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Maternal Responsibility and Changing Relationality at the Beginning of Motherhood

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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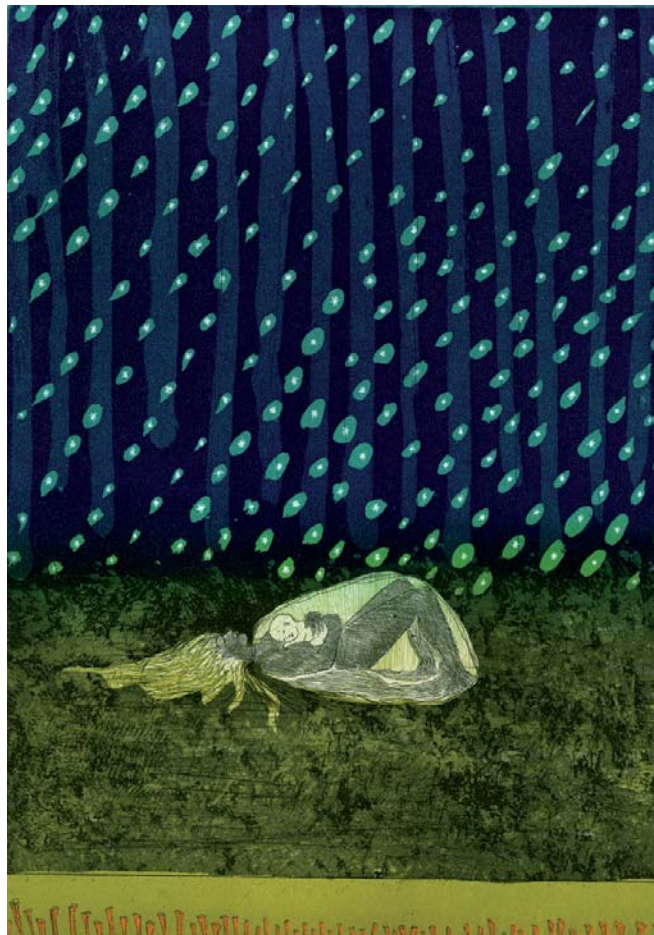
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2009

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ABSTRACT

This study follows recent family research in emphasising the importance of the everyday in studying the family realm. The study highlights the intricate relational and moral nature of early mothering by drawing on the ethics of care. The methodological starting points were in hermeneutical phenomenology, narrative research and feminist studies. The aims were, first, to investigate what it means in a woman's life to become a mother; second, to examine a mother's close relationships, especially those with her child and with her partner; and third, to explore how social and cultural narratives and first-time mothering become entangled in the interviewed women's stories. The study was longitudinal and consisted of four interview sessions each with seven Finnish first-time mothers. The interview process was oriented towards collecting stories about the mothers' everyday experiences, emotions and thoughts during their first year with the baby. By taking a narrative approach it was possible to study how new mothers make sense of the beginning of their motherhood.

This study suggests that pregnancy, birth-giving and everyday life with a small baby transforms a woman's life. The temporal and ambivalent processes involved in becoming a mother concerned: first, the choice to become a mother; second, how the mother relates to her baby and to her responsibility for the baby; third, the change in her couple relationship; and fourth, what the mother's female family relations mean to her maternal agency. Finally, and running through all four topics, is the question about how cultural narratives, such as those of motherhood, parenthood and family relations, affect how the women tell their stories. Early motherhood involves moral ambiguity that relates to the questions of responsibility and vulnerability. It is a process of reorientation pertaining not only to a woman's own identity but often also to her couple relationship. The ambivalence felt as a part of these processes indicates how women need to reconcile contradictory demands, ideals and experiences as these arise in their different relationships and everyday roles in a novel and often demanding life situation.

Keywords: ambivalence, everyday life, morality, longitudinal interviewing, narrative research, relationality, transition to motherhood

Author's address   Eija Sevón
Department of Education
University of Jyväskylä, Finland
P.O. Box 35 (D-building)
40014 University of Jyväskylä
e-mail: eija.sevon@jyu.fi

Supervisors   Professor Leena Laurinen
Department of Education
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Professor (emerita) Sirkka Hirsjärvi
Department of Education
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Dr Marjo Kuronen
Department of Social Sciences
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Reviewers   Professor Elina Lahelma
Department of Education
University of Helsinki, Finland

Dr Vanessa May
Department of Sociology
Morgan Centre for the Study of
Relationships and Personal Life
University of Manchester, UK

Opponent   Professor Elina Lahelma
Department of Education
University of Helsinki, Finland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Department of Education and to the Disciplines of Education and Adult Education for offering me the possibility to work as an assistant from the beginning of the year 2005 onwards. I have been able to do my research and teaching as a mother of three small children without pressure to complete my study in a hurry. As a working environment, our 'unit' has been rich and challenged me to develop my working manners. Becoming acquainted with our unit's personnel, their respective research areas and thoughts as well as with the students has made my own thinking livelier. I warmly thank all those at the unit who have been my colleagues and lived with my dissertation process during these years.

There are also some people that I want to thank, because of the insights and ideas they have given me. They are Marita Husso, Vilma Hänninen, Eeva Jokinen, Raija Julkunen, Leena Kakkori, Satu Katvala, Minna Kelhä, Jaana Kemppainen, Marja Keränen, Johanna Lahikainen, Timo Laine, Riitta-Leena Metsäpelto, Kirsi Nousiainen, Susanna Paloniemi, Satu Perälä-Littunen and Jaana Vuori. I owe my very special gratitude to Michael Freeman, who has helped me to mould my Finglish into English. He has been very understanding and extremely fast and precise in the task of language consulting.

This dissertation would not exist without the seven women, who told me about the beginning of their motherhood, that major change in their lives. I want to thank you for sharing your experiences and I hope that I have been able to capture and handle kindly the meanings and interpretations you gave to your mothering and everyday lives.

Finally, it is the turn of the extra-scientific support group, my close family members. I thank my mother and father, despite the geographic distance between us, for being supportive and helpful in the everyday life of my family during the dissertation process. I am deeply grateful to my beloved partner, Jouko for supporting and encouraging me, and for sharing parenting and house work, weekdays and Sundays, along with emotions and thoughts. My children Sohvi, Helmi and Siiri I thank for allowing me to be your mother. You teach me every day what is important in life.

Jyväskylä, June 11th, 2009

ORIGINAL PAPERS

Article I   Sevón, E. 2005. Timing motherhood: experiencing and narrating the choice to become a mother. Feminism & Psychology 15 (4), 461–482.

Article II   Sevón, E. 2007. Narrating ambivalence of maternal responsibility. Sociological Research Online 12 (2), <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/2/sevon.html>.

Article III Sevón, E. 2009. Renegotiating the couple relationship at the beginning of motherhood. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Article IV   Notko, M. & Sevón, E. 2006. Problematic woman-to-woman family relations. European Journal of Women's Studies 13 (2), 135–150.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why still study motherhood?

Motherhood has interested many professional fields and scientific disciplines, including medicine, psychiatry and psychology. The focus of the research on motherhood has mostly been on ideal development and well-being of the child, and thus a picture of ideal motherhood has tended to be drawn (Vuori 2003). This picture of 'good mothering' may function as a normative mould for women (Phoenix & Woollett 1991; Vuori 2003; Wetherell 1995). Ann Phoenix and Anne Woollett (1991, 20–25) have claimed that in standardising motherhood certain dominant conceptions are circulated that are assumed to concern all mothers via, for example, scientific theories. When the characteristics of the ideal mother are analysed, it can readily be seen that they cohere with official family policy and with conceptions of the mother in traditional psychoanalytical and attachment theory, which affect how motherhood is seen in society at large (Phoenix & Woollett 1991; see also Vuori 2001; 2003). Knowledge about motherhood is not value-free or objective, but always derives from conceptions shaped through debate (Phoenix & Woollett 1991).

In feminist research, motherhood has been conceptualised through the concepts of the ideology, myth or institution of motherhood that interrogate the social, cultural and ideological conceptualisations of motherhood (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Letherby 1994; Meyers 2001; Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd 1991; Rich 1977; Wetherell 1995). Feminist research on motherhood is often interdisciplinary and critical towards the hegemonic ways of knowing and researching family issues. One important argument in this critique is that responsibility for the wellbeing of the child is too heavily directed at mothers and in particular it is the mother who is blamed for a child's (developmental) problems (Alasuutari 2003; Hays 1996; Parker 1997; Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd 1991; Tardy 2000). As a consequence, this culturally dominant, but idealised and coloured conception that suppresses individual women's maternal agency and feelings becomes the acceptable way of conceiving mothering (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Hirs-

järvi, Laurinen & the research group 1998, 18–21). It has also been shown that most Western women recognise the narrative of 'good mothering' despite class, age, or sexual orientation, even their responses to it may differ (e.g. Hays 1996; Parker 1997).

Feminist-orientated research is value both theoretically and methodologically in studying the importance of gender in the construction of family relations, and especially motherhood (e.g. Chodorow 1999; Gordon 1990; Hays 1996; Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd 1991; Rich 1977; Smart 1991; Vuori 2001; 2003). Is has also made known the different aspects of motherhood as experience (e.g. Gordon 1990; Hays 1996; Jokinen 1997; Lupton 2000; Miller 2005; Nätkin 1997; Ribbens 1994; 1998). As long ago as in the 1970s, Adrianne Rich (1977) created the distinction between motherhood as an institution and motherhood as an experience; these conceptions are totally different even if interlinked. Rich (1977) argued that motherhood as an experience is multifaceted, whereas the institution of motherhood sets aims for women as mothers. Women have the possibility to give birth to new life, children, but the institution of motherhood ensures that this possibility remains under (male) control.

Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto (1992) have, however, criticised Rich and many classical feminist thinkers on motherhood for preserving the fantasy of the perfect mother in their thinking and only seeing patriarchal culture as prohibiting women from mothering in ways they would otherwise prefer. They argue that the ideal reprises the more general, larger than life, ideals according to which motherhood and mothers are viewed in society at large. They claim (1992, 204) that the "idealization of mothers is an infantile fantasy: no human being can be perfect". Because of our childhood memories, we tend to attach highly idealised images to motherhood and to what kind of a person a mother should be. This kind of thinking does not help in developing new theories about mothering and child development (Chodorow & Contratto 1992, 210–211).

Becoming a mother changes a woman's life, even if the transition to motherhood is considered a 'normal' and positive life event for most women (Woollett 1991). Having a child transforms the mother's everyday life quite totally; it changes how a woman understands her body, her 'self' and her relationships. The aim of this study is to understand *how first-time mothers make sense of and talk about their budding motherhood in the 21st century*. The study is based on longitudinally collected interview data consisting of four interview sessions with seven first-time mothers living in a heterosexual relationship. The purpose of the study is to explore *what it means to become a mother* in a society in which mothers confront various and contradictory expectations and demands (e.g. Hays 1996; Miller 2005). The birth and growth of the child presents the mother with many life challenges. How does a mother cope with the ideal of experiencing a 'happy pregnancy', of giving her child 'the best start in life' by being a 'good mother', or having a 'happy couple relationship' and a supportive partner in the midst of the pressures of sleepless nights, breastfeeding, and perhaps a colicky infant or job-related stress? Or more profoundly (and less

ironically) how does a mother experience her relationship with her child, in terms of love towards, responsibility and concern over her baby, her own abilities, coping and uncertainties as a mother, and the other people around her, especially the child's father? The starting point of this study was to listen to mothers' own voices, to look at the beginning of motherhood from their points of view.

This study follows recent family research in emphasising the importance of the everyday basis in studying the family realm, even where the perspective is that of only one family member. In addition, I have utilised feminist theoretical and empirical research in interpreting the interviewed women's experiences and narratives. This study highlights the intricate relational and moral nature of early mothering, first, by drawing on the ethics of care (Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991; Tronto 1994). Second, the study takes into account that normative, gender-specific cultural narratives surround motherhood and family life (Andrews 2002; Miller 2005). These narratives have an impact on how a new mother experiences and makes sense of her mothering in relation to her child as well as to the other people around her, especially the child's father.

Furthermore, the study combines three different methodological starting points: hermeneutic phenomenology, narrative approach and a feminist orientation. In addition to phenomenology, I have adopted ideas on lived experiences and everyday life from family research, feminist studies and narrative research to consider how a mother's lived experiences are expressed in narrative form in the interview situation, and the kinds of dynamics that are involved. These differing starting points enable reflection on the conditions, limits and crossroads of maternal experiences and narratives.

1.2   Becoming a mother in the Finnish context

For the present participants, becoming a mother for the first time take place in Finland, a country that has its own cultural practices and idiosyncrasies. Socioeconomically, Finland has been described as egalitarian, with a stress on equality between citizens and between the sexes, and subscribes to a dual-earner model (Anttonen 1998; Forsberg 2005; Kuronen 2001). The present-day gender equity is explained as resulting from the widespread poverty that characterised the country before, during and right after both World Wars. Agriculture and the re-building of the country needed all citizens, including women. Women also cultivated the land and took care of the home during war-time. These matters are thought to have necessitated equity and companionship (Pylkkänen 1999). It has been also argued that the same factors created the ideal of the strong Finnish woman (Julkunen 1999). As a consequence, the position of women in Finland has its own, special characteristics: the participation of women and mothers in the work force is a common and 'normal' state of affairs, and the ideology of equality between the sexes is widely shared. Less has

been heard about such issues as salary differences between women and men, the uneven distribution of domestic work between women and men, and intimate violence against women (Pylkkänen 1999; 2008).

In Finland a strong value is also placed on gender equality in parenting and family policy (Forsberg 2005; Kuronen 2001; Pylkkänen 1999). Finnish women have fought hard to combine motherhood and working life. Women can choose to become mothers, at least at the legislative level, without fear of losing their jobs or of being obliged to return to work soon after giving birth, and children have a legal right to municipal day-care services (Julkunen 1999). Nevertheless, motherhood and responsibility for the family have belonged and still belong to the everyday lives of many women (see Gordon 1990; Perälä-Littunen 2007). Balancing family and work has caused tensions in postmodern women's lives (e.g. Kinnunen & Mauno 1998). Motherhood demands time, involvement, and the postponement of one's own needs and desires. At the same time, pronatalists have become more vocal, advocating that women have more children and have them younger (see Kelhä 2005). In the present social atmosphere choosing and timing motherhood may be a contradictory and ambivalent issue for many women (Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005; Kelhä 2005; Niemelä 2005). Even the choice of whether to have child may have to be set against the demands of working life and a possible career.

There has been a strong emphasis in theoretical and empirical work on the mother-child relationship in a heterosexual couple relationship in which the father's role is seen as more to support mother than to create his own relationship with the child (Huttunen 2001; Vuori 2003; 2004). It is only recently that the focus has shifted to considering the father's role in the family (Huttunen 2001; Mykkänen & Huttunen 2008; Vuori 2003; 2004). Finnish family policy and family professionals have striven to support the father's participation in childcare, and the paternal rights of men have been highlighted (Forsberg 2005; Lammi-Taskula 2006). In the scientific and in public debate, the narrative of shared parenthood, with the emphasis on the equal sharing of parental responsibilities between mothers and fathers, has become an alternative to the narrative of exclusive mothering (Forsberg 2005; Huttunen 2001; Lammi-Taskula 2006; Salmi 2006; Vuori 2001).

Despite all this, Anneli Anttonen (2003) has argued that Finland is a country characterised by the care of small children in the home by mothers. During the past decade over half of children under three years of age have been cared for at home, mostly by their mothers (Anttonen 2003). The Finnish parental leave system enables either the mother or the father of a child to be released from work during the child's first year. It has almost invariably been the mother who has taken parental leave (Lammi-Taskula 2006; Salmi 2006). Even in families where the father is committed to parenting, absence from work is something that fathers are not readily willing to do (Lammi-Taskula 2006). Fathers and mothers have the possibility to stay at home with their children until the youngest child is three years old (with a home care allowance). Again, this is an option taken up widely by mothers (Anttonen 1998; 2003).

