach a "pinnacle" before she has a child. It seems that she believes this pinnacle must be reached in order to ensure the greatest possible career prospects following having a baby and maternity leave. This sense of a career pinnacle needing to be reached before becoming a mother is one that resonated with my own experience, as shown below in an extract from my own verbatim:

(00:33:07) Me: *"That's why I don't want to get all encompassed by a baby at this point because I just know this final push (excuse the pun)... That I've just got to like push out this final piece of work before I push out another human being..."*

Indeed, such a feeling connects to the notion of "trying to have-it-all" in my research question. I felt that this was a term that summed up the feeling I had around the experience of timing motherhood while prioritising a career, the notion that I could find a way to somehow feel that I was "having-it-all" and not compromising in one area of my life. However, the feeling that came from Sarah in our conversation and my own experience seems to suggest that while we feel that we can try and juggle the roles of motherhood and working women, we also have an underlying suspicion that to fulfil either to the best of our ability, one must suffer. This sentiment is expressed by Sarah and myself in the following extracts:

(00:30:00) *"Um... And some of the best career women I've seen just don't have kids, they just don't do it..."*

(00:29:55) Me: *"like I haven't compromised anything... like I've got it all... Like, oh I managed to get the doctorate, and have a baby... and you know, that definitely is part of the "sorts of women" I look up to... .. Even though on an intellectual level, I really don't believe in "having-it-all", in that kind of Hollywood way, like you do have to make compromises, and you're never going to be... If I choose to be a mum I'm never going to be what I could have been if I didn't choose to be a mum, but I'm also, if I didn't choose to be a mum wouldn't be the mum I could have been..."*

Meaning

Throughout our conversation Sarah expresses a desire to mother that seems grounded in conceptualising motherhood as a life project that she feels is meaningful and essential. Sarah speaks about motherhood as a role that she believes would give her life ultimate purpose and is *"what [she] is here to do"* (00:11:36). In our conversation she explains her anxiety around the possibility of not becoming a mother due to either missing her opportunity as a result of career decisions or physically not being able. This feeling is demonstrated in the following extract:

00:11:36 *“Whereas for me, it’s like... I genuinely feel like it is what I’m here to do... And I love my career, I love my career, love my job, I love my life without a baby... But I feel like there is something in me that has to do it, I have to do it...”*

While this sentiment seems fairly straightforward, Sarah goes on to show how difficult and complex deciding how to live a life that feels meaningful is for her. She expresses the anxiety inherent in her grappling between a career and motherhood in terms of the fulfilment she believes each role will give her. When Sarah expresses the importance she places on fulfilling the role of mother at the same time as feeling good about her career, I gained a clear understanding of her struggling with the questions and decisions around how she can live the most meaningful life. This grappling is shown in the following extract:

00:26:13 *“and while I’m sure that changes once you’ve had a baby because you think oh I’ve got something more important in life, I don’t want that, I want to have a career, I want to have something for me, and I’ve not spent my whole life working towards something to give up, like I will fight through this... um, and... and I don’t know, I don’t know how it’s possible, I don’t know how, I don’t know anyone who has said they’re going to be a certain way and stuck with it after having a baby...”*

This experience of anxiety in meaning making is one that resonated with my own experience of the phenomenon. In particular I am aware that this particular theme points to the notion of “having-it-all”, a key term in my research question. The idea that women should be able to “have-it-all” has often implied that a combination of motherhood and career is the ultimate in meaningful female existence. I have been aware that my own experience of timing motherhood has been impacted by such a notion, with the underlying assumption being that to be *just* one or the other will not provide me with the ultimate experience of fulfilment that I seek, much like Sarah. My own experienced pressure to not “just” be a mum, and find the most meaningful life is shown in the extract below taken from my own verbatim:

00:16:35 *Me: Yeh, or just that I, you know this whole timing of it is that like – if I was a counselling psychologist, a doctor like by the time I give birth, at least when people say what do you do, at least I can say “oh I’m a counselling psychologist”, well you know now I can say I’m a psychotherapist, which would you know, which makes it good, which makes it kind of acceptable if I’m not working for a bit while I’m child rearing. But there is this bit of me that thinks, well I’d like to be as qualified as I’m going to be by the time a baby comes along so that at least I’ve got that and I can be this other thing as well...*

6. Creative synthesis

The researcher in entering this process is thoroughly familiar with all the data in its

major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as a whole. The researcher puts the components and core themes usually into the form of creative synthesis expressed as a narrative account, a report, a thesis, a poem, story, drawing, painting, etc. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31)

The creative synthesis part of the heuristic process began to take form when I felt I truly had a sense of the different themes and parts of the phenomenon as expressed by my participant and experienced by myself. In considering the felt sense of this phenomenon creatively I found myself thinking mostly in images, metaphors and similes. Imagery, metaphor and simile are techniques that I find helpful, illuminating and connecting when working with clients as a psychotherapist. I have experienced profound moments of connection and understanding with clients when I have shared a metaphor or image that attempts to express an element of the feeling or experience of the phenomenon they are sharing with me. Indeed, it has been found that clients in successful therapies develop a core metaphorical theme in relation to the main issues of therapy, and as such emotional communication is aided through the use of imagery metaphors (e.g. Bayne & Thompson, 2000; Kopp, 1995; Levitt, Yifaht, & Angus, 2000). Indeed, I have found through my work as a psychotherapist that translating lived experience into digestible imagery or metaphor can communicate the feeling of the experience in a way that makes sense without the need for complex understanding of each of the various constituents of the phenomenon.

Consequently, as my creative synthesis I wrote a short piece of prose that attempts to show what I feel has been expressed by myself and my participant as the essence of the lived experience of timing motherhood against the backdrop of making career choices around age 30:

She knew that living would only make sense to her if she could find the hidden treasure at the end of the race. However, the message came through in such a vague dreamlike state that she could not remember how long she had to complete the race and she could not see clearly where the finish line was. This haziness worried her and left her with a nervousness in the pit of her stomach. For now, she knew that something needed to be discovered in order to find the

treasure. Finding what needed to be done was vital for her existence.

Validation of the heuristic inquiry

Following the final stage of the research process, creative synthesis, I once again returned to the data with the synthesis in mind in order to check accuracy. I sent my participant the expression of creative synthesis in order to gain feedback and suggestions for adjustments. This added hermeneutic circle provided the final opportunity to ensure that my expression is real and accurate. This part of the process was important in terms of the epistemology of the approach. I was interested in illuminating personal experience as it is lived, as such interpretation cannot contribute anything meaningful to this process and it was therefore important that my participant resonated with the synthesis.

In addition, I used Yardley's (2000) evaluative criteria to continuously assess the validity of my research. Yardley proposes evaluating the validity of qualitative psychological research in terms of four criteria: sensitivity to context, completeness of data collection, analysis and interpretation, reflexivity and how important the research is in terms of practical and theoretical utility.

Discussion

Reflexivity

I am aware that this is a research question that is meaningful and important for my own life. At the time of undertaking this pilot study I was thirty-one years old and considering motherhood against the backdrop of my career aspirations, attempting to make a plan and realising the implications of this decision. It is the encompassing experience of this choice that led me to my research question and to an exploration of how it is experienced by others. Therefore, I was constantly aware of my inherent link to my research question as a woman who fits all of the criteria for participating as co-researcher and the researcher who came upon the question through personal exploration. I was aware that I had pre-existing assumptions regarding the experience I was attempting to illuminate and have aimed to be as explicit as possible throughout my research about these assumptions.

In order to maintain constant personal awareness and reflect on the biases that arise throughout my work, I began a reflexive journal at the beginning of my research

journey. Research that proceeds heuristically requires the presence of the researcher's whole self and an openness to being changed personally by the findings.

My personal journey, through undertaking this pilot study and moving towards a model and mapping of the experience, was one of illumination and greater clarity. As a woman who wanted children and had a sense of urgency and anxiety in relation to my temporality, interviewing Sarah and analysing her lived experience moved me towards a deeper understanding of my own and the varied components of the lived experience. I felt changed by the research, able to articulate my position with a new sense of calm and clarity.