Finland also has an extensive municipal maternity and child health-care system used by all mothers and families. Marjo Kuronen (1999; 2001) has described the practices of maternity and child health care as based on gender equality and a strong family orientation, but also on building up the friendly relationship between the professionals and mothers. Moreover, breastfeeding is recommended in both medical and public health discourses to promote mother-infant bonding and infant development (Kuronen 1999, 211–212; cf. Murphy 2000; Schmied & Lupton 2001).

In fact, the research done in the Finnish context reveals a paradox: even if men are encouraged to engage in fathering, a proportion of scientists and professionals emphasise the primacy of the mother (Kuronen 1999; 2001; Vuori 2001). Thus, despite the gender equality embodied in legislation, Finnish professional and expert knowledge, and the cultural expectations of parenting, seem to form an ambivalent landscape for parenting in Finland (Anttonen 1998; Kuronen 2001; Perälä-Littunen 2004; 2007; Vuori 2001).

1.3   On situatedness: I as a researcher and as a mother

My own mothering experiences have had an effect on the present study; I was and am interested in studying the process of becoming a mother as a multifaceted phenomenon. I did not think that the transition to motherhood as a research topic had been exhausted by the work done in the psychological and feminist domains. More relational and experiential approach was needed, one which would also take into consideration the specific Finnish cultural and social context of becoming a mother.

Lynne Pearce (2002) states that it is not easy to 'speak' our positioning. In the course of her own research she found that it was very difficult for people to argue simultaneously the different aspects of their identity (i.e. national, gendered, racial). She argues that particular problems exist concerning how we can articulate the ontological complexity of our situatedness. With respect to my own situatedness as a researcher, I am a woman and a mother. This question is ontological, and not epistemological only (Battersby 1998, 6–7). My path to becoming a mother was much the same as that of my interviewees: I was in a heterosexual relationship, I had given 'natural' birth to my first daughter, I had experienced the same maternal health care procedures as the interviewees. We all live in the same Finnish culture with its emphasis on gender equality and most of us have a similar educational background. I have experience of caring for a baby on a daily basis.

My understanding is intermingled with my mothering, and this has both its strengths and weaknesses. According to my intention to remain close to the everyday life of mothering, having an insider position enabled me to understand these women, to ask questions which kept the interviews close to the level of everyday life. My vision or position was from inside, and every now

and then during the research project I had the feeling that I was too close, that is, too much a mother, and not a researcher. Rosalind Edwards and Jane Ribbens (1998) have been influential on the question of researching other people's private, intimate, domestic, personal lived experiences and understandings, and their social worlds. As researchers, we seek knowledge about these private lives, bring and translate them into public, academic knowledge. At the same time, we ourselves have our own personal lives. Edwards and Ribbens (1998) say that this often causes us to shift uneasily between the position of the participant and that of the listener.

The phenomenological notion of a feeling of strangeness or unintelligibility was important in sensitising myself to the other mothers' narratives. I did not try to understand what was told on the basis of my own experiences, but tried to figure out how they felt and what they thought in the situations they were talking about. For many phenomenologists these principles of understanding in relation to investigating others' lives mean a need the researcher to bracket her own conceptualisations (see Laine 2001). This process is called phenomenological reduction. Amadeo Giorgi (1997) perceives phenomenological reduction as bracketing all earlier knowledge concerning the phenomenon under investigation so that the researcher can be open to the phenomenon as lived in everyday life. Herbert Spiegelberg (1978, 692–694) views this bracketing of earlier knowledge as belonging in particular to the preliminary stage of data analysis.

It is claimed that the researcher cannot free herself or himself from her or his pre-conceptions. The researcher has to take responsibility for her analyses and interpretations. The question of the process of making decisions, selections and interpretations is always present (see Riessman 1993, 8–15). As Heather Fraser (2004) and Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner (2002) point out, these decisions have an ethical aspect: are our interpretations respectful towards the participants and fair towards their stories. Furthermore, because the interpretations that emerge from the research process have to be discussed with reference to scientific arguments and with scientific audiences in addition to the interpretations of the people being studied, the concepts, theories, perspectives used need to be reflected on as well (Doucet & Mauthner 2002). This process has been described by Edwards and Ribbens (1998) as demanding reflection in order to preserve the 'voices' of the private, personal, intimate lives of the participants.

What differentiates me from my interviewees, what makes me an 'outsider'? Is it my being a researcher, my feminist commitments, or is it being a mother of three children who are all girls? My lived experiences, strung together, differentiate me from other women; in this lies the idiosyncrasy of everybody's lives. Donna Haraway (1991, 193) states:

> "The topography of subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always construed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another."

2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND KEY CONCEPTS IN STUDYING THE BEGINNING OF MOTHERHOOD

2.1 Ontology of mothering as lived experience

This study has its roots in hermeneutical phenomenology. Its central concept is lived experience that is grounded on the phenomenological idea that being a human means to have an experiential relation with the world (see Laine 2001). Researching lived experiences means focussing on the world of everyday life, on the world as we live it through in our daily lives. Vangie Bergum (1997, 5) depicts the aim of phenomenological research as

> "to understand what a person's experience is from his or her point of view, as opposed to explaining actions, decisions, or patterns from an outside point of view or starting from a theoretical construct".

Thus, phenomenology implies an attempt to examine the world as perceived, known and lived. The ontological claim embodied in hermeneutical phenomenology asserts the subject "as engaged in practices, as a being who acts in and on a world" (Taylor 1991, 308).

The following sections discuss how identity and subjectivity might be thought about differently. The discussion takes its departure from the embodied realm, in which case birth and the fact of being born have a meaning for how identity and gender might be seen, from the relationality of our being, and from our temporally constructed self-understanding. These different aspects are often intertwined in lived experience and in life, as is also the case in discussing them; however some aspects are also separately highlighted.

2.1.1 Conceptualising (gendered) embodiment

Charles Taylor (1991, 309) states that our understanding itself is embodied. Our conceptions of ourselves, other people, and the world are understood through lived embodiment (Marander-Eklund 2000, 57–59; Taylor 1991). Lived embodiment locates us in the world; through embodiment we have a situated relation to the world (Haraway 1991; Young 2005, 6–9). Through embodiment we also relate with other people, as the basis of relationships is encounters between people with bodies, i.e., relationality is embodied relationality. Tina Miller (2005, 13) pays attention to the embodied and gendered aspects of self. She (2005, 13) states "as we actively make sense of experiences and produce and sustain (and *re*construct) narrative accounts we do so from embodied, gendered and unequal positions within the social world".

Embodiment has been a much discussed theme in feminist research (see Young 2005). Iris Marion Young (2005, 5–6) states that Western metaphysics first postulated the idea of an autonomous individual subject who inhabits but is distinct from a body. Phenomenological thought can be seen as transcending the Cartesian distinction between mind and body. In theories about selfhood and identity, women were not included as rational, autonomous, self-sufficient subjects, but as others departing from the male norm. Women were attached to their bodies, and were seen as closer to the nature. In particular, being a mother restricted women's possibilities of becoming something else (more). They had tasks tied to their reproductive bodies.

In researching motherhood, embodiment has been a two-sided question for feminist thought. Motherhood was seen as an ability or encumbrance of the female body that differentiated women from men. First, women's reproductive ability was comprehended as controlled by patriarchal order and a means of oppressing women. Early second-wave feminists, for example Simone Beauvoir, claimed that reproduction and motherhood attached women to their bodies and prohibited them from achieving their freedom (Battersby 1998, 35–36). Only negation of the female body enabled the coming into being of a 'free' self (Battersby 1998, 35–36). Motherhood was seen not as the free choice of a woman but as the inevitable destiny of the female body. Alternatively, motherhood as an experience could be seen as emancipating for women if not restricted by motherhood as an institution (e.g. Rich 1977). Ecofeminist thought has celebrated women's embodied reproductive ability and motherhood as a site of resistance for patriarchal culture. By the same token, motherhood as an experience becomes idealised (see Chodorow & Contratto 1992). Thus, the connection between being a woman, motherhood and embodiment has been seen either as an obstacle or as a resource for women. These opposite views, however, have been claimed to essentialise motherhood as the destiny or ability of the female body, linking women first and foremost to their reproduction without acknowledging differences between women.

Christine Battersby (1998) states that in considering the ontological groundings of the self, we need to take seriously the idea that we all are embodied subjects. Battersby (1998, 8–11) presents a framework of identity, in which

the starting point is female embodiment, that is, women experiencing a body with the capacity to generate another body. Battersby goes further and suggests that the concept of identity needs to be thought anew on the basis of natality. Through birthing the self is foundationally related to the other and thus the relationships are based on embodiment. In addition, the self can be seen not as something disconnected from the body but as inseparable from it.

Gender has been shown to be central in studying many important questions such as those concerning self, identity, subjectivity or agency, care or family relations (Byrne 2003; Finch 1994; Finch & Mason 1993; McNay 2000; Miller 2005; Morgan 1996; Sevenhuijsen 1998). Emotional closeness, maintaining family relations and care are deeply gendered practices; even expectations related to these are connected more to female agency than male agency (Finch 1994; Finch & Mason 1993; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 80; Smart 1991). Understanding embodiment as gendered might be understood to imply that mothering is something that only female bodies are capable of, however, I understand the emphasis on female embodiment to mean, first, that the conceptions of identity and the self need to be thought anew on the basis of our embodied and relational being (see Battersby 1998; Young 2005). Second, women's and men's experiences differ not only because their bodies are a female or a male, but also on account of the cultural and social meanings of what is feminine or masculine, which affect how we experience ourselves as females and males. This is not to say that men cannot 'mother', or that there are no differences between women, or that women and men cannot have similar experiences.

Selma Sevenhuijsen (1998, 81) stresses that gender should be analysed as a multilayered phenomenon. She (1998, 81) states that "gender, including its embodied aspect, is something which women feel and act upon; they (are able to) employ a whole range of gendered forms of behaviour. Women are not passive victims of their body." Gender can be seen as something we do rather than what we are (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 80).

In this study, identity and selfhood are seen as profoundly embodied and through this as relational and involved with dependencies and power differences (see Battersby 1998; Miller 2005; Sevenhuijsen 1998). The act of interpreting the interviewed women's maternal experiences and narratives, and of considering the self as embodied means recognising the deeper layers of the studied mothers' meaning-making processes. Along with Young (2005), the emphasis here is not only on the female, but also on how this female becomes standardised and defined through the cultural meanings ascribed to the feminine in our Western and, specifically, Finnish culture. To be a mother is not only something bound to the female body, but something that has been considered a woman's capacity and duty for centuries in our culture. In addition, the idea of the female is not something that transcends culture, but is construed socially (Battersby 1998, 20–21). As Battersby (1998) emphasises, it must be acknowledged that the idea of seeing selfhood through the female does not mean excluding men or childless women as other, but to see that at an abstract level the

conceptions of an autonomous, self-sufficient, rational, cogito self fails to take into account the idea of the embodied and relational grounds of identity.

2.1.2 Relationality of mothering

Battersby's framework, presented above, stressed that our being is in a very profound way relational, interdependent and dependent. The relationality of being means that being-in-the-world is primordially being-with, that is, our identities and agencies are linked with other people. This idea of relationality is counter to the view that individuals are autonomous, isolated subjects. The idea of the profound nature of the relationality of being can be found in hermeneutic phenomenology, and also in studies on ethics, and in feminist-orientated studies on (female) subjectivity and relationships (Bauman 1995; Heidegger 1996; Josselson 1996; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Tronto 1994). It can even be claimed that individual autonomy can only be a myth because we are fundamentally relational subjects (Battersby 1998; Mason 2004; Miller 1994). Nancy K. Miller (1994) insists that we should view gender, like identity, as intrinsically relational processes. Jennifer Mason (2004) argues that in research there should be a greater focus on the processes of relating. She specifies (2004, 177) that

> "this is qualitatively and substantially different from the idea of individuals *with* relationships and responsibilities (and rights) that underpins, for example, Giddens' reflections on family democracy. It means that both agency and identity need to be understood relationally, and that the selves that emerge from our narratives are not simply 'selves in relation', but relational selves."

If our being-in-the-world is considered to be relational, then morality is situated at the centre of our being. For Zygmunt Bauman (1995) to be moral means that we are confronted with the morality of choices that are a result of us being essentially responsible for how we live together with other people. Responsibility for others is seen as the core of our moral agency in the theory of the ethics of care which is discussed in more detail in section 2.4.2, where motherhood is related to morality and responsibility.

One assumption underlying my work is that it is important to investigate the beginning of motherhood through relationality, that is, to pay attention to whether and, if so, how maternal identities are born and created in relation to other people. What kind of relationality from the mother's perspective exists between mother and child? What aspects, emotions, and interactions does the mother stress as meaningful, important or in need of sense making in her relationship with her baby? In addition to the child or children, motherhood is also dependent on other significant persons close to the mother. In the situation of heterosexual stable couples, it might even be argued that becoming a mother and having a child happens inside the couple relationship rather than being an individual woman's autonomous choice and responsibility. I would argue that feminist scholars have often studied how the social construction of motherhood affects and restricts women, and seen mothering as an individual experience or through the mother's relationship with the child. More attention should be paid

to how maternal identity and agency depends on the woman's partner or other people. In this study women's mothering is viewed relationally.

2.1.3 Self-understanding, temporality and agency

Hermeneutic phenomenology stresses that the meaning-making process plays a central role for us humans, that is, we give meanings to our experiences. According to Martin Heidegger (1996), understanding is a primordial fact of being human. We give meanings to our experiences through understanding and interpretation. Taylor (1991) regards human beings as self-interpreting beings and therefore the meaning of human actions are for an agent – for the beings-for-whom they are meaningful. Meanings are nodes of lived, embodied agency and understood reality. Meanings are always partial, incomplete and from the point of view of the self (Haraway 1991; Heidegger 1996; von Bonsdorff 2002). In other words, the world is not identical for all of us; it is a world of our own perspective. Understanding and interpretation is a process, which Heidegger (1996, 152) has described as:

> "When with the being of Da-sein innerworldly beings are discovered, that is, have come to be understood, we say that they have *meaning*. But strictly speaking, what is understood is not the meaning, but beings, or being. Meaning is that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself."

Experiences and their subjective meanings are born in encounters between the embodied subject and the world (Taylor 1991, 308; van Manen 1990, 24–27; Varto 1992, 23–24, 55–57). The world should not be perceived as an abstract concept but as containing embodied others, communities, institutions, symbols and orders, societies with which and in which we live our lives of and in the present time. Taylor (1991) considers self-understanding as relational, depending on other people. We also live in the web of our culture, its practices, ways of thinking and value systems; in an everyday world which is historical, i.e., changing and yet natural for each person living in that world in a sense that it is experienced to be given and it constitutes a basis on which a person lives and acts (von Bonsdorff 2002, 317).

Lois McNay (2000, 76–77) stresses the active role of the subject in the process of identity formation. She (2000, 76) states that

> "[T]his denotes the idea that individuals do not passively absorb external determinations, but are actively engaged in the interpretation of experience and, therefore, in a process of self-formation, albeit on a pre-reflexive level".

Also Kerry Daly (2003) suggests that even if in lived experience culture is usually hidden from view and provides us with the coordinates of meaning, culture is not a straightforward device which tells us how to act. Instead, people use culture or perceive culture as a pool of resources from which they choose meanings for their action. I understand this to mean that symbolic orders and meanings are not transformed into individual meanings and practices in a

straightforward manner (see McNay 2000, 77). Given the active, but also ambivalent, interpretation processes of individuals, the holding of even irrational or oppressive identities becomes understandable (McNay 2000, 77). That is to say, people may interpret their lives in relation to multiple, conflicting meanings at the same time or at different times in order to maintain their sense of self.