Limitations of Study

This study was limited in scope by virtue of being a pilot study and therefore only reflective of one person's deeper experience in a specific situation. In particular, it was limited to a very specific group's experience of desiring to mother, which was the research question, but limits the reach of the findings since they may only apply to women in the same very specific circumstance.

A less limited study on a similar experience could look at women in varied other circumstances in terms of their desire to mother and consider the existential themes that arise.

Implications for future research and practice

The findings of this pilot study open up new areas for future research. More philosophical and phenomenological research could be carried out on the lived experience of the themes that arose as experienced by women. It would be of interest to research other phenomena that bring up reflections connected to women's experiences of uncertainty, meaning, temporality and finitude. In particular, connected experiences to timing motherhood, such as pregnancy, infertility, trying to get pregnant and new motherhood may provide rich insights into how women's experiences connect them specifically to these existential themes.

Future research could also be carried out on the experience of men at different points in their parenting journey, to understand where there are similarities and differences along the way in order to create more specific support for both men and women navigating new parenthood.

In addition, this research could be enriched and contextualised by carrying out research on different groups of women considering becoming mothers. In order to add to the body of knowledge around the experience of desiring to mother, it would be valuable to understand the experience from the perspective of those who know they cannot have biological children, single women who feel time is running out, gay women, transgender women and women without careers. In addition, broadening the scope to encompass different groups in terms of income level, race, religion and culture to understand deeper the nuanced experiences of women would be beneficial.

The hope is that through increasing our understanding of the ways in which women experience different parts of their lives, we as psychotherapeutic practitioners can better support and explore the impact of the experience which may present itself as anxiety, low mood or larger existential anxiety.

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Appendix A – Participant Recruitment

As part of my doctorate in counselling psychology and psychotherapy, I am seeking participants to take part in my research project. My research topic is: trying to “have it all” at 30: how professional women experience the tension between desiring to mother and career progression.

Participant criteria

- Are you a woman between the ages of 28-33?
- Are you a graduate?
- Are you working in or towards a profession that you experience as a career choice?
- Do you wish to be a mother and currently have no children?

If you answer yes to these questions, and are interested in taking part please read more about the study in the attached information or get in touch with me via e-mail or phone using the details below.

Naomi Magnus
Naomi@northlondon-therapy.co.uk
07984 678096

Appendix B – Consent Form

Middlesex University School of Health and Social Sciences
Psychology Department
Written Informed Consent

Title of study and academic year: *A heuristic exploration into the lived experience of trying to “have it all” at 30: how professional women experience the tension between desiring to mother and career progression against the backdrop of the finitude of their fertility. 2014-2015*

Researcher: Naomi Magnus

Supervisor (*only for students*): Dr Rosemary Lodge & Dr Patricia Bonnici

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 provide my consent that this might occur.

Print name

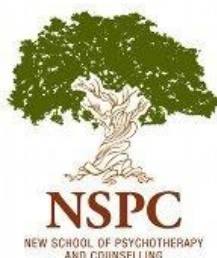
Sign Name

date: _____

Please tick here if you consent to the recording of your interview being kept for up to 3 years following interview for possible use in radio broadcast (you would be contacted again should this occur): _____

To the participants: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Social Sciences 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 C – Debriefing Form



A heuristic exploration into the lived experience of trying to “have it all” at 30: how professional women experience the tension between desiring to mother and career progression against the backdrop of the finitude of their fertility.



NSPC Ltd
61-63 Fortune Green Road,
London NW6 1DR

Middlesex University

The Burroughs
London NW4 4BT

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in my research project. Your contribution is invaluable and much appreciated.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me at: naomi@northlondon-therapy.co.uk, or: 07984 678 096. I will be available for you to contact up to 6 months following this interview.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study, you may contact my supervisors:
Dr Rosemary Lodge at: rosemary.lodge@virginmedia.com and Dr Patricia Bonnici at: pbonnici@gmail.com.

Or

The Principal
NSPC Ltd.
61-63 Fortune Green Road,
London NW6 1DR
Admin@nspc.org.uk
0044 (0) 20 7624 0471

If you have found any part of this process distressing, or our interview brought up some thoughts or feelings you feel you would like to talk through with a therapist, please find some useful links below to websites where you will be able to access the right support.

- The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy:
<http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/>
- The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy:
<http://www.bacpregister.org.uk/>
- The British Psychological Society: <http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist>

Many thanks,
Naomi Magnus

Appendix D - Transcribed Interview

00:00:28	Interviewer: Ok, to start off why don't you say a little bit about what drew you to contact me and to participate and just a bit about you... Anything you think is relevant.
00:00:35	Interviewee: Um... Well it was forwarded on to me by ****, and **** and I have spoken countless times about babies and careers and how you juggle everything and genuinely having no idea how people do it... And I just, I don't know I find it interesting to talk about... it's a very interesting topic. And I constantly read features on it and I think it's interesting to explore it... Also – I've never been given the opportunity to explore it from my perspective, because it's not something that my husband and I have really discussed on a serious serious level ... Um... It's always kind of... <i>when we're ready</i> ... as opposed to – ok we're ready now lets start trying and... you know... so it's interesting to be able to talk about it.

00:01:31	Interviewer: Mmm... So you mentioned your husband ...
00:01:36	Interviewee: Yeh... so we got married last September ... Um... and... yeh it was kind of... it was a whirlwind romance I guess ... we met... at the end of 2011, but we didn't actually start seeing each other until 2012, and then we were dating... we hadn't seen each other since, and then we were seeing each other for 5 weeks and then I went off to Borneo for 4 months on a volunteer expedition and we got engaged as soon as I got home... So it was really really whirlwind. We spent 2 years engaged... then got married last September in London...
00:02:21	Interviewer: Mmm... and was family part of that discussion... sort of, when you...
00:02:27	Interviewee: Yeh... I mean... We had, when I came back from Borneo actually, we had a... and accidental pregnancy... well not an accident, just carelessness... as most of the accidental ones are... Um... And, that was a really strange time because it was kind of... we were discussing, is this right for us now? Um... What are we doing? And, I had kind of... I was not in the place. And, we were kind of set on having an abortion and just leaving it, and I was kind of OK with that... ish... um... and then it turned – I had a miscarriage – and it turned out to be ectopic and I was rushed into hospital and it was... they almost took out my fallopian tube and then once I was wheeled down to surgery, it just so happened that the top gynaecological surgeon in the UK was there that day and she said: <i>"I think we should just watch this and see if it... reabsorbs"</i> ... because they often do if they've already died... so she said <i>I want to keep you on watch</i> , and because I lived up the road it was fine... yeh they just watch it, and the hormone levels went down and yeh... it was done. But that was very weird... cos... I almost felt like I hadn't made the choice and that the choice was taken and that made it really harder, that made it a lot harder... And it was shit for a good year... a good year and a bit... um... and I had really bad... actually what turned out to be post natal depression from it. So I had really bad hormonal fluctuations from when I miscarried up until the following July, August time ... And I was just going nuts and I didn't understand why and then I went to see a hormone specialist and he said it's more likely that it's similar to post natal depression, except you didn't have a baby so ... um... but that kind of made it really real, and that actually made my desire for a baby a lot stronger... when you feel yourself... when you feel pregnant, you know you're pregnant... like I just knew and I did a test because I just knew ... And I hadn't ever really thought about it until then. And then since then... We've discussed it and we've talked about it and we've kind of said He made a promise to me that we would have a baby before I turned 30... And, I'm 29 in June... <i>(laughing)</i> ... Um... Doesn't give us much time...
00:05:31	Interviewer: What was it about 30 for you?
00:05:33	Interviewee: I kind of... when I saw... when I spoke to the gynaecological surgeon at the time she said, <i>we don't know if the fallopian tube works...</i> because obviously that was the first time I had been pregnant and she said <i>there's no telling if it does or if it doesn't, we couldn't tell you anyway because we don't know how they work, so even if we did surgery and had a look we still wouldn't know...</i> um... and she said <i>and if that one doesn't work there's no telling whether the other one does.</i> So... she kind of said <i>if you are going to start trying, try sooner rather than later because... one problem doesn't necessarily mean another might come along... sort of just so that you're aware that it might do...</i> um... and on that day that we were discharged we kind of agreed that we'd have to bring it forward... And that has been pushed back a little bit and a little bit at a time...
00:06:30	Interviewer: When you said bring forward... So what was it before then?

00:06:33	Interviewee: So before then it would have been 27/28 and I was what... 26 at the time so I was thinking I'd have it a lot sooner... And life kind of just got in the way and we got married and ... and actually it's been good because I don't feel ready, and I don't think we're ready, but I do have this panic in my head of when am I gonna be ready and when is this going to work and is it going to work and what about my job and.. how are we going to afford this ...
00:07:03	Interviewer: What does "ready" look like for you?...
00:07:07	Interviewee: Well I am... As of last August... I've been through therapy my whole life, different types of therapy – mainly CBT and I've found CBT to be kind of useless in my case, so in August I decided to try psychotherapy and it's changed my life and made me a much calmer... And far more in touch with who I really am, because I think, I had a really funny childhood in that I kind of was being someone I wasn't and that went into my adult life and I've had to kind of address the child and reassess who is really me... um... and it's not been long, you know it's only been since August so there's a long way to go yet, but it's made a big difference and it's made me understand how far I am away from being... I guess – content ... on a level playing field... I'm someone that very much likes to just throw everything in and sod of to Australia for 2 years and just go on a whim...
00:08:22	Interviewer: So you're quite impulsive?
00:08:23	Interviewee: Yeh, very impulsive and I think that has actually been a huge part of my depression and all the problems I've had and I've used that to self treat myself ... um... and I actually started on – even though my psychotherapist didn't want me to – I've started on Prozac last week... so I was on citalopram for years when I was younger but that didn't really do anything for me, so last week I started on Prozac because I was just in such a bad way... And it's been a really long time... working through everything has basically made my depression... I can't self soothe anymore because I'm aware of it, so it's kind of always there and I can't buy things or go away ... that won't help it... so... um... so yeh... and it's... you know, it's very early days so I don't know if it will work but I feel relieved to not have to struggle through every day at the moment... So for me it doesn't feel like the best time to be having a baby ...
00:09:38	Interviewer: So... when you say ready... You're referring to your, kind of psychological wellbeing...(Yeh) And mental state... (Yeh) I might be putting words in your mouth... But you feel like you want to be in a certain place...
00:09:51	Interviewee: Yeh... I would like to be in a certain place... But not only that, I mean there are things like... We're trying to buy a house and that's just been a fucking nightmare... It's so expensive and so hard to get on the ladder ... and ... And that's kind of also in flux, and I'd want to have a nice house, like I'm very traditional... I want to be married, owning a home, before we have a baby... And it never really struck me, I never thought about the logistics of things like ... we've gone through our mortgage application, we know how much we can afford, but what happens when we have a baby? (00:10:26) Like, how do we afford the mortgage then? It's all very well saying, ok we can afford 1500 a month now between the 2 of us, but... if we then have a baby, that brings it down to nothing for however long. So, all those things I was not prepped for and I don't feel like I've figured out a way of doing it yet. I think if I had figured out how people do it... it doesn't seem feasible, it seems like it's so expensive and so tiring that I don't know how people do it ... (00:11:07) And it's weird because I have this absolute desire and need to have a baby, and like this... My whole body screams for it...
00:11:17	Interviewer: Can you say more about that?
00:11:19	Interviewee: Yes, I don't know I guess...

00:11:21	Interviewer: Where that comes from and you're understanding of that...
00:11:22	Interviewee: That's a very interesting question... I don't know, I mean it's interesting because **** (<i>husbands name</i>), my husband **** he's, he doesn't have that ...
00:11:35	Interviewer: How old is he?
00:11:36	Interviewee: He's 33, and he doesn't have that kind of... He sees it as a logical thing, for him it is a logical step and yes he would like to have one but, he's not really that bothered... You know... Whereas for me, it's like... I genuinely feel like it is what I'm here to do... And I love my career, I love my career, love my job, I love my life without a baby... But I feel like there is something in me that has to do it, I have to do it... And it's kind of, it's like it's not even my choice, it's something that... It's a bit like when people say they have a faith in god or something, or whatever and they just know, and I kind of feel like that. I feel like it's just a knowledge for me that it has to happen and it will happen... In my life span.
00:12:35	Interviewer: So, could you say what being a mother means to you?
00:12:41	Interviewee: Um... .. Everything... Everything. I think, through my psychotherapy I've realised how many mistakes my parents made, and I know that my parents loved me more than anything in the world and did everything they could that they thought was best, but I still came out the other side with a whole bunch of issues because they did things their way and not necessarily how I should have been treated or looked after and all the rest of it... um... but I guess being a mother to me is going through that journey, understanding and trying to be... (00:13:35) caring for something entirely is the most important thing in the whole world, and I have this big desire to do that, and I think a lot of that comes from... that I didn't really have, I was never spoilt and I didn't really have all the stuff that everybody else had. And it's the same when I'm with my nieces, I just want to spend all my time with them. And whenever they're like, oh I want to buy this or can I have this, it takes everything in me not to buy it and be like, you've got enough stuff. I don't know, I guess it's rectifying what I didn't have... In a very odd sense...
00:14:13	Interviewer: So it's kind of set in the context of your own family...
00:14:15	Interviewee: Yeh, to me yeh... and I think ... um ... I think I'd be a really good mum, like I really do think I'd be a good mum, I think... There was a stage when I really worried I wouldn't be a good mum, and actually through my psychotherapy I've realised, I'd be a really good mum, and I think **** would be a great dad and I think we're a really good team for it... So... I'm just really excited, I'm really excited. And I'm actually excited about not being able to sleep, and I'm excited about getting up in the middle of the night to feed every bloody 2 hours and never getting a chance to do anything for myself... Like I know that sounds nuts and to anyone else... Especially to men, that sounds absolutely nuts, but to me, I can't wait... genuinely cannot wait. I look forward to getting the size of a house and worrying about my arse and how big my arse is and I look forward to having emotional melt downs over it, because I'll have this person and that out weighs everything ...
00:15:23	Interviewer: Mmm... So, that kind of very clearly describes this kind of determination, or real strong desire to become a mum... So where does the career stuff come into it?... You said your career's really important to you...

00:15:38	Interviewee: Yeh... So I... I mean, I wanted to be a writer since I was a kid and I have worked with software and digital since I was a kid and they're two really big parts of me, I'm a massive geek, I love it and...
00:15:57	Interviewer: Which bit do you love?
00:15:58	Interviewee: Just being a geek, and being able to embrace that on a daily basis and say ok lets do something really cool with technology and lets do something new and... um... or something really fun with social...
00:16:11	Interviewer: Can you just say briefly what you do?
00:16:13	Interviewee: Yeh, so I am... I head up social with ****, although she takes the brunt of it and then I'm also showbiz editor for the **** celebrity site... um... the showbiz editor stuff I really hate, I'm so bored of it because I've done that for almost 10 years, I did that at **** before and it was not what I wanted to get into, but the social stuff and the technology side of stuff I love, absolutely love... um... but yeh, I wanted to be a writer since I was a kid, and I... It was what I set out to do from the youngest age of 6 I think it was, and ... um... I went to uni and did journalism, and I came out of uni, got a job in journalism, and I kind of worked my way up to the easiest route, um... and I feel like I'm really good at my job, I'm really good at my job, I know exactly how people think to be able to understand SEO, and I understand how social works better than most people, and... I... you know... can code in HTML and CSF, and that's something that not a lot of people in my level can do, and ... I don't want to let that go... I absolutely love it, I love the thrill of making something work, or having a big win, like an article goes viral or something, that's a big part of me, I'm very competitive and to me that's part of my career, and also I know, I kind of know that I can do better, I know that I can move up to the next level and work in one of the other big 3 company's in silicone valley and that's like the goal, and I almost feel like if I have a baby, that totally scuppers that....
00:18:16	Interviewer: How is that the goal?
00:18:17	Interviewee: Well for me, my goal from **** was to either work at facebook, apple or google, um... and... the next obvious step from ****, I mean that's been my goal since I was working at **** on day 1 and **** was the step towards that, and then from **** would be one of those, but I'm kind of at this position where, if I don't get a job there soon... I'm kind of screwed because once I have a baby... that's fucked... like that's over. Because, firstly I know that everyone's mentality changes every time they have a child, I cannot tell you how many friends I have who are like; yeh totally career, 100%, and then they have a baby and they just don't care anymore, and I don't know how I'm going to respond... I kind of assume I'll be like everyone else and not really care anymore, but I don't want to say that, I would like to... I'd like to carry on having a job, I mean I'd need to carry on having a job.... Um... But I'd like to not have to be fighting for a position at one of those companies with a baby, because that's not going to be easy...
00:19:41	Interviewer: So you mean, not trying to get a job in one of those company's after you've had a baby?
00:19:47	Interviewee: Mmmm... I would rather be there, and then take a break and have a baby and go back to there, because firstly I know that I would love it there and secondly... um... you can then focus on really enjoying what you're doing as opposed to focussing on where you're going next.
00:20:06	Interviewer: Mmm, so it sounds like you're thinking quite strategically time wise...