These active and ambivalent interpretation processes enable agency to be seen as a creative reaction to contradictions, allowing the possibility of non-oppositional and non-dominating relations and of relating to the other in a meaningful way (McNay 2000, 77–78). McNay (2000, 76) criticises the poststructural theories of agency which see the subjectification as a negative process where identity becomes an externally imposed effect. The formation of self-identity cannot be separated from material and structural constraints, but this process needs an account that enables the possibility of agency over external forces. According to McNay (2000, 78–79) the temporal conception of self-identification is able to explain the historical embeddedness of meanings and the durability of certain forms of identity. The temporality of identity formation can explain why nothing is fixed in the nature of meanings, which, at the same time, become restricted through our (emotional) investments in time and during the life course to certain meanings in our narrative accounts about ourselves (McNay 2000, 80).

In this study individual and temporal understanding and interpretation processes are seen to have an active role in how the interviewed women make sense of their mothering experiences. The narrative approach, which focuses on questions of the nature of meaning-making processes, will be discussed in more detail in section 3.1.

2.2   Everyday perspective on mothering

If we take seriously our ontologically experiential relationship within reality, we need to consider how it becomes possible to research lived experiences. In this section I discuss theoretically the nature and scope of experiences related to early mothering and how these experiences can epistemologically become a focus of research from the perspective of everyday life.

2.2.1 Everyday life as a focus of research

Everyday life has become of interest in different disciplines both in philosophy and anthropology (Felski 2000; Heller 1984) and the social sciences from feminist research (Jokinen 2005; Salmi 2004; Silva & Bennett 2004) to the recent expansion in family research (Larson & Almeida 1999; Rönkä, Malinen & Lämsä 2009). The rise of interest in studying everyday life lies both in claims that everyday life has become problematic and in understanding everyday life critically

as a concept capable of integrating different fragmentary aspects of life (Bennett & Silva 2004; Felski 2000; Salmi 2004, 12). In family research, Daly (2003) has argued for the need to develop family theories in the direction of the theories that families themselves live by. He asserts that the concerns of everyday life, which are mundane and pervasive, are important in researching family life, but yet absent from the established family theories.

Theoretically everyday life has been conceptualised variously. It has been stated that the distinction between production (work, working life, working time, public) and reproduction (housing, family life, free time, private), which arouse from industrialisation, made everyday life visible, separable and increasingly important (Felski 2000; Heller 1984, 3; Salmi 2004). Agnes Heller (1984, 37) argues that all human beings must reproduce themselves as individuals in order to reproduce society. She understands everyday life as an ensemble for this reproductive purpose. All people must sleep, eat and attempt to engender offspring. Everyday life is also a part of social reproduction, i.e., social reproduction happens in everyday life.

Phenomenologically viewed, the everyday life of people is bound to their immediate environment. Everyday life carries the meanings of repetition, routines, and conventionality (Felski 2000; Heller 1984; Jokinen 2003; Salmi 2004, 17–21). Rita Felski (2000) divides everyday life into the temporal dimension, characterised by repetition, the spatiality dimension, which includes the sense of home, and the habitual or conventional dimension. Repetition refers to something that happens cyclically, such as 'day after day', in contrast to linear, progressive time (Felski 2000). However, Felski (2000, 21) points out that everyday life and repetition are not the opposite of linear time, progress and agency, but "the temporality of everyday life is internally complex: it combines repetition and linearity, recurrence with forward movement". By the sense of home she means home not just as a geographical place, but as a sense of belongingness, as a familial location. Finally, in everyday life we dwell in conventionality without a need to reflect constantly on our everyday routines; we adopt a taken-for-granted attitude. Repetition of actions in everyday life offers ontological security for the self, and habits rooted in everyday life offer familiar, and often gendered, positions for agency (Felski 2000; Jokinen 2003; 2005; Salmi 2004, 17–21; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 80). In philosophical and sociological thought everyday life has been defined negatively in terms of greyness, boredom, non-reflexivity, alienation, misery and even of being the enemy of an authentic life (Felski 2000; Salmi 2004, 17–21).

In this connection, the question about the possibility of change runs counter to the nature of everyday life (Felski 2000; Salmi 2004, 11–12). It has been argued that everyday life can preserve, but it can also be transformative: routines 'preserve' people, because they enable everyday life to be lived without the need to reflect on every action (Felski 2000), but everyday life carries the seed of change through tiny changes in actions and habits (Jokinen 2005, 30). Thus, everyday life also embodies opportunities for agency.

In addition, I would argue that everyday life theorists have forgotten to consider the relationality of everyday life (see Holmes 2009; Morgan 2004). I suggest that encounters with other people, even if they are often habitual and taken-for-granted, offer everyday life the possibility for change and sometimes even compel change. Even if relationality is present in almost every area of everyday life, relationality is especially visible in family life (see Morgan 2004). Everyday life encounters with other people include interactions, ruptures, frictions, tensions and clashes related to mutual imbalances of temporality, routines or habituality. The temporality experienced by a child and an adult is different, and some of the habits of one's partner may irritate. These may cause conflicts and quarrels, a change in our or in the other's behaviour or a need to reflect on our everyday life. For example, beginning dating, moving in together, having and rearing a child or divorce also embody ruptures of repetition, unconventionality and agency. However, it has been argued that agency in everyday life is a kind of 'small' agency such as solving problems, bearing, tolerating, suffering and caring, instead of executing, fulfilling or performing (Honkasalo 2004). At the same time, 'small' agency is often a relational agency.

Minna Salmi (2004, 17) remarks that understanding everyday life as reproduction was important for feminist research in the 1960s and 1970s, hence unpaid (women's) work at home became visible and was seen as necessary for society. At the same time, everyday life began to be seen as a product of individual and collaborative action (Salmi 2004, 17). If it is in particular women who 'dwell' and act in the private sphere taking care of children and the home, and if it is men who do productive work in the public sphere, everyday life renders gender hierarchy visible (see Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Holmes 2009; Salmi 2004, 21). The various features of everyday life carry gendered connotations, which reproduce invisibly, pervasively and over time gender hierarchy (Felski 2000; Holmes 2009; Jokinen 2003). Everyday life, boredom, non-reflectivity and immutability become seen as female while escape from everyday life, excitement, reflexivity and change are seen as male, even if we all need and live everyday life. These categorisations also open up a gap between these two 'ambits', and do not acknowledge that the mere fact of having everyday life enables disengagement from it (see Felski 2000).

2.2.2 Epistemological and ethical questions related to research on everyday life

Edwards and Ribbens (1998) justify the need for hearing and representing the private domestic lives of women and men. Daly (2003) also talks about the negative spaces of family life being in a need of research and theorisation. In his view the unpredictable flow of daily events and discrepancies of family behaviour are undertheorised. In this flow he sees emotions having a specific meaning: love, anger, frustration, hurt or care belong substantially to the family realm. Emotions arise in everyday family life; positive and negative, are felt, expressed and regulated, they are mediated from one family member to another (Daly 2003; Larson & Almeida 1999; Strazdins & Broom 2004). Thus, emotion

work is done in families. Daly (2003) thinks it would be particularly worth studying positive emotions rather than negative emotions, and the emotional processes and contradictions between the co-existence of different emotions. Further, he sees shortcomings in not understanding love as a basic motivation in family relations. Love exists in everyday family experience, even if sometimes irrationally, and thus is one salient motivating feature in caring and belongingness in families (Daly 2003).

It is stated that there is both a gap and a difficulty in researching the everyday life of mothers, i.e., what women actually do and think as mothers, and even in narrating maternal feelings (Jokinen 1997, 144; Miller 1998; Nousiainen 2004; Ribbens 1998; Vuori 1999; 2003). To do this demands the sensitivity to ask, listen to and then to speak again the narratives and experiences of everyday life (Edwards & Ribbens 1998). Further, Edwards and Ribbens (1998) stress that exploring aspects of domestic and intimate lives involves methodological and epistemological considerations at every stage of the research process: what concepts we use, how we collect the data and face the participants, how we interpret their accounts, and how we write up the findings and draw conclusions.

Theorisations of everyday life have been criticised either for romanticising and glorifying (female) everyday life as authentic and pure or for undervaluing it as a source of alienation and oppression (Bennett & Silva 2004; Felski 2000). It is vital to see both women and men as embodied subjects with repetitive, ordinary everyday lives without undervaluing the aspects of everyday life. Further, it needs to be acknowledged that private lives do not need any glorification, and that the tensions and problems of private life need to be taken into account as well as the positive aspects (Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Felski 2000).

While phenomenological accounts of everyday life are able exquisitely to capture the features of the everyday life, they cannot explain precisely enough how these experiences are given meaning or the impact of culture on our meaning-making processes in everyday life (see Jokinen 2005, 29–30). Neither do they account for how change and agency are possible in everyday life. Tony Bennett (2004) points out that we need to see how habits and repetition are interwoven with social forces and a multiplicity of powers that can make everyday life at the same time coercive but also transformative. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of seeing of persons 'dwelling' in everyday life as capable of critical, self-reflective awareness. In this sense, everyday life and the social structure are overlapping. Changes in society at large, as well as those related to child rearing and education, are met, lived and solved in families (see Forsberg 2003).

Thus everyday life, in addition to being seen a self-governing, habitual repetition of the same, needs to be acknowledged as a suit for agency, for knowledge and transformation (see Bennett 2004; Edwards & Ribbens 1998; McNay 2000). Agency, learning through everyday actions, and change, however, are not easy to achieve, particularly, in the family realm, because everyday life in families also embodies the more normative element of how should we live (Morgan 2004). Acknowledging this is crucial when studying the everyday life of mothers: motherhood is surrounded by scientific, professional and lay

accounts of how mothering should be performed, while at the same time mothering is deeply linked with women's identities.

In this study, a feminist orientation means, first, attributing importance to the various ways in which women themselves experience, narrate and evaluate their everyday lives. Dorothy Smith (1987) has proposed that we need research that is not only about women but for women. This means an ethical commitment to conduct research in order to obtain knowledge that is based on women's experiences and their ways of perceiving and knowing the world (see Young 2005, 5–6). Edwards and Ribbens (1998) stress the importance of listening to the stories of mundane everyday lives carefully, and of dialogue more on the topic of what we share with those stories on the personal level than on disciplinary concepts (see also Daly 2003).

2.3   Becoming a mother or transition to parenthood?

2.3.1 Life course, transitions and turning points in need of reflection

The transition to parenthood can be seen as connected to research relating to the life course and turning points of lives. In the classic life course or life span developmental theories, the life course is viewed through developmental stages and crises (e.g. Erikson 1950; Levinson et al. 1978). Life transitions may offer a personal developmental crisis that has positive impacts on the personal values, life goals and wellbeing of the individual (Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003). The concept of turning point is defined in psychology as a point where life changes: decisions concerning one's own life are re-evaluated, one's way of living changes and new role expectations are met (e.g. Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003). The concept of a turning point differs from the concepts of a transition or life event. Transitions are life phases that involve some kind of normativity; the individual moves linearly from one stage or phase to another, roles are transformed, redefined or left behind, but such transitions are not necessarily evaluated as personally significant and offering new meaning to life (see Aapola & Ketokivi 2005; Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003).

Critics have claimed that the life stage theories do not take into account individualised life paths and trajectories, but instead offer people a normative mould of what constitutes a 'normal' life course. Many sociologists claim that such a normal biography no longer exists (e.g. Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1991). Life politics refers to the idea that individuals are obliged to and do reflect on their life choices and decisions (Giddens 1991; Hoikkala & Roos 2000). Often these choices and decisions have a moral nature. Anni Vilkko (2000) argues that lives at the present era do not conform with traditional definitions of life course stages and thus individuals are obliged to construct their selves and life courses through reflection and constantly moulding their life stories. She argues, following Anthony Giddens (1991), that even the traditional life

'choices' need to be justified as individual choices. This produces a need to reflect on them already beforehand and makes life transitions more vulnerable to crisis (Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005; Vilkko 2000).

This does not mean seeing life transitions as productive of a negative crisis for individuals, but instead emphasises the growing requirements for reflection (see Miller 2005, 139–142; Vilkko 2000). Consequently, transitions or life events often become turning points. It may thus be argued that on the cultural level, people still share certain assumptions about what constitutes a good, proper or successful life course. For example, we may assume that young adults need to have education and work or they need to be married before having children, we lay down criteria for what age it is suitable to become a parent, or we may think that a woman loses something essential if she does not become a mother. Such taken-for-granted cultural expectations may carry with them long traditions of thinking about the 'proper' life course. These expectations may depend on gender, social class, ethnicity, embodiment and sexuality (see Gordon 1990, 14–15; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005).

In narrative research, the focus is often on how people themselves sense how their lives develop, what the life crises or turning points of people's lives are and how they connect their life events, for example, to time, age, gender and to the wider social and cultural environment (Plummer 2001, 191–194). This study draws on the narrative research tradition and thus tries to understand how women themselves describe and evaluate the beginning of their motherhood and what kinds of meanings they themselves construct in connection with their life course at this point of their lives. However, it has been claimed that turning points cannot be recognised, understood and revealed as such, but only when time has passed, retrospectively, and from a distance (Freeman 2006; Plummer 2001, 194–195; Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003). This study runs counter to this kind of thinking and assumes that the nature of early mothering lies behind the dailyness of mothering (see Edwards & Ribbens 1998) and is difficult to trace afterwards. Distance from the experiences of early mothering may also lead to an attempt to suppress feelings that depart from the ideals of mothering (see Miller 1998; 2000; 2005).

Bren Neale and Jennifer Flowerdew (2003) stress that longitudinal qualitative research enables the importance of time and the temporal dimensions of social life to be recognised. This is important in the present era of rapid social change. They argue that in longitudinal qualitative research the texture of social life, denoting the intermingling of personal identities, individual pathways and subjective meanings with social relationships and cultural practices, interplays with temporality. Neale and Flowerdew (2003, 193) state that longitudinal qualitative research approaches human lives from the viewpoint of everyday lives, from the 'fabric of *real lives*', in which the focus is on detailed story lines instead of an epic picture. Compared to longitudinal quantitative research, the life course can be studied utilising more fluid and individualised notions about what defines it instead of the traditional conceptualisations of linear and fixed stages and trajectories. The aspect of how people themselves experience, reflect

on and conceptualise time and change can be brought in as a focus of study (Neale & Flowerdew 2003).

I have tried to replace the concept transition to motherhood and instead used the terms the beginning of motherhood, early motherhood and the phrase becoming a mother. However, the term transition to motherhood is used in some occasions as well, as it is an established concept referring to the beginning of parenthood as well as to an established area of research with which the present study also engages. However, I do not want to attach this study solely to the transition research tradition, because I assume that the beginning of motherhood is highly likely to be one of the major turning points of a woman's life, both at the time and evaluated retrospectively, even if in our culture mothering is assumed to be almost an inevitable part of the 'normal' female life course. Many women consider the transition to parenthood as a turning point in their adult lives (Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003). My starting point is that it may be difficult to conceive of having one's own thoughts and feelings about mothering in a context that assumes mothering to be self-evident, always rewarding and similar for all women (see Article I).

(Longitudinal) qualitative research focusing on the beginning of motherhood from the mother's viewpoint has increased during recent years (e.g. Bailey 1999; 2000; Bergum 1997; Choi, Henshaw, Baker & Tree 2005; Fox 2001; Kelhä 2005; Lupton 2000; Marander-Eklund 2000; Miller 1998; 2000; 2005; Niemelä 2005; Tardy 2000; Woollett & Parr 1997). These studies show that becoming a mother needs to be seen as an intricate phenomenon. Mothering is rewarding and demanding at the same time, mothering affects the mother's relationships, her relation to work, to her body, and, profoundly, her identity (Bailey 2000; Bergum 1997; Lupton 2000; Marander-Eklund 2000; Woollett & Parr 1997). Furthermore, these studies show there is a cultural master narrative of good motherhood lurking behind all women who are in the process of becoming mothers (Choi et al. 2005; Kelhä 2005; Lupton 2000; Miller 2005; Niemelä 2005; Tardy 2000). This narrative has an effect on how first-time mothers learn to evaluate themselves ambivalently in terms of good and bad, right and wrong (Choi et al. 2005; Lupton 2000; Miller 2000; 2005; Tardy 2000). In today's world becoming a mother may be simultaneously a narrative pivot and a turning point in a woman's life, both of which require reflective work from women (Bailey 1999; Marander-Eklund 2000; Miller 2005; Woollett & Parr 1997).