00:20:11	Interviewee: Yeh, very strategically, and I don't think, I mean I don't even know... I always talk to **** (husband) about this and he's just like: it doesn't work that way, and I thought it kind of did...
00:20:25	Interviewer: What doesn't work that way?
00:20:26	Interviewee: So, you can't really be strategic about... .. what you're doing, because what happens when you go back and then you've got to pay the childcare for the hours that you're back, and if I wanted to completely give it all up and be a mum that's not acceptable in our family...
00:20:48	Interviewer: How do you mean not acceptable?
00:20:49	Interviewee: Well it's not something... I don't think **** (husband) would be happy with that, I think he would find that too much pressure so we have agreed that I would work, but that ...
00:21:03	Interviewer: Oh, so financially it's not acceptable...
00:21:04	Interviewee: Yeh, so that puts pressure... he also knows that I am very career led and so I will go nuts if I say ok I'm giving it all up ... um ... because when I've not had jobs before I've gone absolutely crazy. I'm a hugely passionate person for me I need to be throwing myself into something... um... but also watching **** (colleague) have her miscarriage was... like... so... I mean it was heart breaking to watch and it's been heart breaking to watch her whole journey, and it kind of actually really opened my eyes up to what I could be in for, because I've had that sort of experience before, though nothing like hers... um... and that's made me realise... (00:22:00) And we've had conversations before where, she's said don't go into anything thinking about when you're going to have a baby because you haven't got a fucking clue where you're going to be... um... and the same with houses, I was saying about houses and she was saying, well we thought we were going to have a baby in this house and we don't even know any more! So... that's kind of thrown it into turmoil in another way and it also makes me want it more, because I think, what if I can't do it, what if it doesn't happen for me...
00:22:31	Interviewer: So there's a big what if... So while thinking quite strategically, there's also kind of an awareness that actually you don't know...
00:22:40	Interviewee: Yeh, you don't know how it's going to work... you've got no idea if it's going to work, and I don't think, I don't think a lot of people think... well I don't know, I don't know if a lot of people think that way... um... but it is a big worry factor in my head, if I wasn't so worried about if I could, I don't know... I don't know... because I am worried about if I could so that makes it more of a desire, because I want to do it and I want to make sure it gets done, it's like ticking a box... in a weird way... it's something that has to happen, on my life path, so... .. the question is where, but if I'm not deciding where because my body won't let me then it throws everything into flux...
00:23:28	Interviewer: Hmm... So you're aware that you may not be in control... While kind of making decisions to feel...
00:23:36	Interviewee: Yeh... and that's really stressful, because that's like a... it's like constant... you can't just say, ok I'm going to quit my job on this day and go and do this, it's not my choice... it's my choice to say ok lets start trying, but that's not to say that it's another 3 years down the line before we do anything, so then do you carry on looking for jobs in the time that you're trying? Do you sit pretty in the time that you're trying? Do you just get on with your life? Am I stuck at fucking **** [current employer] while I'm trying or what... you know, what the hell do I do? And this is not something that I can bring up with **** [husband] for example because he's very logical and so his thought process would be, ok well you carry on with life as normal and then when we want to start trying, start trying and

	everything will fall into place... and that is not how a woman's, well my mind works, it is very much, well we don't know any of that so I can't sit there saying to facebook oh yeh I'm totally signed onto this and then I sign up and a month later I'm pregnant, (00:24:50) that's the worst thing because that just kills my career...
00:24:55	Interviewer: How, how do you – wait how can I ask this question... um, when you said that just kills your career... where does that assumption come from?
00:25:05	Interviewee: The assumption that I have seen women go for maternity leave and come back and A, either not be treated the same way or B, not been able to put in the same amount of hours or effort or C, don't want to and a lot of it is the way everybody else treats women who've come back from maternity leave and in the time frame that they're gone it's kind of this assumption that they're gone forever and that they're not coming back or when they do come back they'll be on a 9-3pm and that will be it and so I assume that things will change hugely because I've not seen a single person come back and do it normally... even Marissa Meyer's got a crèche in her office because she can, but the rest of us can't so, so what do you do?
00:26:02	Interviewer: Mmm, so you're aware that if you, whenever it happens, whatever job you're coming back to, it's not going to be the same when you come back... - Yeh – And you won't be able to put in the same effort and commitment...
00:26:13	Interviewee: Yeh, and I don't like that, I really don't like that, and while I'm sure that changes once you've had a baby because you think oh I've got something more important in life, I don't want that, I want to have a career, I want to have something for me, and I've not spent my whole life working towards something to give up, like I will fight through this... um, and... and I don't know, I don't know how it's possible, I don't know how, I don't know anyone who has said they're going to be a certain way and stuck with it after having a baby, so not only is there all this pressure from everybody around you.... Um... but also from yourself, you just don't know how you're going to react...
00:27:09	Interviewer: Mmm... you mentioned 30 as something that you and your husband had said... (yeh)... And you're talking a lot about kind of now and what move to make now and kind of timing it strategies as it were, so... .. it sounds like 30 means something to you... Can you say more about that?
00:27:31	Interviewee: Yeh... um... there is the fear, the ever growing fear that once you hit 30 your ovary's start to die, and everybody tells you this and everybody is screaming it and you get your mother who's from the baby boomers generation who's convinced of it, and is very much; you know you should really start thinking about it now. And it's kind of... I think for most women is like it's an age, you get to that age and people start to ask "are you thinking about kids" or "why aren't you thinking about kids" and it's kind of the pressure around that age and I don't think it would be there if it wasn't for science and if it wasn't for the fact that our ovary's are starting to die at 32-35 and you kind of know that at 30, if stuff goes to shit you've got 2 years before it's really gone to shit to really try, otherwise, you know if you're at 34 and you're having IVF you've got less of a chance than if you're 30 and having IVF, so there's like a time stamp age limit. And then... you know, then there's the whole, do I want to be an old mum? Do I want to be at school, do I want to be tired when my child is 10, 12... um... and my cousin was 24 when she had her daughter and she's like, "I wanted to be a young mum, I wanted to be that. And I'm the youngest person at the school gates and blah blah blah" and I'm like, well, does that matter to me now? Will it matter to me? Don't know... it's like you have to plan your whole life in this stage in your life, at like 27-32 you are planning your whole life. Up until that stage, you're kind of, it's a free for all, you can do what you want, you can go anywhere, you can be with whoever you want and then you get to the age and it's like ok, well what the hell... if you want kids and you want a family you have to think about it and it

	becomes like this necessity, and... (00:29:50) I don't know, I can understand why some employers don't want to employ women at that stage – cos we're all nuts at that stage, because we're all thinking, what are we doing. (00:30:00) Um... And some of the best career women I've seen just don't have kids, they just don't do it...
00:30:10	Interviewer: What's your response to that?
00:30:11	Interviewee: I could never do that... I would rather give it all up and have a child than not have a child at all... and you know... then I'd... maybe I'd have to start something new. I mean there have been times when I have considered going into... teaching or... nursing or, something that would be far more flexible, <i>purely</i> for the sake of children... um, there was... (00:30:44) I mean I applied for bloody teach first last year because I was thinking, I need to think about children, and time off, and being on school holidays when they're on school holidays and it's not even... I mean... you know, it's in my 3 year plan, but, at the same time I am thinking that far ahead, because you kind of have to... and also... but then I felt like I couldn't start training to be a teacher because... that would take 3 years and so, I can't have a baby if I'm retraining because then, how do you train, how do you afford that??
00:31:33	Interviewer: So... Are a lot of the considerations financial?
00:31:36	Interviewee: Yes, um... for us, I would say so, because we don't have a lot of money, we have exactly what we earn and my husband has a loan that he has to pay off, that he wants to do on his own... um... so yeh, it is a big financial... like, you know, we're not poor, by any means, but we're, we're not rich, we're in the middle, we're bang in the middle, and I think it's very very hard when childcare is £2000 a month or whatever it is, might be something more than that, because that's your entire take home pay and so, is there any point in you even being at work when it's costing... your pay goes towards child care and you're not there to see your child, so what are you doing? You're doing it just for career, because you want to have a career, but then it's like, it's just... I don't know, it's really dividing I think...
00:32:47	Interviewer: I feel like you're saying something about the... Career versus job or something (<i>yeh</i>), that like, it's important to earn money but you're trying to kind of figure out how important the career bit is of that...
00:33:03	Interviewee: Yeh, because ultimately at this stage it's a job that pays, and you have money and you have a disposable income and you have a certain life. When you have a baby it becomes... am I going back to my career? Because that money is gone, it's spent, it's done, because if you want to have a career you've got to spend it on child care, so... that's when it becomes a real decision of... I'm basically working for free because all my money is going to look after my child and at the same time as me being at work to pay for my child to be somewhere else, I don't get to see my child, so it's really shit and it's a really shit time and I've seen people go through it, my friend Nicola... she packed it all in, she was like <i>I don't want my child to be in the care of somebody else and I want to spend my time with her and I don't care if that means I'm not going to be at **** anymore</i> ... um... and she gave it all in, but then she got a redundancy package because there was a whole redundancy thing so, and part of me was jealous of that, because I just thought well you're basically now set, because you've got enough money to pay for childcare and do your own thing but you don't have to... you can still be there, you know? So, she got the pay but also could do what she wanted, and that was like... this is really shit, so in a sense it was almost like that is the better option... um... (00:34:55) but yeh... it's like a minefield, it's like trying to work your way through a minefield, it's like a maze, a mouse in a maze, um... and even though you have a husband or a partner... you're kind of on your own because it's your career, your desire, your passion and you have to decide, it's not up to anybody else, and no one else can give

	you the answer and no one else can support you because... it is a case of... well I can do one or the other, you can't do both....
00:35:33	Interviewer: So you really believe that?
00:35:35	Interviewee: Yeh... I think, um... people that do both, I think must have an awful lot of money, and I think it's a certain... I think there must be a threshold of earners that can afford to do both because if you're taking home anything less than how much child care is costing, it's costing you work... it's costing you money to go to work, I mean if you... I mean if we moved out to Essex for example, it'd be £7000 a year for the train, so you've got to take £7000 off for the train, you've then got to think about how much of your take home you actually have and whether it's costing you money to have a career... that's a really big problem...
00:36:21	Interviewer: Hmm... and you're also saying something about what your... um... kind of values are... that you don't want the career enough to pay for it... for it to be costing you to do it... (yeh)... right?
00:36:36	Interviewee: Yeh... I mean, I want a baby more than I want anything else, and I might not be ready for it now, but I know that I want it, and if it came to the decision one or the other I would choose that, I mean I think... I don't know because I'm not there... um... but yeh you've got to want it enough to pay for it because I know that on my wage now, if I cot pregnant now, I'd be paying to come to work, and that's just nuts... I'd be paying to come to work and paying to be away from my child and... you know, I've got this thing in my head that my mum was a career person and she was always at work and I hated it...
00:37:27	Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting...
00:37:28	Interviewee: Yeh, I hated that she was never there, and I hated that during the holidays or after school we were in OSHC or out of school care and... she was never there at netball games in the evening and in the morning we'd have to be picked up by somebody else to go to school because she wanted a career and had worked really hard for her career...
00:37:52	Interviewer: What was her career?
00:37:53	Interviewee: She's a psychologist... interesting dynamic... yeh (laughs), so she kind of... she gave it up for a while but she went back to it when we were in school, um... and I hated it... I hated not seeing her, I felt really lonely and part of all my problems is that as a child I felt really really lonely, and I don't remember my mum being there, and like my dad, I don't really care because I kind of assumed he wouldn't be there because he's you know the bread winner of the family I guess, um... whereas when I was in reception and when I was in year one she was there picking me up, and then when she went back to her career... she was <i>never</i> there...
00:38:45	Interviewer: And you, do you feel like that's kind of informed or come into a lot of your considerations?...
00:38:50	Interviewee: Yeh... yeh... that's a big thing for me and I talk to **** [husband] about that all the time... it's a real concern for me because I don't want to be that parent, I don't want to be the person who's never there, not there to watch games or all the really important things that aren't important but are really important to a tiny person and... I don't know... it's a... it's like I see my cousin who is, she doesn't work and she works 2 shifts a week I think, she does night shifts – she's a nurse, she um... she's there for everything, everything... she says... I remember once when I was up and she was late to be at the school gates and she was having a panic attack in the car because she didn't want **** [daughter]

	to come out and not see her at the gates, and I totally understand that because as a child when you come out of school and your parent isn't there and they're going to be an hour and a half later, it's really distressing because you feel like you're not worthy of it or that the job is more important than you are... And I'm really aware of that and I don't know how other people, or whether other people even think about that, but it's a big big part of how I'm trying to figure out my future, I don't... genuinely don't know how that works...
00:40:16	Interviewer: Hmm... so you've got a vision of how you'd want to be a mum (yeh), and you know... if you're looking at your own experiences as a child it's very much informed by what you got from your mum and with her particularly being career focussed...
00:40:30	Interviewee: Yeh... and I think actually most people, most of my friends mums didn't work... um, so I don't know if they would think of that in the same way or whether it would even be the same because everyone's mums might have to work by the time I have kids and they're in that generation, but... it was a, it's been so, it's taken me 28 years or whatever to work through some of the issues that I developed through not having my parents around, that I don't want to do the same to my children and that's a big problem for me because I do want a career but I guess it would mean, would I have to work from home? I don't know, I don't know...
00:41:25	Interviewer: You said, well you've said a lot throughout the 40 minutes that you're not kind of there yet and it all feels very unknown and it feels like a decision is kind of needed to be made but you're not sort of there... What do you imagine you will need in order to start making these decisions?
00:41:50	Interviewee: Um... I would like to just have 6 months where everything is just OK and I'm happy with my job and I'm making enough money and we're not paying off debts and we have a house and we're not trying to bloody buy a house and I'm stable for 6 months... and I would just like everything to just flow (laughs), and I know that that sounds crazy because nobody's lives do that but I just kind of, at the moment it's so, like nuts, it's like a rollercoaster, so... for me to be able to make that sort of life changing decision I need to be in a steady area you know, steady with everything else you know, because that's too much flux and if you've got everything... my mum always said to me make sure that you always have at least one piece of the pie that is not in flux, she said if you can make it 2 that's great... um... and **** [husband] is never in flux, so my relationship is stable but at the moment work and house are both in flux and my mental stability so it's kind of not the time to be doing that and I envision that at least... house, work, I would like house, work and me to all be solid...
00:43:30	Interviewer: Hmm... When you say, work to be solid, what does that mean?
00:43:34	Interviewee: Well I mean, at the moment I'm actively looking for jobs at those companies and I keep getting interviews and I keep fucking the interviews up because I'm stressed and because they're really hard places to get jobs, and you've got to be really really good, and I know I'm really good but I don't have necessarily the confidence in myself to push myself there, um... so, that kind of feels in flux because I feel like I'm almost taking a step and then taking a step back and then taking a step and then taking a step back and I'm kind of waiting for... for me to nail a job interview and get a job...
00:44:28	Interviewer: So the fact that you are already applying and having interviews, (yeh) so you have made some kind of a decision to move forward with your career?...
00:44:35	Interviewee: Yeh... so... I mean, because I always said, when we first got married I said I'd like to start trying for a baby in September, this September coming up, um... that is being pushed and pushed because I don't feel stable enough, um... and Lee definitely doesn't feel like I am stable enough, he would say no if I was like, lets start trying now! Um... And I would like to be on this Prozac for 6 months, 6 months maximum is what I'm aiming for basically through