2.3.2 Becoming parents as a turning point of the couple relationship

Turning point approaches in close relationship research assume that close relationships do not develop (always) through linear trajectories, but through different turning points that are associated with a change in a relationship (see Conville 1998; Guerrero, Andersen & Afifi 2007, 105–106). New life circumstances may cause a turning point in a relationship. Turning points may include relational turbulence in the couple relationship, which can be caused by changes in everyday life, and which incurs a need to question and negotiate

aspects of the relationship anew (e.g. Conville 1998; Knobloch 2007; Solomon & Knobloch 2004).

The transition to parenthood has been shown to change the quality of the couple relationship; it may have deleterious effects, even if having the child may also strengthen it (Cowan & Cowan 1992; Shapiro, Gottman & Carrére 2000). In addition, expectations and the impact of violated expectations on the transition to parenthood have been studied (e.g. Ruble, Fleming, Hackel & Stangor 1988). These studies have shown that becoming parents often has deleterious effects on the new parents' couple relationship, especially from the woman's point of view. The expectations towards becoming parents and towards the child seem to be higher, and the degrading impacts, consequently, stronger for the woman's evaluation of the couple relationship (Belsky & Kerry 1994; Belsky, Lang & Rovine 1985; Cowan & Cowan 1992; Ruble et al. 1988; Shapiro, Gottman & Carrére 2000). These mainly quantitative studies alone show that the transition to parenthood is dissimilar for women and men, and that the birth of the child has impacts on the couple relationship.

It has been claimed that the cultural and social climate at the present era has changed from more gendered positions in the couple relationship and parenting towards more gender-neutral or gender-equal positions (e.g. Allan 2008; Cherlin 2004; Giddens 1992; Vuori 2001). At the same time, however, the present-day ethos prioritises 'living a life of one's own' over collaboration and mutual adjustment, which renders couple relationships and parenthood more vulnerable than earlier (Amato 2004; Cherlin 2004; Thagaard 1997). Graham Allan (2008) claims that the transition to parenthood has become a more complicated effort than in the past. The detraditionalisation of marriage in heterosexual couple relationships has meant that the cultural expectations, norms and ideals related to family life and roles are only actualised at the precise point when the partners become parents. He (2008) emphasises that the transition to parenthood forms a phase where the couple needs to reconcile their diverse ideals about family life, family roles and their responsibilities as partners and parents, and the cultural ideals related to them.

A similar line of argumentation can be found in the study of Riitta Jallinoja (2000), who sees the birth of the child as a 'third' from the viewpoint of the couple relationship, and this threatens and transforms romance into reality. The ethics of love is replaced with the ethics of rules and taking turns. Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002, 87) writes about the pressure of today to attach great expectations to becoming parents, to have a special child and "give their child 'the best start in life'". She argues that parenting has become a more demanding, expert-guided and responsible task involving high investment in and, consequently, expectations about the quality of family life and children's abilities. However, at the same time, the couple relationship has become more vulnerable (Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

Allan (2008) claims that despite the trend towards individualisation, the normative and institutional framings of family relations and friendship ties remain distinct such that people in their everyday lives understand the forms of

reciprocity, obligation and commitment in these relations differently. Friendship is characterised as nonhierarchical, reciprocal tie characterised by equality and balance (Allan 2008). In people's relationships with their partners, parents and children, providing support is given priority over friends and, at least in the short term, reciprocity is not usually expected (Allan 2008). It has been argued that, for women especially, the process of individualisation is complex, because the ideal of the individualised biography conflicts with the conventional expectation that women take care of others' well-being (Adkins 2003; McNay 2000; Miller 2005). It appears that in becoming parents the task of fitting into the contradictory role demands of being a good mother, a good partner, sharing parenting and having a good relationship is particularly exacting for women.

2.4   Motherhood and morality

2.4.1 The question of the 'good mother'

Susan E. Chase (2001) discusses the divide between 'good' mothers and 'bad' mothers. This polarisation generates divides between women, and thus can be used to prohibit women from seeing the structures that have created motherhood as the female ideal and standard (Letherby 1994; Tardy 2000). Why is motherhood so often discussed only in terms of good or through the dichotomy between good and bad, right and wrong? The question can be considered from four different angles.

First of all, as a concept motherhood is filled with a variety of ideals and high values. In our everyday talk and in public debate, we talk about how a mother should behave or act. We all have our own ideals related to motherhood. Second, Sharon Hays (1996) argues that the image of the mother-child relation is most purely the relationship of the present era which is based on altruism. She suggests that the pressure on mothers and the determination of the mother-child relation is strong, since the rest of our present-day relationships are, at least, portrayed as based on individual satisfaction and choice (for pure relationships see Giddens 1992).

Hays (1996) describes present time US mothering as intensive mothering. She defines intensive mothering to be child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive and financially expensive (Hays 1996, 8). Intensive mothering demands time, constant involvement, emotion work and energy from women who become and are mothers. Mothers, according to Hays (1996, 131), do not have any other 'choice' than whether or not add the role of paid working woman to the role of intensive mothering. In other words, if a woman wants to be a good mother, she needs to be an intensive one. Hays (1996, 149–151) points out that almost all mothers experience ambivalence despite being at home or as working mothers. She goes further with her argument by saying

that this ambivalence is a mark of wider ambivalence about a society based on the competitive pursuit of self-interest. Motherhood is a space where the contradiction between human-centred morality and the impersonal competitive pursuit of individual gain is played out (Hays 1996, 18, 172–178).

Third, motherhood as an institution signifies the idea that motherhood has a specific meaning for society's functioning in general, i.e., society is dependent on how the mothers (and fathers) raise their children. The debate on the quality of the socialisation process, lost parenthood and (decent or proper) citizenship is connected to morality through moralisation. Normative pressure is focused on families, and especially mothers, with the emphasis on evaluating parenting practices as good and bad, right and wrong (see e.g. Jallinoja 2007; Jokinen 2005; May 2008). Jallinoja (2008) has suggested that present-day families are expected to carry out diverse and contradictory 'functions' that place a heavy burden on families. This loading of demands causes turbulence inside families.

As early as, in the 1980's Hanne Haavind (1985) observed that women have had a greater freedom of choice in their lives, but at the same time a greater responsibility. This responsibility becomes visible particularly in what women 'do' to their partners and children. It has been suggested that it is women in particular who battle against working life practices by taking time off for children through parental leave, leave to tend to sick children and by restricting their working hours or staying at home and remaining outside the labour market (Anttonen 2003; Salmi 2006; Sevón & Huttunen 2004). In the light of all this, it would seem that it is above all mothers whose morality is under scrutiny and who sense, combat and seek to balance these contradictory demands in their everyday lives, even if in many families men are willing to share the challenges of parenting with their partners.

Fourth, in addition to the aspects mentioned above, this study takes the view that there is a morality underlying parenting. Parenthood involves questions of responsibility, dependency, obligations, rights, ideals, principles, aims and authority, which are ethical by their very nature (e.g. Sevenhuijsen 1998; Värri 1997). In the case of becoming a parent and a mother, parenthood embodies an assumption about taking responsibility for the baby (Murphy 2000; Tronto 1994, 132). Responsibility involves moral ambiguities over how to understand and interpret the baby's needs and wellbeing, and what constitute the limits of responsibility and care for the baby (see Tronto 1994, 137–141). New mothers are suddenly confronted with these questions in their everyday lives.

2.4.2 The ethics of care and emotion work

The theorisation of the ethics of care derives from Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on female moral reasoning. Gilligan (1982) developed a theory of moral reasoning that stressed the particular morality of women as an answer to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which she considered as not taking into account the kind of moral reasoning that women have. Gilligan's theory has been much debated and further elaborated, as it was seen to essentialise gender difference at the expense of the diversity of women' voices or of men's

ability to give care (see Davis 1994; Larrabee 1993; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991; Tronto 1993; 1994). For example, Sevenhuijsen (1998) and Joan Tronto (1994) have developed the theory of the ethics of care in the direction of a more general theory about the moral nature of human beings.

It has been claimed that the postmodern era carries the possibility to become 'truly moral', in which case responsibility, moral choices and moral dilemmas, and moral ambiguity and moral ambivalence are understood to be part of people's everyday lives (Bauman 1995, 1–3; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 16–19). We have to deal with ambivalence because we are obliged to make moral choices (Bauman 1995, 4). The theory of the ethics of care played a significant role in the process of understanding and illustrating the women's narratives in this study. Three different aspects of the ethics of care, important for this study, were brought together. First, the ethics of care stresses the moral nature of human agency; second, it takes its departure from everyday life; and, third, it illuminates care as a basic dimension of relationality.

The (feminist) ethics of care stresses everyday care as a crucial aspect of moral agency and responsibility and relationality above abstract, individualised rights and rules (Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991). Sevenhuijsen (1998, 83) defines care "as an ability and a willingness to 'see' and to 'hear' needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met". Care thus is at the same time a moral disposition and practice (see Sevenhuijsen 2000; Smart 1991). In this way morality is seen as an activity rather than a set of principles (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 107; Tronto 1993). Maternal care can be defined as an attempt to be attentive and sensitive, to take responsibility over and take care of the routines belonging to caring for the child (see Fischer & Tronto 1990; Sevenhuijsen 2000).

However, care involves moral questions and dilemmas that people meet and need to solve in their everyday lives. Moral questions are particularly difficult in situations of dependency and power imbalance (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 84), when the other, like a young child in this study, is totally dependent on her or his carer. Care brings moral reasoning into everyday actions and interactions, because in all its phases care is a relational phenomenon (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 84). The value and the morality of caring comes through the activity of caring.

Sevenhuijsen (1998) sees care as a profound aspect of relationality, but in a way that does not (re)produce an idealised picture of relationality based on the image of a 'good mother'. The ethics of care explains gender differences in caring resulting from the social practices of caring; women do and are obliged to do more caring in our societies (Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991). Because women do caring more than men do, they are likely to establish a different worldview and moral position (Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991). This does not imply any essentialist or psychological viewpoint that women are more caring than men. Sevenhuijsen (1998, 13) argues that thinking dichotomously for or against the idea of 'female' reasoning and morality does not contribute to understanding the relations between gender, power, care and ethics, all of which are multilayered problems.

Consequently, Sevenhuijsen (1998, 60–62, 107–111) points out that there are pitfalls in explaining mothering via the ethics of care: first, attention is focused solely on mothers, thereby essentialising caring as a female capability; second, the issue of the goodness of care gives rise to a new kind of normativity; and third, motherhood becomes understood only in terms of care. In order to avoid these pitfalls, the concept of care needs to be understood as having a multifaceted nature. Especially when talking about motherhood, we have a set of emotions that are attached to good mothering, such as love, care, sensitivity, strength in our Western culture (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Katvala 2001, 92; Parker 1997). These emotions become the proper feelings a good mother can and is allowed to feel (Finch 1994, 206–208), and they construct maternal responsibility in particular ways (Andrews 2002; Hays 1996; Vuori 2001).

It is acknowledged in this study that care embodies diverse feelings, not just love and consideration, but also more negative feelings such as frustration, anger or guilt (see Sevenhuijsen 1998, 84). The concept of emotion work provided a means for understanding the women's narratives in this study. By drawing on the concept of emotion work a more detailed insight into the emotional aspects of care from the carer's point of view became possible (see Arendell 2000; Hochschild 2003; Miller 2005; Morgan 1996, 104–107; Strazdins & Broom 2004). The concept of emotion work does not consider caring as a 'naturally' fluent process, but enables analysis of the complexities and of the connections between the different emotions involved in caring (see Morgan 1996, 106–107). The nature of bearing responsibility for the child becomes visible: it is work in which one's emotions are involved and managed, and it demands skill, time and energy from the carer.

On the relational level, emotion work can be defined as time, intention, actions and efforts that are made to meet the emotional needs and enhance the well-being of other family members and to maintain concord in the family (Strazdins & Broom 2004). As Lyndall Strazdins and Dorothy Broom (2004, 357) point out, emotion work is "time consuming, can be demanding, involves opportunity costs, and is often invisible, unacknowledged, or devalued". On the level of the individual, emotion work means a process of emotion management in order to balance one's emotions and behaviour to correspond to feelings that are considered proper and right in the situation and relationship in question (e.g. Hochschild 2003; Morgan 1996, 104–107). The standards for proper emotions or behaviour often derive at the same time from an attempt to act in order to meet the other's needs, but they are also informed by cultural scripts. For Terry Arendell (2000) maternal emotion work is an ongoing process, where feelings shift in the course of a day and over longer period of time, depending on the child's behaviour and on support given by others. In this process a mother needs to manage and direct her feelings (Arendell 2000).

Emotion work is also linked with the couple relationship. It has been argued that women prefer an egalitarian model in organizing family and work, because they link emotion work and involvement at home by their partner with love and consideration for themselves (Guerrero, Andersen & Afifi 2007, 226–

227, 254–255; Stacey & Pearce 1995; Strazdins & Broom 2004; Thagaard 1997). This process may involve specific emotions: on the one hand feelings of satisfaction, gratification, intimacy and closeness and on the other hand feelings of frustration, anger and disappointment (Stacey & Pearce 1995; Thagaard 1997). Dissatisfaction may lead women to hope for and demand change in the relationship and more from their partners (Stacey & Pearce 1995; cf. Guerrero, Andersen & Afifi 2007, 319).

Thagaard (1997) in turn claims that because of the gendered power positions of women and men in the couple relationship, women are positioned to provide love and care and men positioned to control and utilise the love and care provided by women (see also Dryden 1999; Wood 2001). Thus, women may also suppress their needs and do emotion work in order to maintain the couple relationship while concealing the gender inequality of the couple relationship from themselves, their partner and outsiders (Duncombe & Marsden 1995; see also Dryden 1999; Fox 2001; Jamieson 1999). Marita Husso and Tuija Virkki (2008) argue that women manage their frustration in order to control situations where resentment and cynicism could arise. Such denial of a woman's feelings and needs may become the normal state of affairs also in a woman's experiences. The gendered practices of trusting and emotion work support this process (Husso & Virkki 2008).

2.5 The centrality of the concept of ambivalence in researching motherhood

Daly (2003) has stated that family research has concentrated more on negative feelings, and has not considered how positive emotions, particularly love, are important in the everyday lives of families. Moreover, he points out that the interplay between positive and negative emotions has been undertheorised. The same concern was articulated by Sevenhuijsen (1998) in the context of theoreticing and researching care. She (1998, 13) has stressed, in addition to seeing caring as valuable and important, that the shadow sides of care need to be taken into account in order not to reproduce and emphasise caring through moral goodness. Arendell (2000), in turn, has claimed that the negative feelings women experience in relation to mothering are understudied. In the present study, because the interview data revealed the co-existence of positive and negative emotions and evaluations, it became central to try to understand the ambivalence involved in early mothering.

The concept of ambivalence has many definitions depending on whether it is viewed as structural or sociological ambivalence or as individual or psychological ambivalence. Andrea Willson, Kim Shuey and Glen Elder Jr. (2003) define the concept of ambivalence, by combining these different views, as contradictory emotions and cognitions that are held toward people, social relationships and structures. In defining ambivalence on the structural level, they refer

to Ingrid Connidis and Julie McMullin (2002a; 2002b) who introduced the concept of sociological ambivalence as a theoretical tool for explaining adult family ties.