	another 6 months of my treatment through psychotherapy, um... and then I'd like to come off it again, um... and I can't be on fluoxetine and have a baby so that's one whole situation, the second is that I'm also aware of post natal depression because depression runs in my family, um... so it's kind of being pushed back and back and I'm thinking what am I going to do because I don't want to be here when I'm on maternity, I want to be where I know I'm going to stay with my career when I go on maternity, so I'm now in this kind of race to get out before we start trying...
00:46:03	Interviewer: Because it feels like it's a race to start trying...
00:46:07	Interviewee: Yeh... So it's like ok well I want to be at the pinnacle of my career or the place that I really want to be at... It's kind of like a goal, I've set myself this goal and I have to reach it before we start trying and... so I've basically put myself under immense amounts of pressure to get to this goal before September, even though September is probably not when we'll start trying anyway, so... but I'm 30 next June...
00:46:38	Interviewer: So that's looming...
00:46:39	Interviewee: Yeh... so I've got a year and 4 months to sort my career out and get my shit together before absolute D-day...
00:46:53	Interviewer: Is that how it feels?
00:46:54	Interviewee: Yes
00:46:56	Interviewer: So, 30's there, next year, looming...
00:46:57	Interviewee: Yes... 30 is like, it really is like D-Day, it is like ... that's it, whatever stage I'm at in career, whatever stage I'm at in my life, that is the deadline, and I have to start trying at that point, and if I'm not... I wanted to be pregnant at 30, and if I'm not at least trying... that's just not... that's not ever... it's just been my.. it's just been... 30.
00:47:27	Interviewer: So if you're not trying? How do you finish that sentence?
00:47:32	Interviewee: I don't know... I mean if I'm not trying like what the hell am I doing with my life, I mean, that's a panic, because then it's thinking, you don't know if it's going to work... like at least if I git pregnant and then had a miscarriage, at least I'd be in the bloody running for something, you know like there's something I'd know that I could catch or I'd know that there's a problem or I would know, or I would have more knowledge, like there's no confirmed knowledge, I can't control it, and... I don't have massive issues with control in my life, I have massive issues with control with babies in my life and career and that balance, and...
00:48:21	Interviewer: So feeling out of control is a massive issue?
00:48:22	Interviewee: Yeh and that's not really something that I struggle with elsewhere, I don't... I don't know... I mean I've never, I'm far more relaxed with everything else, I very much have a fuck it attitude, but when it comes to that, I'm like emotionally charged and solid as if someone's telling me I will never have kids if I can't have kids by the time I'm 30, like that is the cut off ... so yeh...
00:48:57	Interviewer: Hmm... you mentioned that that, kind of 30 deadline comes from science and from kind of older people saying... what other people are saying (yeh), is there kind of anywhere else you can identify where that kind of significance of 30 has come from? Or when it became important... I mean you mentioned the miscarriage and the fact it was mentioned by a doctor but...

00:49:25	Interviewee: I guess... Well my mum had me at 32, she had my brother at 30 so there's that, um... there's also my friends have all done it in the same time frame (which is when?...), 30... like 29, 30, um... .. I don't know where else that comes from... like, when I was living in a shared house I was living with a guy who worked for **** publishers and he was putting together this book on fertility, and some of the stuff, I remember him coming home one day and saying I cannot believe how fast our eggs, well your eggs deteriorate... 35 there's a 70% chance that something will go wrong and how fast it goes to crap from 30 to 35, and so you kind of... don't want to be in the danger zone, you want to be in the green bit and not in the red bit and the red bit is 30 to 35 and then you know... extreme... I don't even know what comes after that... so... I don't know...
00:50:51	Interviewer: So, 30 is the red bit...
00:50:53	Interviewee: Yeh... 30 to 35 to me is the red bit, I feel like it's green up until my, the last day of being 29 and the it goes red instantly [the next day when you wake up]... yeh... and I don't know why, I just have this... that's in my head, I visually see it as the red zone and shit could go wrong, it could go wrong and you don't know... Because that's what everybody tells you... there's always constant stuff about IVF... then there's all my friends who are having problems and... and then there's me having problems at 26, like it's just... I don't know... it's just that is the red zone and I don't think it will change...
00:51:48	Interviewer: So it sounds like the kind of unfortunate bit, you're saying is that that kind of, you're saying 28-32 you've got to sort it all out [yeh], so it's like you've got this sort of red zone and D-day leaning over you [yeh], and you're also at a certain point in your career where you haven't quite got where you want to be [yeh], but you're kind of on the cusp of it [yeh] and it feels like everything has to happen in the next year and 4 months [yes]...
00:52:15	Interviewee: Yes, it's like pressure zone, and then not only that but I'm trying to sort through all my issues before I have children so I am in the middle of psychotherapy, which is the hardest thing I have ever done, and nobody but my therapist understands how hard it is, um... and you can explain til you're blue in the face to all your friends and your husband, and they'll never understand unless they do it themselves, um... and... it's just such, it's like I'm going to just spontaneously combust with all the pressure that I have put on myself and I'm fully aware that it's me putting it on myself, like I can logically see that, but I don't see another way... and I kind of think ok yeh I can do that and yes I can do this, and yes ok yes I can get married with no money and raise that money in a year, yes I can go through psychotherapy and I can get through all this crap, yes I can also afford to buy a house and get a mortgage, yes I can also take on looking for a job and interviewing and yes I can also take on children... Like it's kind of, I'm layering more and more stuff to carry with me um... but I feel like I have to because I don't have a choice and if someone turned around and said you don't have to do it all now, I would just say well I want to because I do want to, that's how I want it to be and I'm not going to give up until I do it, and... I don't know, I'm a fighter when it comes to stuff like that and I think... you know, if you want something and you want something to be a certain way you've got to work bloody hard for it and this just happens to be a time in my life when I'm having to do it all, um... because if I don't buy a house now we won't be able to afford to buy a house um... in London, which I want to do because I'd like to make enough money to buy than a house outside of London and if I don't find a career then I won't have a career before my child and if I don't have a career before my child I will never go back to my career... um... and I want to sort through my crap, because if not now, when, and I know I'm crazy when I've got my period so I know I'll be crazy when I'm pregnant... so... it's, I need it to be sorted now before I start to lose my mind on hormones, like there's all these little factors that play into it and I'm sure everybody has got them... I'm sure they do, but nobody talks about them, because there's so many... it is not as straight forward as I'm going to have the baby here or we're going to start trying in x amount of time, so much

	goes into that... unless it doesn't for some people... who knows, maybe some people are just whimsical about it... [laughs]
00:55:32	Interviewer: Um... We've got a few minutes left, I'm just going to check that we've covered everything (sure), maybe I'll just read out ... I think ... um... we've covered 'how does desiring to mother impact how you experience life' (we have), 'how important is your career at this point in your life, how do you believe that your desire to mother impacts the way you conceive of your working life, does your working life have an effect on when you'd like to mother, what does being a mum mean to you, what does being a career woman mean to you'... did we cover that? Not completely... could you say a bit about that... what a career woman as kind of an identity means to you...
00:56:14	Interviewee: As an identity, I guess... ... a career woman is someone who chooses their career over everything else as an identity to me it's, um... someone who like **** (CEO), who took 2 weeks off for maternity and then came back to work with her child... and.... That's like the extreme I guess, and for me that's not where I aim for, I aim for somewhere a little bit more normal, um... but as an identity that's how I see it, that really extreme figure of career career career...
00:57:05	Interviewer: So that's not what you want?
00:57:08	Interviewee: No... you know, my career is important to me but... ... I very much think it's 50/50, your career's important but life is equally as important, and more important... so, less so, but career is what you do 98% of your time so you've got to be happy in it and you've got to be doing what is good for you, and what's good for me is doing the best, being the best and being competitive. So... um... ... yeh, I mean I don't want to be a CEO, I don't have that drive to be at the very top but I have that drive to be the best at what I want to be, so for me it's about... finding a role that I can really excel in, and doing something that really challenges me because this job doesn't challenge me at all, and I could do it with my eyes closed, but I would really love to get to a point where I'm doing something that I feel challenged by but is also, doesn't necessarily have to be the top of the top of the top, just the best of what I perceive to be the best of that role...
00:58:33	Interviewer: Mmmm... so what does being the best, if you couldn't do that in your life, what would that mean for you?
00:58:42	Interviewer: Um... I would always regret it, I think when I was... 12, I was approached, I used to swim all the time and I was approached by the Olympic squad in Adelaide to swim for them, for Australia – when I was 12... I turned it down because I didn't want to turn a passion into a chore, and I kind of regret that in that I didn't push myself because I don't know what could have been and I don't want to feel like that with this career... I want to feel like I know how far I could get and it's one of those places, and ... I want to prove to myself that I can, and if I can't then I'll be really pissed off because I know that I can... it's just, it's just... getting there it's getting that bloody foot in the door, doing it and actually dealing with it and, and I would be so angry if I don't do it...
1:00:05	Interviewer: So something about fulfilling your potential is important...
1:00:06	Interviewee: Yeh because I know that that's the pinnacle of the career path that I want and so... it's almost like finishing a race, it's like if I get there then I've done what I set out to achieve when I was 18 and I went to uni and I can relax (laughs), I can like breathe and breathe a sigh of relief that like I did it, now I can enjoy, because I've done it, um... and then everything will follow, I think... in my mind (laughs)...

1:00:48	Interviewer: OK, um... so we've covered pretty much everything that I wanted to, is there anything else that you think is really relevant that we haven't talked about?
1:01:10	Interviewee: Um... Not really, I think I've pretty much just word vomited...
1:01:18	Interviewer: That's great, that's what I wanted...
1:01:18	Interviewee: So yeh...
1:01:21	Interviewer: Well, if you think of anything else... Ok so we'll end there, thank you very much...

Appendix E – Individual Depiction

Themes	Interview 2
Needing to reach a certain career point before becoming a mother	00:18:17
	00:19:47
	00:46:07
Potential - sense of fulfilling or not	00:26:13
Mothers age of mothering	00:49:25
Mothers/friends styles of mothering (looking at other models)	00:37:28
	00:37:53
	00:38:50
Time pressure - everything that needs sorting	00:52:15
Previous pregnancy's	00:02:27
Practical financial considerations	00:09:51
	00:31:36
Meaning in mothering	00:11:07
	00:11:36
Sense of loving how life is now and idea that that will change	00:11:36
Need to "care" for something / look after	00:13:35
How partner would be as a father	00:14:15
Career passion / excitement	00:15:58
Strategic planning	00:30:44
Referencing traditional family or gender roles	00:09:51
Personal readiness	00:09:38
	00:09:51
	00:44:35
"Lean in"/ Having it all	00:22:00
	00:24:50
Uncertainty & unknown	00:22:40
	00:23:36
30	00:27:31
	00:46:39
	00:49:25
Needing to choose	00:33:03
The cost of child care	00:33:03
	00:35:35

Appendix F – Analysis Table

		ANXIETY “The paradox of freedom and finiteness”	
THE PHILOSOPHY	(Uncertainty?) Freedom v Control	Meaning	
	<p>Control V. lack of control</p> <p>Combating uncertainty through creating an illusion of control.</p> <p>“Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved” (Niebuhr).</p> <p>Kierkegaard: Freedom & selfhood, inner conflict – belief in fate as a method of avoiding anxiety and guilt feeling in creativity (p41).</p> <p>p 23 (May) – what can be measured and controlled does not contain anxiety.</p> <p>Trying to make sense of the dilemma in order to reduce anxiety through and increased sense of control. Feeling stuck in uncertainty and the “what if”.</p>	<p>Tillich – anxiety is the threat of non-being (Nonbeing is the threat of meaninglessness)</p> <p>Frankl</p>	<p>H</p> <p>J</p> <p>T</p>
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE			
<p>Überwelt (Spiritual)</p> <p>Response to the givens.</p>	<p>Uncertainty & unknown</p> <p>00:22:40 “Yeh, you don’t know how it’s going to work... you’ve got no idea if it’s going to work, and I don’t think, I don’t think a lot of people think... well I don’t know, I don’t know if a lot of people think that way... um... but it is a big worry factor in my head, if I wasn’t so worried about if I could, I don’t know... I don’t know... because I am worried about if I could so that makes it more of a desire, because I want to do it and I want to make sure it gets done, it’s like ticking a box... in a weird way... it’s something that has to happen, on my life path, so...”</p> <p>00:23:36 “Yeh... and that’s really stressful, because that’s like a... it’s like constant... you can’t just say, ok I’m going to quit my job on this day and go and do this, it’s not my choice... it’s my choice to say ok lets</p>	<p>Considering how I can live the most meaningful life.</p> <p>00:11:36 “Whereas for me, it’s like... I genuinely feel like it is what I’m here to do... And I love my career, I love my career, love my job, I love my life without a baby... But I feel like there is something in me that has to do it, I have to do it... And it’s kind of, it’s like it’s not even my choice, it’s something that... It’s a bit like when people say they have a faith in god or something, or whatever and they just know, and I kind of feel like that. I feel like it’s just a knowledge for me that it has to happen and it will happen... In my life span.”</p> <p>Considering what I want most of all</p>	

	<p>start trying, but that's not to say that it's another 3 years down the line before we do anything, so then do you carry on looking for jobs in the time that you're trying? Do you sit pretty in the time that you're trying? Do you just get on with your life? Am I stuck at fucking **** [current employer] while I'm trying or what... you know, what the hell do I do? And this is not something that I can bring up with **** [husband] for example because he's very logical and so his thought process would be, ok well you carry on with life as normal and then when we want to start trying, start trying and everything will fall into place... and that is not how a woman's, well my mind works, it is very much, well we don't know any of that so I can't sit there saying to facebook oh yeh I'm totally signed onto this and then I sign up and a month later I'm pregnant, (00:24:50) that's the worst thing because that just kills my career..."</p>	<p>00:30:00 "Um... And some of the best career women I've seen just don't have kids, they just don't do it..."</p> <p>00:30:11 "I could never do that... I would rather give it all up and have a child than not have a child at all... and you know... then I'd... maybe I'd have to start something new. I mean there have been times when I have considered going into... teaching or... nursing or, something that would be far more flexible, purely for the sake of children..."</p>
<p><i>Mitwelt (Social)</i></p> <p>Impact of the wider social context.</p>	<p>Practical / financial considerations</p> <p>00:09:51 "But not only that, I mean there are things like... We're trying to buy a house and that's just been a fucking nightmare... It's so expensive and so hard to get on the ladder ... and ... And that's kind of also in flux, and I'd want to have a nice house, like I'm very traditional... I want to be married, owning a home, before we have a baby... And it never really struck me, I never thought about the logistics of things like ... we've gone through our mortgage application, we know how much we can afford, but what happens when we have a baby? Like, how do we afford the mortgage then?"</p> <p>00:31:36 "...like, you know, we're not poor, by any means, but we're, we're not rich, we're in the middle, we're bang in the middle, and I think it's very very hard when childcare is £2000 a month or whatever it is, might be something more than that, because that's your entire take home pay and so, is there any point in you even being at work when it's costing... your pay goes towards child care and you're not there to see your child, so what are you doing? You're doing it just for career, because you want to have a career, but then it's like, it's just... I don't know, it's really dividing I think..."</p> <p>Looking to mothers / friends styles of mothering (looking at other models for information of how I want to be)</p> <p>00:37:28 "Yeh, I hated that she was never there, and I hated that during the holidays or after school we were in OSHC or out of school care and... she was never there at netball games in the evening and in the morning we'd have to be picked up by somebody</p>	<p>Referencing traditional family or gender roles (the with-world; social context) – “right way of living a life”</p> <p>00:09:51 "Yeh... I would like to be in a certain place... But not only that, I mean there are things like... We're trying to buy a house and that's just been a fucking nightmare... It's so expensive and so hard to get on the ladder ... and ... And that's kind of also in flux, and I'd want to have a nice house, like I'm very traditional... I want to be married, owning a home, before we have a baby... And it never really struck me, I never thought about the logistics of things like ... we've gone through our mortgage application, we know how much we can afford, but what happens when we have a baby?"</p> <p>Referencing own family experiences to make sense (and meaning?)</p> <p>00:13:35 "caring for something entirely is the most important thing in the whole world, and I have this big desire to do that, and I think a lot of that comes from... that I didn't really have, I was never spoilt and I didn't really have all the stuff that everybody else had. And it's the same when I'm with my nieces, I just want to spend all my time with them. And whenever they're like, oh I want to buy this or can I have this, it takes everything in me not to buy it and be like, you've got enough stuff. I don't know, I guess it's rectifying what I didn't have... In a very odd sense..."</p>

else to go to school because she wanted a career and had worked really hard for her career..."