2.5.1 Structural ambivalence in motherhood

Connidis and McMullin (2002a) claim that social roles in family lives are based on structured sets of power relations which are prone to conflict. These social roles in family life reflect taken-for-granted cultural expectations about how people should act in these relationships. These different social roles confer different amounts of power along with gender. They are also based on the various rights, responsibilities and privileges that define social relationships. For example, women have traditionally had fewer excuses than men for not caring for children (Connidis & McMullin 2002a).

Connidis and McMullin (2002a) argue that the concept of ambivalence draws the social structural and the individual perspectives together by stressing the tensions related to the processes through which individuals try to meet their own, their families' and society's competing standards and expectations. Individual agency is achieved and negotiated in social interaction, but power hierarchies affect the extent to which people are able to negotiate and act in these situations (Connidis & McMullin 2002a).

According to Connidis and McMullin (2002a, 563) ambivalence "arises when an actor is faced with a specific situation that simultaneously values opposing courses of action that are rooted within the social structure". Coping with ambivalence is dependent on the resources available to the individual; for example, women confront more obstacles than men, and people of colour more than white (Connidis & McMullin 2002a). Kurt Lüsher (2002) stresses the temporal aspects of ambivalence. He (2002, 587) defines ambivalence as follows:

> "when polarized simultaneous emotions, thoughts, social relations, and structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable".

Connidis and McMullin (2002b) stress that resources and responsibilities in families are differentially divided among family members. These resources and responsibilities reflect the norms, rules and beliefs that are constructed in structured sets of power relations. These norms may have long traditions and emotional embeddedness that resist change despite changes in society. These structured sets of power relations are reproduced easily in the dominant cultural storylines. It may be argued that this kind of structural ambivalence is also present in the mother-child relationship in the sense that structural demands and pressures from the culture and other people cause feelings of ambivalence in individual women when performing their mothering (see Article IV). Structural ambivalence is also in question when women consider their role as a mother in relation to their role as a partner, and in relation to their partner's role as a fa-

ther and to the existing contradictory cultural and social demands and resources of these roles (see Article III).

Further, Connidis and McMullin (2002b) point out that ambivalence is an inevitable feature of social relationships and the social structure, and it cannot be reduced merely to individual negative feelings. Ambivalence cannot be seen as wholly negative, it just exists. Connidis and McMullin (2002b) emphasise that the origin of ambivalence in family relationships is in social structural arrangements. If these arrangements are negative and oppressive, the ambivalence is also negative. Thus, in order to diminish individual ambivalence, actions that change social institutions and structures are needed.

2.5.2 Experiencing maternal ambivalence

From an individual or psychological perspective ambivalence can be understood in either of two ways: as the coexistence of positive and negative emotions or as discrepancies in one's feelings, perceptions and actions (Lefkowitz & Fingerman 2003). Psychological accounts can illuminate the phenomenological experience of ambivalence. It can also be argued that all relationships embody aspects in which ambivalence is an essential part. Such aspects or themes in mothering are related to the co-existence of love and hate, caring and aggression, dependence and agency (Lupton 2000; Oberman & Josselson 1996; Parker 1997; 2005, 1; Sevenhuijsen 1998).

Yael Oberman and Ruthellen Josselson (1996) have drawn up a matrix of tensions, which can be seen as sources of ambivalence in mothers' experiences. They argue that one source of ambivalence is the discrepancy between women's positive feelings about their children and the boredom or frustration that attends daily care-taking activities. The other polarities that can give rise to ambivalence are as follows: first, expansion of self vs. loss of self and maternal power and the burden of responsibilities; second, the experience of omnipotence vs. the experience of overwhelming responsibility in seeking to fulfil the fantasy of the perfect mother; third, life destruction vs. life promotion, which relates to the volatile and aggressive feelings that may arise in the mother-child relationship, although this involves caring and loving aspects as well (Oberman & Josselson 1996; also Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Lupton 2000; Parker 1997).

Oberman and Josselson (1996) also bring up maternal isolation vs. maternal community, cognitive strategies vs. intuitive responses and maternal desexualisation vs. maternal sexualisation as sources of ambivalence. Ambivalence related to cognitive strategies versus intuitive responses refers to the idea presented by Sara Ruddick (1989) of a shift in maternal thinking from natural, instinctive female intuition about how to care for a baby towards a conscious effort which demands cognitive work, thinking and reasoning. Yet in caring for an infant intuition plays a role, if only because of the unforeseeableness of situations and relational interactions. It might also be that the present-day expert-led emphasis on knowledge enhances this kind of tension between what a mother feels to be right and what should be done according to the professionals and child-rearing manuals (Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 46–48).

Rozsika Parker (1997; 2005) evaluates and modifies psychoanalytic theories about child development and about the ambivalence of the mother-child relationship. She shows how psychoanalytic (Klein, Winnicot) theories see ambivalence, the co-existence of love and hate, as a part of the mother-child relationship that the child needs to learn to tolerate. She argues, however, that these theories do not account for ambivalence as a part of maternal experience. Maternal ambivalence needs to be seen as a life-long process, as a dynamic experience of conflict, as fluctuating feelings at different times, from moments to moments in the child's development (Parker 1997).

Parker (1997) also situates ambivalence in the simultaneous feelings of love and caring with those of hate and anger, which are present in the development of the mother-child relationship. She argues that in our Western culture there is no acceptable language with which to acknowledge or handle this ambivalence. The only acceptable and safe way to admit its existence is through humour in such forms as cartoons, newspaper columns and stories. Parker (1997) divides ambivalence into bearable and unbearable ambivalence.

Chodorow and Contratto (1992) investigated the definition of the child's needs as in urgent need of fulfilment. They ask whether all children's needs, or, more specifically, the desires of the child, are rational or realistic and whether they are more in need of restriction than fulfilment. Parker (1997) points out that maternal, manageable ambivalence may lead a mother to think about her relationship with her child, and enable her to keep her frustration or anger on the psychic rather than physical level, thereby creating in her a sense of separateness and autonomy. Parker (1997, 27) suggests that: "for a mother, the conflict between love and hate urgently mobilizes [...], the desire for knowledge" to understand what the child is experiencing, thinking or feeling.

Parker (1997) sees present-day idealised expectations as the main reason for the unmanageable ambivalence experienced by women striving to be good mothers. This is related to the omnipotence invested in motherhood (also Chodorow & Contratto 1992). She (1997) argues that the overwhelming responsibility of motherhood can cause fear of loss and guilt in situations where the mother finds her actions have harmed her child through lack of ability or her aggressive behaviour. At the same time, a mother is required to exercise control over herself and her child in all situations, some of which are uncontrollable. Thus she is made to feel guilty when things go wrong because she is subjected to the contradictory, impossible ideals of omnipotent mothering that do not allow ambivalence and negative feelings to exist, let alone expressed (Parker 1997).

Overall, it is important that the presence of ambivalence is taken into consideration in attempting to understand mothering from mothers' points of view. This does not mean that all mothers should experience and talk about their love-hate relationships with their babies. It means acknowledging that the multifaceted nature of maternal experiences involving ambivalence has its origin in a cultural ethos that places excessive stress on the mother's significance and, more importantly, in the specific aspects of the mother-child relationship.

That is, in mothering the moral questions of humanity and relationality, i.e., dependency, responsibility, life promotion, and vulnerability are present simultaneously with grandiose, morally powerful pressures on mother to fulfil her role perfectly.

2.6 The aims of the present study

The purpose of this study was to follow the storylines of seven Finnish first-time mothers' narratives in order to capture the process of becoming a mother as a multilayered phenomenon, and to identify the changes and ruptures belonging to the beginning of motherhood. With the aid of the mothers' stories, I studied how maternal identities are construed through their everyday lives and relationships and their narratives about them. The overall aim of the study was to understand the women's experiences and narratives from their points of view. Thus the first research question was:

> 1) How are changes in the women's life course and their everyday life narrated at the beginning of motherhood?

The second step in the study was to find out what associations there are between changes in the self and relationality and how these become actualised during the transition to motherhood. The special focus was thus on how the women's narration about themselves and their relationships changed from interview to interview as well as from woman to woman. Hence, the second research question was formulated as follows:

> 2) What changes in the self and in relationality do the women talk about when in the process of becoming mothers?

The research was linked with the idea that mothering despite being an embodied and personal experience is linked with the social and cultural expectations, assumptions, norms and ideals that are attached to motherhood, the couple relationship and family life. In the context of this study these cultural and social aspects are referred to as cultural narratives (see section 3.1.4). Thus, the third research question was:

> 3) How are the cultural narratives of motherhood and family life embodied in the women's experiences and narratives?

Utilising the data, the research questions were answered by focusing separately on the different relationships (see Table 1). These three research questions are intertwined with each other in many ways. In particular, the two articles fol-

lowing the longitudinal processes related to becoming a mother aspired to take into account all three research questions.

The dissertation consists of four articles that all shed light on the changes and relational processes involved in becoming a mother. As can be seen from Table 1, each article forms an independent sub study with research questions of its own. The general research questions, presented in here, could be answered on the basis of these sub studies. The first article *Timing motherhood: Experiencing and narrating the choice to become a mother* (Article I) discusses the nature of the choice of becoming a mother and the conditions related to the onset of motherhood. The data used in the first article focuses on the first interview conducted during pregnancy. The second article *Narrating ambivalence of maternal responsibility* (Article II) covers all four longitudinal interviews and aims at understanding the interviewed women's relationship with their baby and the nature of responsibility through their stories about the changes in their everyday lives. The third article *Renegotiating the couple relationship at the beginning of motherhood* (Article III) shows how the couple relationship and the partner's fathering are related to the women's mothering, and the changes and discrepancies related to these. The third article also concerns all four longitudinal interviews. The fourth article *Problematic woman-to-woman family relations* (Article IV) describes how female family relationships may become problematic after the birth of the child.

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TABLE 1   The aims of the study

Aims of the study	The data	The focus of analysis	Article
1) How are changes in the women's life course and their everyday life narrated at the beginning of motherhood?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	Content and form of the women's narration	Articles I,II,III, IV
a) How does motherhood begin and become a part of the women's life course?	Focus on the interviews during the women's pregnancy	The four women's individual stories on their choice to become a mother and the narrative threads in these stories	Article I
b) In what ways does the women's everyday life change?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	How the women narrate their everyday life and routines; changes in narration from interview to interview	Articles (I), II, III, (IV)
2) What changes in the self and in relationality do the women talk about when in the process of becoming mothers?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	How the women describe and evaluate the changes in themselves and in relationality in their lives; changes in narration from interview to interview and from woman to woman	Articles I,II,III, IV
a) What were the women's relationship with the baby and everyday life with the baby like?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	Talk about the child, daily care and mothering; changes in narration from interview to interview and from woman to woman	Article II
b) What is the significance of their partner for the women's transition to motherhood?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	Talk about the women's partners and their couple relationship; changes in narration from interview to interview and from woman to woman	Articles (I) and III
c) Why do some women experience their female family relations as problematic (at the beginning of their motherhood)?	Two micronarratives by one woman (combined with one woman's written narrative from another study)	Analysis of one woman's two (micro)narratives focusing on her female family members (combined with one woman's written narrative from another study)	Article IV
3) How are the cultural narratives of motherhood and family life embodied in the women's experiences and narratives?	The four successive interviews of the seven interviewed women	Analysis of encounters with the (dominant) cultural narratives	Articles I,II,III, IV

3 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL, NARRATIVE AND LONGITUDINAL APPROACHES APPLIED IN THE STUDY

3.1 Combining phenomenology and the narrative approach: making sense of mothering

In this section I consider how the linkages between an ontology that stresses the women's lived experiences and everyday lives, and the stories they tell about these experiences can be made epistemologically intelligible. A focus on everyday life is in line with the idea of phenomenological research and longitudinal interviewing. Narratives are understood here as bound to everyday life, but the narrative approach allows us to see the women's narratives as a combination of their lived experience and their interpretation of this experience which are affected by the cultural and social environment.

3.1.1 Storying everyday experiences

The social and human sciences have experienced the linguistic and narrative turns that signify interpretive epistemologies and have adopted research methods that preserve human agency and subjectivity, paying attention to the functions of narratives in human meaning-making and acknowledging the centrality and conventions of language in narrating lives (see Brockmeier & Carbaugh 2001; Hyvärinen 1998; Riessman 2003; 2008, 14–17). Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh (2001, 14) illustrate two positions in the debate about whether there is such a thing as a pre-narrative experience, that is, the unplotted material of memory on which the structures of narratives are imposed afterwards, or whether our experience is organised inherently in a narrative fashion (see also Riessman 2008, 7). Those who see narrative and narrativity as ontological conditions of human life argue that narrative represents reality, experience or life referentially such that narrative offers a transparent window onto life experiences and to the truth, or that life, experience and the self are ontologically narrative

in their nature, i.e., narrative structures experience, life and the self (see Carr 1991; Czarniawska 2004, 3; Hänninen 1996a; MacIntyre 1981, 211–212; cf. Brockmeier & Harré 2001).

The opposite way of seeing the relation between experience, life and a story is a poststructural and a constructionist one. Although poststructural and constructionist thought can be separated, taken together they stress the constructive nature of meaning-making and the centrality of language in this process (Brockmeier & Harré 2001; Puolimatka 2002, 32–36). Language and its usage do not describe reality, but they produce and create reality by giving meanings to reality. In this sense reality is linguistic reality. Ontologically, this means that reality has no one, correct interpretation, while neither is there one, correct method of interpretation (Brockmeier & Harré 2001; Puolimatka 2002, 42). Catherine Riessman (2003, 341; 2008) argues that personal narratives are meaning-making units of discourse, in which narrators interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce the past as it was.

McNay (2000) claims that in poststructural theories agency is easily demolished. Subjectivity is subject to the language system or to productive power; the only way to obtain agency is through very conscious resistance to the prevailing discursive regimes (McNay 2000, 1–14). Poststructural conceptions form a negative paradigm of subjectification, meaning that subjectivity becomes a free-floating and atemporal entity lacking historical depth (McNay 2000, 17). The emphasis is on a symbolic, or more narrowly, a linguistic conception of embodied identity (McNay 2000, 14). One solution to the problems of this poststructural 'negative' paradigm that McNay (2000) presents, is to understand agency as based on narrative identity in order to appreciate gender and agency as lived and active concepts.

The present study takes an ontological and epistemological stance which presumes that life or experiences have a pre-narrative nature (Ricoeur 1991a). Individual embodied and lived lives and experiences exist ontologically and it is possible to achieve knowledge about people's experiences through their personal narratives. This means an epistemology in which knowledge about experiences is possible through narrativity, although narrating events and actions do not offer direct access to experience. Epistemologically, we do not have access to (an other person's) experiences other than through meaning-making (Hänninen 2000, 29; Riessman 2008, 22). We understand and give meanings to our experiences through narration and we construct our social identities through narrativity and narratives (Chase 1995; Ricoeur 1991a; 1991b; Somers 1994).

In this study I see the interviewed women's lived experience, as lived experience more generally, as in search of understanding and interpretation, i.e., in quest of narrative. Paul Ricoeur (1991a) adopts a hermeneutical point of view and stresses the meaning of a story as mediation a) between man [sic] and the world called referentiality, b) between man and man, called communicability, and c) between man and himself called self-understanding. In Ricoeur's thinking narrative is capable of preserving experiential aspects even if it also takes

into consideration how this 'referential' mediation is accompanied with social and cultural mediation. For Heidegger (1996, 152) language is a way of disclosing being that is captured in the individual's understanding and interpretation. Thus, a hermeneutic interpretation of narrative does not draw as strict a distinction between linguistic reality and lived or prediscursive reality as is the case in social constructionist and poststructural theories, where the focus is on linguistic reality (see Brockmeier & Harré 2001).

Monika Fludernik (1996, 13) has claimed that the most important aspect of narratives is their capacity to convey experience of the world, and enable the expressions and evaluation of the emotions felt in life, and not the chain of events. She (1996, 13) argues for "experientiality, as everything else in narrative, reflects a cognitive schema of embodiedness that relates to human existence and human concerns". She (1996, 50) presents a model of 'natural' narratology:

Human experientiality = topic of narrative
↓
Mediation (narrativisation) by means of consciousness
↓
Narrativity = mediated experientiality
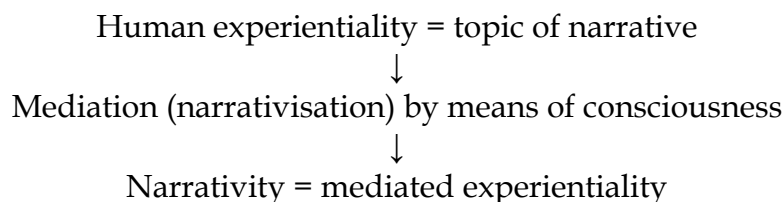
Mediated experientiality was what I aimed to understand in the analyses of the present data.

3.1.2 Time and temporality in narratives

Jane Elliott (2005, 4) stresses the importance of three aspects of narrative when doing social science research: narratives are temporal, meaningful and social. Temporal aspect refers to the way narrative is plotted in terms of time. Narrative is the principal in which we structure our understanding of time (Abbott 2002; Brockmeier & Carbaugh 2001; Ricouer 1991a). The temporality of experience is understood and communicated through narratives and narrativity. Meaning and narrative understanding are closely intertwined (Abbott 2002, 11). Ricoeur (1991a) sees experience as having an aspect of narrativity through temporality. We are beings who have the capability to understand our temporality. Temporality, however, is unstable by its nature. In each life there exists the threefold nature of time, meaning that past, present and future are present in the present experience: expectations as the present of the future, memory as the present of the past and attention as the present of the present (Ricoeur 1991a). David Carr (1991, 163), who refers to Husserl's theory of time-consciousness, says that "we cannot even experience anything as happening, as present, except against the background of what it succeeds and what we anticipate will succeed it".

The temporality of being forms the basis for Ricoeur's thinking on the pre-narrativity of experience and identity as narrative in its very nature. In relation to the present study, I understand making sense of, reflecting on and talking about their own mothering experiences as an attempt by the women to weave

their temporally constructed and changing everyday lived experience into their temporally compounded and narrative conception of themselves. This temporal nature of meaning making is highly visible in the longitudinal interviews, which show how the flux of experiences and the meanings given to the events, to diverse persons and to the self change over time. This indicates that the women needed to make sense of events, changes in relationality and in themselves in the context of the past (what had happened, and been felt, thought and narrated earlier), present (how the situation had now changed and these changes were to be interpreted in relation to past events and to expectations regarding the future) and future. Later experiences may confirm, dispute or change the meanings of earlier experiences.

3.1.3 Sense making, emplotment and narrative identity

For Elliott (2005, 8–10) meaningfulness refers to the belief that individual meanings of behaviours and experiences can be approached through narratives. The term emplotment refers to the meaning-making process through which understanding is sought for our temporality of experiences: events are given coherence, put into a deliberate order and begin to make sense to us as a part of our life story (Ricoeur 1991a). By the means of language, experience is at the same time disclosed, understood and given shape. Life can be understood only through the stories that we tell about it (Ricoeur 1991a).

Ricoeur (1984, 65; 1991a) claims that emplotment is a synthesis between events, which are multiple, and the story, which is unified and complete. In this way events can be seen as more than mere incidents, as having an effect on the construction of the story, and the story is seen as a synthesis of events that the plot organises into an intelligible whole (Ricoeur 1984, 65; 1991a). Emplotment is also related to its temporal characteristics (Ricoeur 1984, 66). There are two sorts of time in every story told: the time of a discrete succession and temporal integration, culmination and closure. In this sense, composing a story is drawing a configuration out of succession (Ricoeur 1984, 66; 1991a).

In the present study, in the successive interviews the women narrated their experiences related to becoming a mother, drawing together the heterogeneous aspects of their being-in-the-world into stories. Experiences also involve non-verbal meanings based on actions and senses that do not easily lend themselves to linguistic meaning-making. This means that the interviews, concentrating on recent events, served as a place to describe, collect together, make sense of, put in order, reflect on and evaluate experiences somewhat fragmentary in their nature, actions carried out by the women themselves and the people around them, and the multiplicity of events.

Ricoeur (1991a) claims that when we consider or reflect on our lives, this is a constructive activity by which we, through narrative understanding, discover the narrative identity which constitutes us. Narrative identity refers to the idea that subjectivity is not an incoherent series of events or an immutable substantiality incapable of change. This implies that self-understanding is the play of

sedimentation and innovation and that we construct our narrative identities in the light of the narratives available to us in our culture (Ricoeur 1991a).

Ricoeur (1991b) divides identity into sameness (idem) and selfhood (ipse). Sameness refers to identity in the numerical sense, uniqueness contrary to plurality and to the idea of resemblance as contrary to different. The third criterion for sameness, especially important for personal identity, is "the uninterrupted continuity in the development of being between the first and last stage of its evolution" (Ricoeur 1991b, 190). This continuity of identity is contrary to discontinuity, and is related to permanence in time, which needs to take into account change through time. Ricouer (1991b) states that the contrary of permanent identity is diversity.

Selfhood, in turn, answers the question who instead of what. It refers to ascription, that is, to the assignation of an agent to an action (Ricoeur 1991b). For Ricoeur (1991b) ascription takes on an explicitly moral significance in terms of 'good' and 'just'. That is, identity as selfhood is related to the capacity of human beings to question themselves, to reflect on their being-in-the world (see also Heidegger 1996). Ricoeur (1991b) sees these reflections to as having a moral nature. The moral nature of selfhood is also emphasised by other narrative theoreticians (Brockmeier & Freeman 2001; Frank 1995; 2002; Taylor 1991). Identity as sameness and as selfhood intersect at permanence in time. Permanence for selfhood means fidelity to the self as keeping one's promises or to be a character defined by a certain constancy of its dispositions (Ricoeur 1991b, 192). These are related to how we answer the question concerning the agent (who) of the actions done in the course of time. For Ricoeur, the answer lies in the concept of narrative identity and the capacity of narrative to imitate actions. Ricoeur (1991b, 196–198) advances corporeality or embodiment as a mediating condition between self and world. Narrative imitates what we already know as action and interaction in a physical and social environment.

McNay (2000) has considered the possibility of applying Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity to understand gender and agency as lived and active concepts and to overcome the dichotomy between the fixity and contingency of identity. McNay (2000, 93) argues: "The self may always be in a state of reconfiguration in order to incorporate the flux of experience; however, it is not completely arbitrary or open-ended". Everyday lives and identity are mediated through temporal structures and pre-narrativity that give (gender) identity its durability without claiming it to be immutable (McNay 2000; Ricouer 1991a).

This study supports the idea of narrative identity construction by showing how first-time mothers reflected on the diverse aspects related to their transition to motherhood. They tried to fit together the diverse events, emotions and evaluations that they lived through during pregnancy and the first year with their babies. This fitting together did not appear to be a straightforward or easy task; instead it demanded identity work in order to enable sometimes even contradictory everyday experiences and emotions to become understandable and accepted as a part of their images of themselves.

3.1.4 Social and cultural narratives in personal meaning-making

Elliott (2005, 3) emphasises the social nature of narratives for social sciences. Social can refer to the fact that narratives are often told to somebody or to an audience (Elliott 2005, 3, 10–11). Thus, narratives have been connected to the rhetorical turn, i.e., narratives are seen as a form of communication, as a way of "taking a stand" (Bruner 2001, 35). People use the means and conventions of language in narrating about life, and one purpose of narration is to convince an audience (Brockmeier & Harré 2001; Hyvärinen 1998; Ricoeur 1991a). Riessman (2008, 8) argues that narratives are used in order to remember, argue and justify, and to persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience. In narrating their experiences as new mothers, the interviewed women very likely evaluated me as a listener and possibly imagined the readers of this study. These aspects are discussed in more detail in section 3.3.2.

Alternatively, the social aspect of narratives can be seen as referring to the relational nature of our being, and in this sense narrative, and the selves narrated are always social (Conville 1998; Mason 2004; Miller 1994; Somers 1994). Personal narratives are about other people and how we evaluate and interpret their meaning in our life or in the events talked about. Thus, encounters with other people affect how we understand and interpret our life through the interactions we are involved in; they are in a profound way the content of our personal narratives; our selves are relational selves. As stated already earlier, our conceptions of the world, other people and our selves become understood through lived embodiment. Precisely embodied situatedness and relationality locate us individually into the world.

However, experiences and events are always interpreted and made sense through selection, imagination, in which cultural voices and social interactions play a significant role (Ricoeur 1991a); every story in this sense is 'multivoiced' (see Brockmeier & Harré 2001). On the one hand, meanings are not fixed; instead individuals have the possibility to choose between the diverse meanings that accord with their everyday lived experience. On the other hand, because encounters with social and cultural meanings are partly unconscious, cultural narratives can be (morally) powerful, normative and difficult to reject, and oppressive and harmful for individuals. Consequently, it was important to aim at identifying the impacts of cultural meanings on the women's personal meaning-making processes.

Personal narratives also locate the individual in a specific social, cultural and historical situation (Brockmeier & Harré 2001; Bruner 2001; Hänninen 2000, 58–71; Somers 1994). The term intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts and narratives reiterate and recycle various culturally recognised modes of storytelling (Abbott 2002, 94–95; Jokinen 2004; Vuori 2001, 90–93). Intertextuality can be explicit or implicit (Vuori 2001, 91–93). A cultural web of narratives and meanings are available for individual meaning-making, for imitation or allusion (Abbott 2002, 94–94). However, even if imitation and allusion indicate the cultural origin of meanings, individual meaning-making processes are not

straightforward, but active and contain the possibility of individual choices in meaning-making (Daly 2003; McNay 2000).

Repetition is important in intertextuality in the sense that some narratives achieve a certain institutional power through (institutional) repetition, causing them to become dominant and acceptable ways of depicting the issues at hand (Miller 2000; Vuori 2001, 91–93). Margaret Somers (1994, 619) defines metanarratives as "'masternarratives', in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history and as social scientists". According to her, the paradoxical nature of metanarratives lies in their quality of denarrativisation (see also Jokinen 2004). This quality makes metanarratives easily invisible to our consciousness. Different genres, according to which we have learned to plot our stories, belong also to metanarratives (Abbott 2002, 45–46). Even if most of us recognise the romantic genre, the tragic genre or the Bildungsroman in movies or books, their affect on how we evaluate our own lives may be less evident. Vilma Hänninen (2000, 50–52) writes about the social stock of stories. Metanarratives exist in the social stock of stories as well as also do more determined cultural narratives that are only for a specific group of people, for example for women or mothers, and define their role expectations for that group (Hänninen 2000, 51–52).

The impacts of dominant narratives are various; we may identify with the dominant narratives and use them to produce an image of ourselves as moral actors; but we can also use them as warning examples; or we may resist them; be confused, feel ambivalent or unhappy with them (Andrews 2002; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes 1999; May 2008). These processes do not always happen on the conscious level. Molly Andrews (2002) introduces the concept of counter-narratives, by which she refers to narratives that consciously or unconsciously oppose the culturally dominant narratives. She defines counter-narratives as existing in relation to the dominant narratives, however, the relation between counter-narratives and dominant narratives is not dichotomous. Cultural narratives often have moral dominance over our own personal narratives and they may lead us to question and suspect whether our own experiences are deviant or flawed when they do not match the dominant storyline (Abbott 2002, 44–45; Andrews 2002; Miller 2000). Thus, cultural narratives may induce negative feelings and leave us unable to find cultural articulation for our own 'deviant' life experiences. They may cause us to question the intelligibleness and continuity of our lives.

In this study I refer to the social construction of motherhood as the cultural narrative of 'good mothering', because it constructs role expectations for mothers and an ideal of how to live and behave in order to live a life as a good mother. Motherhood, and especially the transition to motherhood, are loaded with cultural, scientific, professional and lay narratives (Andrews 2002; Miller 1998; 2000; 2005). The narrative of 'good mothering' affects how mothers interpret their lives, because of the long history and scientific authority that lies behind it (Miller 2000; 2005; Phoenix & Woollett 1991; Riessman 2002) and because it polarises the divide between good and bad (Abbott 2002, 44–45; Chase 2001; May 2008).

It has been claimed that the narrative of shared parenthood, which challenges and somewhat contradicts the narrative of 'good mothering', is one of the narratives available, at least in the Finnish context, to adults considering parenthood and becoming parents (e.g. Kuronen 2001; Vuori 2001). For women, the narrative of shared parenthood tells them that they are not solely responsible for the care of the child, but that the father of the child is also committed to bear that responsibility. On the other hand, the couple relationship is surrounded by cultural narratives delineating the ideal couple relationship. The genre of romantic love offers stories in which the focus is on the quest for an ideal heterosexual relationship, characterised by mutuality and transcendence, but which, at the same time, conceals a gender imbalance (Squire 2003). This may be also the case in relation to the narrative of shared parenthood. In this study I have been interested in and analysed how these dominant cultural narratives of motherhood and family life are embodied in the women's experiences and narration.

3.1.5 Frictions in narrating the self

Many social science researchers have written about the discrepancies between the ideal of a 'good life' or a 'good life story' and how people experience and talk about their lives (Byrne 2003; Frank 1995; 2002; Miller 2000; 2005; Notko 2009). They argue that disparities exist between the norms and conventions of a proper life story and people's felt experiences. Norman Denzin (1992, 27) states that "lives may not have beginnings, middles, and happy endings; nor can they necessarily be told in straightforward, linear time, through representational, realistic texts". Bridget Byrne (2003) asks whether a story as a unified and understandable whole is inevitably achieved or even possible to be achieved out of the diverse events of a life. She has noted that producing a self-narrative retrospectively in an interview may tempt the participant to construct a coherent and whole self, make assumptions about change, transformation and difference, and suppress experiences that do not conform to the norms and conventions of life-story narration (cf. Frank 1995).

Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland (2003) point out that longitudinal interviewing may have a similar normative effect, producing narratives of progress and development. This is related to the idea that we have expectations of closure when narrating our lives, that is, we expect uncertainties to be resolved or 'closed' during the course of the narrative (Abbott 2002, 51–61). Aspects that do not readily fit into the life story narration may remain unspoken (Byrne 2003; Miller 1998; 2000; 2005, 60–64; Notko 2009). It needs to be acknowledged that people may experience moments of absence in their narrative selves, times when experiences do not harmonise with their sense of self (see Byrne 2003; Ricoeur 1991b, 199).

Different life transitions and disrupting life events can cause tensions or 'biographical disruption' in one's personal narrative, and between one's own and related cultural narratives (Bury 1982; Chase 1995; Hänninen 1996b; Miller 2005; Vilkko 2000). The affected person feels that her or his experiences do not

make any sense, the future and goals related to life become fuzzy and the person finds her or his social roles unsuitable (Hänninen 1996b). This means that such life experiences are not easily understood, or, especially, talked about, because earlier expectations and explanatory systems become disrupted (Bury 1982). In this situation a narrative reorientation is needed because the person's old narrative does not fit her or his new life circumstances (Bury 1982; Frank 1995; Hänninen 1996b).

In situations of incoherence, at turning points, during life transitions, and in disrupting life events cultural narratives may be sought in order to maintain one's sense of coherence (Hänninen 1996b; Wood 2001). Julia Wood (2001) states that in situations when our experiences do not make sense, when we feel chaotic, we actively try to search for coherence in our lives. Wood's (2001) research on the normalisation of violence in heterosexual romantic relationships shows that at times of wrestling with experiences that do not make sense, the women in her study found it easier to explain their life situation according to the dominant cultural narrative of romance than to invent a new narrative rejecting violence as a part of the romantic relationship.