*00:38:50 "Yeh... yeh... that's a big thing for me and I talk to **** [husband] about that all the time... it's a real concern for me because I don't want to be that parent, I don't want to be the person who's never there, not there to watch games or all the really important things that aren't important but are really important to a tiny person and... I don't know... it's a... it's like I see my cousin who is, she doesn't work and she works 2 shifts a week I think, she does night shifts – she's a nurse, she um... she's there for everything, everything... she says... I remember once when I was up and she was late to be at the school gates and she was having a panic attack in the car because she didn't want **** [daughter] to come out and not see her at the gates, and I totally understand that because as a child when you come out of school and your parent isn't there and they're going to be an hour and a half later, it's really distressing because you feel like you're not worthy of it or that the job is more important than you are... And I'm really aware of that and I don't know how other people, or whether other people even think about that, but it's a big big part of how I'm trying to figure out my future, I don't... genuinely don't know how that works..."*

The cost of child care

00:33:03 : "Yeh, because ultimately at this stage it's a job that pays, and you have money and you have a disposable income and you have a certain life. When you have a baby it becomes... am I going back to my career? Because that money is gone, it's spent, it's done, because if you want to have a career you've got to spend it on child care, so... that's when it becomes a real decision of... I'm basically working for free because all my money is going to look after my child and at the same time as me being at work to pay for my child to be somewhere else, I don't get to see my child, so it's really shit"

"Lean in"/ Having it all

00:22:00 "And we've had conversations before where, she's said don't go into anything thinking about when you're going to have a baby because you haven't got a fucking clue where you're going to be... um... and the same with houses, I was saying about houses and she was saying, well we thought we were going to have a baby in this house and we don't even know any more! So... that's kind of thrown it into turmoil in another way and it also makes me want it more, because I think, what if I can't do it, what if it doesn't happen for me..."

	<p>00:24:40 <i>"it is very much, well we don't know any of that so I can't sit there saying to facebook oh yeh I'm totally signed onto this and then I sign up and a month later I'm pregnant, that's the worst thing because that just kills my career..."</i></p>	
<p><i>Eigenwelt (Psychological)</i></p> <p>Personal/psychological impact/experience</p>	<p>Kierkegaard – destroying the status quo, guilt</p> <p>Creating a sense of control relieves anxiety around the unknown – helps psychological distress</p> <p>Interviewee: <i>"Yes, it's like pressure zone, and then not only that but I'm trying to sort through all my issues before I have children so I am in the middle of psychotherapy, which is the hardest thing I have ever done, and nobody but my therapist understands how hard it is, um... and you can explain til you're blue in the face to all your friends and your husband, and they'll never understand unless they do it themselves, um... and... it's just such, it's like I'm going to just spontaneously combust with all the pressure that I have put on myself and I'm fully aware that it's me putting it on myself, like I can logically see that, but I don't see another way... and I kind of think ok yeh I can do that and yes I can do this, and yes ok yes I can get married with no money and raise that money in a year, yes I can go through psychotherapy and I can get through all this crap, yes I can also afford to buy a house and get a mortgage, yes I can also take on looking for a job and interviewing and yes I can also take on children... Like it's kind of, I'm layering more and more stuff to carry with me um... but I feel like I have to because I don't have a choice and if someone turned around and said you don't have to do it all now, I would just say well I want to because I do want to, that's how I want it to be and I'm not going to give up until I do it, and... I don't know, I'm a fighter when it comes to stuff like that and I think... you know, if you want something and you want something to be a certain way you've got to work bloody hard for it and this just happens to be a time in my life when I'm having to do it all, um... because if I don't buy a house now we won't be able to afford to buy a house um... in London, which I want to do because I'd like to make enough money to buy than a house outside of London and if I don't find a career then I won't have a career before my child and if I don't have a career before my child I will never go back to my career... um... and I want to sort through my crap, because if not now, when, and I know I'm crazy when I've got my period so I know I'll be crazy when I'm pregnant... so... it's, I need it to be sorted now before I start to lose my mind on hormones, like there's all these little factors that play into it and I'm sure everybody has got them... I'm sure they do, but nobody talks about them, because there's so many..."</i></p>	<p>Career passion / excitement</p> <p>00:15:38</p> <p>Interviewee: <i>"Yeh... So I... I mean, I wanted to be a writer since I was a kid and I have worked with software and digital since I was a kid and they're two really big parts of me, I'm a massive geek, I love it and..."</i></p> <p>Interviewer: <i>"Which bit do you love?"</i></p> <p>Interviewee: <i>"Just being a geek, and being able to embrace that on a daily basis and say ok lets do something really cool with technology and lets do something new and... um... or something really fun with social..."</i></p> <p>Desiring a sense of fulfilment</p> <p>00:26:13 <i>"and while I'm sure that changes once you've had a baby because you think oh I've got something more important in life, I don't want that, I want to have a career, I want to have something for me, and I've not spent my whole life working towards something to give up, like I will fight through this... um, and... and I don't know, I don't know how it's possible, I don't know how, I don't know anyone who has said they're going to be a certain way and stuck with it after having a baby, so not only is there all this pressure from everybody around you.... Um... but also from yourself, you just don't know how you're going to react..."</i></p> <p>Wanting to ensure career is meaningful</p> <p>00:18:17</p> <p>Interviewee: <i>Well for me, my goal from **** was to either work at facebook, apple or google, um... and... the next obvious step from ****, I mean that's been my goal since I was working at **** on day 1 and **** was the step towards that, and then from **** would be one of those, but I'm kind of at this position where, if I don't get a job there soon... I'm kind of screwed because once I have a baby... that's fucked... like that's over. Because, firstly I know that everyone's mentality changes every time they have a child, I cannot tell you how many friends I have who are like; yeh totally career, 100%, and then they have a baby and they just don't care anymore, and I don't know how I'm going to respond... I kind of assume I'll be like everyone else and not really care anymore, but I don't want to say that,</i></p>

it is not as straight forward as I'm going to have the baby here or we're going to start trying in x amount of time, so much goes into that... unless it doesn't for some people... who knows, maybe some people are just whimsical about it... [laughs]"

The decision needs to be made based on uncertainty.

00:34:55 *"but yeh... it's like a minefield, it's like trying to work your way through a minefield, it's like a maze, a mouse in a maze, um... and even though you have a husband or a partner... you're kind of on your own because it's your career, your desire, your passion and you have to decide, it's not up to anybody else, and no one else can give you the answer and no one else can support you because... it is a case of... well I can do one or the other, you can't do both.... "*

Strategic planning

00:30:44 *"I mean I applied for bloody teach first last year because I was thinking, I need to think about children, and time off, and being on school holidays when they're on school holidays and it's not even... I mean... you know, it's in my 3 year plan, but, at the same time I am thinking that far ahead, because you kind of have to... and also... but then I felt like I couldn't start training to be a teacher because... that would take 3 years and so, I can't have a baby if I'm retraining because then, how do you train, how do you afford that??"*

I would like to... I'd like to carry on having a job, I mean I'd need to carry on having a job.... Um... But I'd like to not have to be fighting for a position at one of those companies with a baby, because that's not going to be easy...

Interviewer: So you mean, not trying to get a job in one of those company's after you've had a baby?

Interviewee: Mmmm... I would rather be there, and then take a break and have a baby and go back to there, because firstly I know that I would love it there and secondly... um... you can then focus on really enjoying what you're doing as opposed to focussing on where you're going next.

Umwelt (Physical)
The role of the body and biology

Nod to science and other options to natural conception