Arthur Frank (1995) studied the narratives of people who have severe illnesses. He describes the chaos narrative as having no narrative order and lacking coherence and continuity; one event does not lead to the next event, a happy end seems unfeasible (Frank 1995, 97). Frank (1995, 98) writes that to turn such chaos into a story demands some distance and reflective hold on events, because lived chaos makes reflection and storytelling impossible. Further, hearing chaotic stories invokes anxiety, because they lack a 'proper' plot or narrative thread, and because the teller reveals vulnerability, futility and impotence instead of competence and progress (Frank 1995, 97–98).

Lived experiences do not always easily lend themselves to narrative meaning-making and a self narrative or narrative identity is not a unitary and coherent entity, but involves frictions, fragmentariness, and thus is in a need of narrative identity work. It has been argued that the dominant narrative of 'good mothering' may give rise to problems for mothers in making sense of and telling about their feelings and thoughts (Miller 1998; 2000; 2005; Ribbens 1998; Riessman 2002), at least when they collide with that narrative. I would argue that frictions and fragments felt in life may be the sites in which the experiential cannot be easily accommodated in the individual's life story narration or related to the social and cultural resources available for individual's meaning-making. The longitudinal interviews did not lead the women to produce coherent stories, suppose any coherent story form, but instead allowed the ambiguity of the women's everyday experiences to be narrated.

3.2　The interviewed mothers

The women participating in the study were between 21 years and 31 years old at the time of the first interview. Most of them were in their late twenties. They were all expecting their first child, and one of them was expecting twins. Their partners were aged from 25 to 35. The child to be born was the first child for both partners. The interviewees were quite highly educated, four had a Master's degree (three of these were in education), one was doing her Master's degree, one had college-level training, and one was applying for university. Three of the interviewed women had worked regularly before pregnancy, one of them was in business together with her partner, and three of them were graduating or had recently graduated from university.

The interviewed women's adult life course prior to pregnancy can be illustrated with reference to their personal lives and their couple relationships (see Figures 1 and 2). Despite their high education, three of these women had had no work experience except for short temporary posts or short contracts before their maternity leave. This was related to their prioritising having a child and becoming a mother rather than a (permanent) work or career.

This may be due to the conflicts which surround the position of women and mothers in working life (see e.g. Belcher 2000). The women reflected on the demands for effectiveness of the labour market of the 21st century and on their rejection of a work-centred life style. Were they resisting the prevailing ethos of individualisation and self-fulfilment through work or did motherhood offer a route for self-fulfilment as a woman? Or was motherhood still considered a more inevitable part of a woman's 'normal' life course than working life? These issues are discussed in more detail in the Article I. It may also be the case that women who preferred motherhood over a future career were also those who were willing to participate in a study focusing on early motherhood.

Four of the women were married, and three were cohabiting. One of these women had previously been married and divorced, and one woman had earlier cohabited. All the couples had been together for several years (at least two years) before the pregnancy, even if not all of them had been cohabiting regularly. In Figure 2, the life courses related to the women's present couple relationship, the middle course of the couple relationship represented by four women's stories (see the second row in Figure 2) merits special attention. This middle course of four women is informative about two different aspects of the couple relationship. It might be asked whether this is the ideal course of today's couple relationship. Furthermore, it shows that the similarity between the women is based more on the course and situation of their couple relationship than on their individual life courses and life situations.
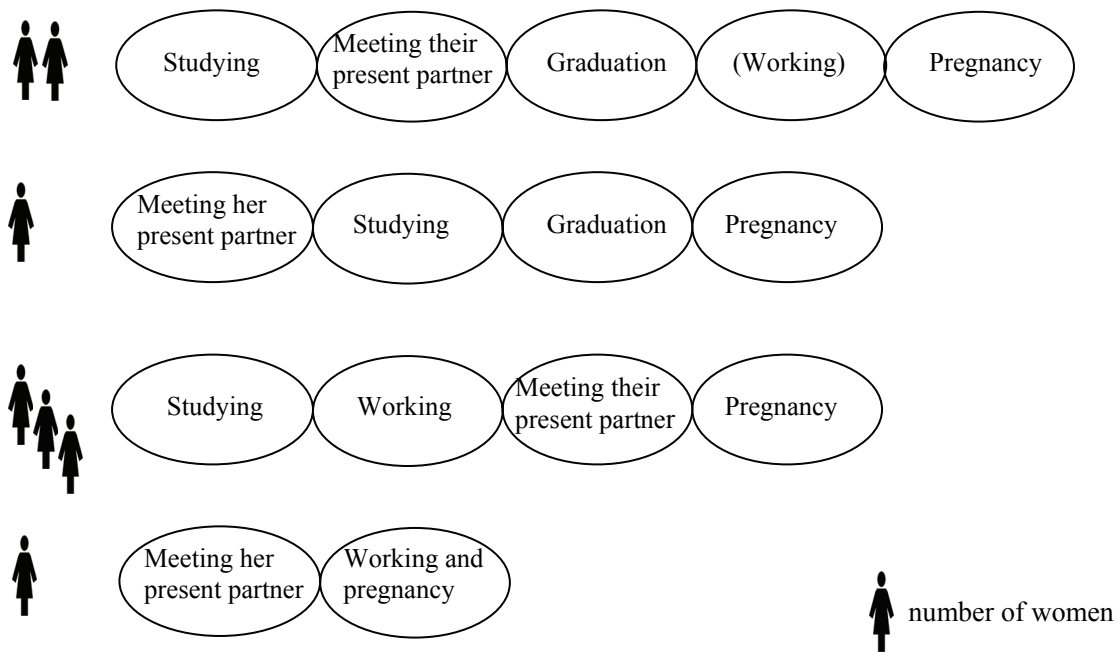
FIGURE 1   The women's adult life course
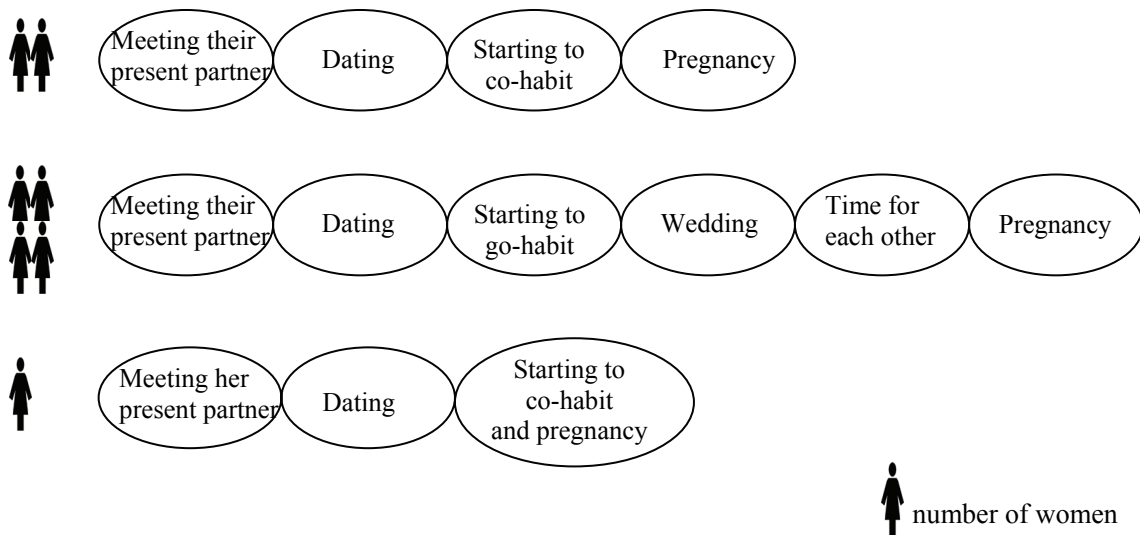
FIGURE 2   The course of the women's couple relationship

It may be argued that the participants represent women whose couple relation-ship was stable and that the women were committed to mothering and to their partners when they consented to participate in this study. An interesting aspect of the four women's couple relationship was that all these women reported that it was their partner who wanted more to postpone having a child and to have

time for each other. Thus, the women would have been ready for a child earlier than was in fact the case.

The interviewees, for the research project, in which either the mother or father or both partners could participate (see Sevón & Huttunen 2002; 2004), were found through the local maternity health care clinics. At first, the research project applied for and received official permission from the head of the local maternity health care centres. I then placed an announcement at the notice board of two maternity health care centres, but received no contacts from pregnant women. Next, I contacted expectant women and their partners by mentioning the study in antenatal classes and in midwife's evenings in the locality. After four visits, five women were willing to be interviewed. I obtained two other mothers with the snow-ball technique.

Michael Patton (2002, 203) writes about purposeful sampling, that is, sampling on the grounds of information-rich cases for study. He (2002, 230–242, 243) presents several ways of performing purposeful sampling, for example, choosing extreme or deviant cases, information-rich cases, or heterogeneous or homogeneous cases. It this study, the sampling was not easy, partly because this study was a longitudinal qualitative study to which the participants needed to commit themselves before and in the course of a major life change. To some extent, it might be argued that the sampling strategy employed was convenience sampling, which Patton (2002, 241–242) finds neither purposeful nor strategic.

The fact that participation in the interviews was based on voluntariness may mean that the women, who were willing to participate in this study were those who found talk about one's life easy. I assume that the idea of longitudinal interviewing did not tempt those who had experienced some uncertainty when requested to participate in the study. This did not, however, prevent two women who had become pregnant accidently or unexpectedly from participating. For this reason I assume that the question related to taking part was more to do with how the women evaluated their couple relationship. However, all the reasons for participating in this research may be highly individual and cannot be traced retrospectively. The reason some of the women gave was more to due with an interest in taking part in a study and feeling sympathetic towards my attempt to find participants. Had the research project looked for both women and men to be interviewed, this might have further limited the group of participants. As it is, there are both women (four) whose partner also participated in the project, and women (three) whose partner did not participate.

Furthermore, educated women might also be more acquainted with the research process, which might in turn mean their greater amenability towards the interviews and better understanding of the significance of the study. It may also be that these women with quite high educational background might be more familiar with psychological knowledge, and maybe thus had high standards regarding their own mothering. In other words, they might be more familiar with the culturally dominant narrative of 'good mothering' (Duncan 2005; Perälä-Littunen 2004; Walkerdine & Lucey 1989).

Taken together, this meant that the sample-to-be consisted of women who were quite well-educated and middle-class and in quite a stable heterosexual couple relationships. However, the research process was about contemplating something yet unknown to the participants. In this sense the data also reveal the diversity in the women's experiences in addition to and despite the similarities among them. In the light of Patton's (2002, 236) critical case sampling, the idea was to look at the similarities between the women's experiences so as to learn about the prevailing ideas to do with becoming a mother. Recognition and understanding of the differences between the women was equally crucial in order to acknowledge individual pathways, meanings and experiences contributing to becoming a mother.

3.3 Longitudinal qualitative research about becoming a mother

This section considers issues related to the conduct of the study and the longitudinal interviews. The study was (micro)longitudinal and consisted of four successive interview sessions with seven Finnish first-time mothers over the course of one year. I begin by describing the interviews. I then turn to a consideration of the mutual interaction of the interview situations and my role in shared knowledge production. Finally, I discuss specific methodological questions relating to qualitative longitudinal research.

3.3.1 Interview outline and the timing of the longitudinal interviews

The timing of the interviews and the interview outline are shown in Table 2 (a more detailed outline is given in Appendix 1). The interview themes covered the women's life situation, their everyday life and their relationship with the baby, the women's couple relationship and their partner's fathering, and any other events and relationships the women wanted to talk about. Every interview, except the first one, started with an open question about the present life situation and what had happened since we met earlier. Although the themes and questions related to the interviews were limited, the women often brought up changes in their relationships unprompted right at the beginning of the interview. They also talked about themes that were not included in the original plan but were then subsumed into the existing themes of the study. These included consideration of abortion or foetus screening, reflections on the women's relation to working life, the women's relationships with other women and problems in them, breastfeeding, the maternity and child health care system and difficulties confronted in it, for example, the difficulty of getting help. In some cases the themes that some women introduced were added into the interview outline. However, what we had talked about in the previous interview(s) to some extent guided the topics talked about in the next interview(s).

TABLE 2   The interview schedule and the interview outline

	First interview	*Second interview*	*Third interview*	*Fourth interview*
Timing of the interview	During pregnancy: from three months to one week before delivery	The child ca. one month old	The child ca. six months old	The child ca. one year old
Interview themes	1. The woman's background knowledge	1. The present life situation	1. The present life situation	1. The present life situation
	2.Background knowledge about the family	2. Experience of being a mother	2. Everyday life with the baby and the relationship with the baby	2. Everyday life with the baby and the relationship with the baby
	3. The woman's present life situation	3. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship	3. Experience of being a mother	3. Experience of being a mother
	4. Experience of being pregnant	4. Other events and relationships	4. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship	4. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship
	5. Other	5. Other	5. Other events and relationships	5. Other events and relationships
			6. Other	6. Other
				7. Participation in the study

The timing of the first interview was approximately one month before the expected date of delivery, ranging from three months to one week before the birth of the child. The original idea for the first interview was to collect background information about the participants (as can be seen from the interview outline), but the interviews turned out to be much more than that. Many women unfolded their stories about their choice to become a mother in such a detailed manner that these stories became part of the study (see Article I).

The second interview was conducted when the child was about one month old; the range in the timing of the interview was between five weeks to two and a half months after the child was born. The timing of the second interview related to the idea of capturing the first moments, feelings and thoughts of becoming a mother quite soon after the birth of the child.

The appropriate timing was agreed with the women in the first interview, and it was agreed that the mother would contact me when she considered it was the right time to conduct the interviews. We made an agreement that I would contact the mother if I did not hear from her within one month of the agreed date. I did not want to be intrusive, which is why I thought it would be better for the mother herself to contact me at a time suitable for her. There were

no marked changes in the interview schedule; in only one case I contacted the participant first.

The third interview was held when the child was about six months; and the fourth when the child was close to one year of age. Four interviews were thought to be sufficient to cover the experience of the beginning of motherhood (cf. Lupton 2000; Miller 2005). The child's first year is defined developmentally as different from the toddler years, due to the child's greater dependence on her or his carers. After the child is six months she or he usually begins to move more, begins to investigate the immediate surroundings and becomes more regular in her or his rhythms. In broad outline, the child's first year divides into two 6-month phases: the mothering of a small, highly dependent, unpredictable baby transforms into the mothering of a more predictable and capable infant (see Miller 2005). There are, however, wide variations from one child to another, which were also visible in this study, and thus mothering experiences varied from mother to mother. At the time of the last interview the mothers had decided whether to begin or return to work, or to stay at home with the child. This is related to the Finnish parental leave system.

The duration of a single interview was approximately one and a half hours, while the longest interviews lasted over three hours. The total interview data consist of 28 interviews, i.e., over 800 pages of text material or over 45 hours of tape recordings. The data for each woman consist of about 6 to 8 hours of recordings and from 64 to 111 pages of transcription. The third interviews tended to be the longest. Then, five mothers' interviews lasted over two hours, and of these, two interviews were over three hours. However, this information is indicative only as the rhythm of the talk varied as did transcriptions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Long pauses, silences, laughter or interruptions were noted.

3.3.2 Interviewing, interacting, interrupting, interfering

When I started to interview the pregnant women, I had familiarised myself with the phenomenological interview style. The phenomenological interview is open, much like a conversation, and proceeds dialogically (Bergum 1997, 3–8). In the phenomenological interview the most important 'rule' for the interviewer is to avoid leading questions in order for the interviewee to tell about events in a manner that she would like to talk about them (Bergum 1997, 3–8). Another good piece of advice is to remain near the experiences as lived. Talk about experiences is very concrete. In order to have answers that are precise enough, the interviewer should ask for more details or for an example of the event, situation or feeling in question (Bergum 1997, 3–8; van Manen 1990, 66–68).

The phenomenological research interview also offers an opportunity to reflect on motherhood with the interviewee. This is due to the hermeneutic circle of understanding (Heidegger 1996, 141–144). In this way I, as a researcher, could enlarge on and corroborate my interpretation, and thus the interviewee becomes more like a collaborator in the study (van Manen 1990, 63). This was also related to the longitudinal interviewing design; it was possible and often

happened that we returned to events talked about at the time of a previous interview. The phenomenological interview as conducted in this study might be classified as a focused interview (see Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000; Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005), that is, although I had certain themes and questions, I aimed at to be sensitive to the topics that the women unprompted started to talk about.

The narratives and interviews are seen as sites to ponder identity, allowing the women to reflect on their lives with somebody, to make sense of their life experiences. Thus an interview is a co-construction (see e.g. Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005). However, as Johanna Ruusuvuori and Liisa Tiittula (2005) remark, the research interview is an institutional conversation with a specific aim derived from the research question. At the same time, an interview is a social, human enterprise and an active, collaborative process, in which the meanings attributed to gender, age, social class and motherhood produce shared assumptions, but also misunderstandings and negotiations between the interviewer and the interviewee (Riessman 1987).

The interviewer should be aware of the difficulties involved in producing stories. Chase (1995; 2003) points out that the very thing that makes any group of people's life experiences interesting may also produce narrative difficulties. Life stories that produce narrative difficulties or complexities, i.e., silences, gaps, disruptions, or contradictions in the interview situation, often embody experiences and feelings, which have a culturally problematic character (Chase 1995; cf. Frank 1995). In the case of the transition to motherhood, women may have difficulties in narrating their own experiences, if these are incompatible with culturally accepted ways of experiencing this transition (Miller 2000). In Miller´s (2000) study, the women she interviewed used many expedients in constructing their story, which they understood to be the accepted way of narrating the transition to motherhood and their new motherhood. In the present study, talking about personal experiences as a mother, as a partner and as a woman collided occasionally with the cultural ideals of how a woman is supposed to talk about these issues.

Interviewing is not an easy task. There are questions that make story telling possible and academic, scientific questions produce definitions, accounts and formal answers (Chase 1995; 2003). What kinds of questions enable and make it easier to talk about one's experiences? What kind of language should the interviewer use? When should the interviewer remain silent and when should she talk and ask questions? These issues need to be solved in the interview situation. From the perspective of skilful (narrative) interviewing, my interviews are full of examples of interrupting and interfering, of a clumsy interviewer, at least, when retrospectively evaluated (cf. Riessman 1987). The following excerpt is from the interview with Anna about a month after the birth of the child.

> Interviewer (me): *"So, if you think about your and Tapio's [partner] relationship, **how happy is it now?**"* [I am offering a particular conception about the couple relationship, but with some humour in my voice]

Anna: *"We say good morning in the morning and good night in the evening (laughs). But we haven't been two-by-two at all, [. . .]"*

She starts her answer with a humorous remark conveying the idea that my question about happiness is irrelevant or out of place with regard to their everyday life at that moment. It may be argued that my question had an effect on how Anna started to talk about her life situation, and on her evaluation of me as an interviewer and my ideas about a good couple relationship. However, when I listen to the tape, the tone of voice used in asking and answering is humorous and implying a shared understanding of the ideal of a 'happy' couple relationship. Nevertheless, the excerpt shows that interviews in this study are collaborative meaning-making processes. My questions sought to direct the discussion towards topics concerning everyday life with the baby, the couple relationship and other themes included in the interview outline.

As Ruusuvuori and Tiittula (2005) remark, and I would agree with them, it is very difficult, even almost impossible, in an interview situation to restrict the boundaries of one's own role as an interviewer to a certain mould or form (see also Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005). They suggest that it is more important that the interviewees understand and interpret the questions in the way that is intended. Or, as it can be seen with Anna's account, the interviewee points out how she understands the question asked of her. The meanings of questions and the answers to them can be negotiated in the interview situation (see May 2008). Consequently, it was important to listen to, respect and accept the interpretations that the interviewee foregrounded, to give the women space to express themselves by being sensitive to how they reacted to my questions. Riessman (1987, 191) even contends: "If a sensitive collaboration had not occurred in the interview and the analysis, we may have 'heard' nothing".

The women quite often produced their most important insights and evaluations already in answering the opening question so that later in the interview these matters were merely expanded on. Thus, the free opening of the interviews functioned as a guide for me as an interviewer as to what topics and matters were important for the interviewee at that moment. Further, these topics were also central in the subsequent analysis.

In the interview situations I often wondered whether to stop asking or to continue. This is related to the tacit 'rules' of conversation and interviews (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005). In a research interview, the interviewee is the party who is the possessor of knowledge and experience and the interviewer is the listener, yet at the same time the interviewer is the one who asks, guides and directs the discussions in a particular direction (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005). The interviewee is also a respondent, who gives information about her (or his) life. For instance, I interviewed one of the women, who had to stop working in the 20th week of pregnancy. We first discussed her long working day (ten to thirteen hours) and then her sick leave, which had begun five weeks earlier than she had expected. At the beginning of her interview Sari presented an 'official' explanation, she stated very briefly that:

S: "It was such, such long days and my body didn't, or I'd say that I had great tiredness and pain in the abdomen and so on, they came then, and I'd say that they came along with the tiredness, my body didn't rest enough."
I: "So, you worked very long days up until you left?"
S: "Yes, yes I did. Well, it was certainly tiredness that was all in all the main cause of it."

Perhaps this explanation was also related to my style of asking about *the cause* of staying away from work and bringing the culture of science into the interview (see Chase 1995; Riessman 1987). Later in the interview we returned to the time she spent on sick leave. I continued to ask about the events of that time and her feelings and thoughts, and received a more detailed description of the events at that time. A summary of her story can be found in the Article I (see pp. 470–471). The reason for asking her more about her sick leave was the slight reluctance I felt she had at the beginning of the interview. I assume that returning to this time later in the interview was related to that I had had a similar experience of being obliged to stop work earlier than I expected when I was expecting my first child. I was able to recognise the strange keenness to stay at work.

However, I did not give this information during the course of the interview so as not to challenge her experience or disturb her narration about the events in any way. At the end of this first interview, when I turned off the tape recorder, I wrote after the transcription: *"When the interview ended Sari asked: 'Now it's your turn to talk, do you have children?' And we discussed my similar kind of situation of stopping work earlier than I expected and how it was also hard for me."* I have also written in my interview diary:

> Sari was more "withdrawn" [than the two earlier interviewees were], and said that she didn't remember. - - This was the first interview in which the interviewee produced talk after the tape recorder was turned off. At that point I somehow felt I had to tell her about my own sick leave and delivery. Did it depend on her guardedness? I had the feeling that I hadn't got anything out of her. What do I want to get out of the interviews? What do I expect? I now notice that the first two women's interviews guided what I'd like to hear. Now I heard something else.

The first two interviewees had been very open and I felt somehow in the interview situation that Sari seemed to resist talking about her pregnancy. The interview situation was somehow uncomfortable for me, even if I cannot detect that uneasiness in the transcript and from her story. At the same time, this was an example of my 'insider' position with which I try to explain how my own experiences occasionally affected the interviews. It might be argued that I crossed the line of what she might have decided to and have been willing to tell me about her experiences.

This is also an ethical question. Coralie McCormack (2004) points out that when personal stories are at their most personal and illuminating this is by the same token the time when the tellers are most vulnerable. Ruusuvuori and Tiittula (2005) state how the interviewer may construct confidence and sharing by telling about shared experiences, but this telling of one's own experiences may also cross the line of acceptability by not keeping the interviewee and her experiences centre stage. Barbara Czarniawska (2004, 47) is emphatic that even if

an interview is a common enterprise in knowledge production, it is not a mutual exchange of views.

I tried to be very sensitive to the question of whether telling about shared experiences was needed at all, because the women knew that I had a child and that I had been through the same life transition or turning point as they were now. It was their individual experiences that were in the focus of the study, and nobody else had experienced them in the same way. Sari, who was rather suspicious during her first interview, turned out to trust me more in the second interview. During the second interview she told me about the difficulties her twins had had after their birth, she asked herself: *"How did I feel after all then?"*, and started to reflect on this question.

3.3.3 Longitudinal interviewing

In the present study the women's interviews lacked temporal distance from the events experienced and narrated about. Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2006) defines a 'big' story as a personal account of past experiences, as a life story. She defines a 'small' story, in turn, as an umbrella term for tellings of ongoing, future or hypothetical events, shared events, allusions to tellings, deferrals of telling and refusals to tell. Small stories concentrate mostly on very recent events; they often involve projected events, and they may happen in natural conversations (Georgakopoulou 2006). Georgakopoulou (2006) claims that small stories are also more about imagining the future than about remembering the past, but they may also function as a way of linking the past to the future. Further, small stories can be read in terms of how the participants orient themselves towards what the norms of telling are in a certain situation and context (Georgakopoulou 2006). Her objective is to illuminate the messier, contingent and relational nature of identity that becomes visible in small narratives, rather than an autonomous, unified and coherent identity.

Mark Freeman (2006) does not see reflective distance as solidifying the self; instead, it is precisely big stories that enable meaning-making, the attempt to make sense of important domains in a person's life. Thus, temporal distance, instead of being distorting, can add understanding about events that cannot be manifested in the immediacy of the present moment and thus through small stories. He compares small stories with episodes. Freeman (2006) contends that big stories do not mean commitment to a fixed, grandiose conception of self, but rather signify the idea that our lives have meanings for many. This relates to the ideal of lateness, to the idea that our self-understanding is always delayed (see also McLeod 2003). He states that research interviews can provide possibilities for reflection that are generally not found in everyday, non-interviewed life (see also Plummer 2001, 243–246). In this study all the women evaluated the interviews as therapeutic, when asked their opinion about being interviewed. For example, one mother said:

> *It has been interesting that I've needed to think those matters from various angles, because otherwise they might just pass by without any special thought, I've been forced into really thinking how the days have gone.*

For the women narrating their diverse and sometimes contradictory emotions, thoughts and actions could give meaning, shape and form to their everyday lives (Plummer 2001, 243).

In this study, interviewing the participants longitudinally made it possible to see the temporality of the narrated events and actions and enabled two different ways of narrating: immediate and retrospective. The longitudinal interviews embodied 'small' stories of the moment, while the interviews also met the need to narrate 'big' stories which contained retrospective reflection on events (see Freeman 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006). The longitudinal interviews showed that self-understanding is not only created from reflective distance, instead, people also construct their 'big' stories and identities through the 'small' stories of their everyday lives.

Julie McLeod (2003) sees longitudinal interviewing as an archive of perspectives gathered from different points of time enabling understanding of the continuity and change in identity. Longitudinal interviewing offers a possibility to see the process of identity formation, or identity work; it enables movements and analysis between past, present and future (McLeod 2003). Longitudinal data show also the tensions between the diverse perspectives clearly. She writes of what she calls an interpretive challenge, which means active and methodologically enabled ways of listening for both structural factors and emotional investments, and the ability to draw these social and psychological perspectives together. This is not an easy task.

In this study longitudinal qualitative research brought with it, not only many advantages, but also interpretive challenges. McLeod (2003) is correct in arguing that longitudinal interviews are not always easy to interpret, and thus need conscious reflection on theoretical lenses and concepts. Longitudinal data can also confirm or unsettle tentative interpretations and challenge the stability of interpretations (see Thomson & Holland 2003). In the case of this study, longitudinal interviewing produced multiplicity in the theoretical and methodological tools through which I analysed and interpreted the richness and diversity of the data. My attempt to follow individual pathways and personal storylines together with the cultural texture of these storylines, i.e., to draw psychological and social perspectives together demanded particular skills. Even if I was aware of the importance of taking a longitudinal perspective, it may be argued that I did not have all the practical skills and knowledge that attempting this required. The analysis of temporal changes and continuities meant that sensitivity was needed when considering the interpretations made in the earlier phases of the study, as was the ability to take into account the changed nature of the narrations.

Thomson and Holland (2003) argue that longitudinal interviewing enables the data to be understood both cross-sectionally and temporally. It means searching longitudinally to locate the development of a particular narrative and identifying cross-sectionally the discourses through which identities are constructed. This parallels Neale's and Flowerdew's (2003) idea about the temporality and texture of social life.

In this study, putting all the women's stories side by side resembles of a cross-sectional approach. The cross-sectional analysis indicated commonalities and differences between the women towards which I tried to be sensitive. In addition, the cross-sectional analysis made it possible to see the narratives in context as well as offering a frame for constant comparison that helped me to see the individual storylines in a broader context, and to see the commonalities and differences between the women in the styles used to narrate diverse events (see Thomson & Holland 2003). On the other hand, following the individual woman's storylines across the four interview sessions revealed the continuities and discontinuities of the different narrative threads and the changes related to them that emerged during the one-year period.

Thomson and Holland (2003) assume that longitudinal interviewing may provide a better understanding of the individual, because it enables temporal and detailed insight into the lived life. In this study, the narratives obtained from four successive interviews differed rather radically from a retrospective account of the transition to motherhood. Even if the norms and conventions of narration cannot be escaped in any kind of narration, the longitudinal interviewing method offered the women a possibility to understand and evaluate their diverse and occasionally ambivalent feelings about certain moments, and produced more fragmented, unclosed data than a retrospective interview might have done (cf. McLeod 2003). This kind of longitudinal interviewing covering a short period of time (one year) enables the researcher to capture both the elements of change and a more immediate and 'as-it-is-happening' sense of change and development during transitional life events (McLeod 2003). Furthermore, in the present study longitudinal interviewing was suitable because motherhood and family life are filled with cultural, and normative assumptions that easily undermine experiences that depart from the ideal.

The advantage of my data collection process was that in the interviews we were able to grasp aspects of the everyday life that often remain unspoken. First, while becoming mothers, these women were in a totally new life situation: they were living a turning point in their lives. The birth of the baby drastically changed the mothers' everyday lives and thus new aspects of their everyday life were foregrounded. Second, the phenomenological interviewing technique helped them to ground their talk in everyday living. The interviewees were very willing to talk about their everyday lives, as if they had been given a much-needed possibility to reflect on their occasionally fragmented, messy days. The need to talk about their daily lives can also be understood in the light of their everyday life with the small infant. Thirdly, because their routines changed and were ruptured every now and then, they were available for reflection in a different manner than in a situation where routines proceed unhindered.

Furthermore, the use of longitudinal interviewing meant that the participants and I had a 'shared history' of the preceding interviews that made reference to earlier events occasionally rather implicit. Further, as we had already created a relationship of trust, in the later interviews sometimes the women

gave me direct evaluations of their life situation and feelings. For example, I started the third interview with one participant in the following way:

> I: "Could you tell me how your life situation is now?"
> M: "Shall I tell you directly?"
> I: "Go ahead."
> M: "A living hell (laughs), we've had such a time." (pause)
> I: "So where do we start, where did we end up last time?"
> M: "On August? It was then colic crying and …" (she continues for 32 pages to make sense of her family's difficult life situation).

Tuula Gordon and Elina Lahelma (2003) write about the construction of a joint frame of reference that develops in ethnographic research through shared experiences. A similar situation existed in the present interviews. I had visited most of the women's homes two or three times during the year, seen them pregnant and then their babies, and met and spoken with their partners and sat around their kitchen tables drinking coffee. I was familiar with their birth giving experiences, knew from what they had told me, things about their relatives and friends, as well as their thoughts relating to work plans and family life. This calls for ethically justified ways of representing the findings of the study (Gordon & Lahelma 2003).

3.4   The analysis of the data

In social science research, narratives are commonly understood in three different ways (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005). First, a narrative can be an entire life story (cf. 'big' stories, Freeman 2006). Second, a narrative can be a shorter oral presentation of a certain event or experience. Third, a narrative can be created in an interview situation, in which case the focus is on interaction between the researcher and the narrator and in the linguistic features of the narration (cf. 'small' stories, e.g. Georgakopoulou 2006).

In the present study, the focus in the four successive interviews was on the events, thoughts, feelings, meanings and changes that becoming a mother had brought into the women's lives. Thus, the interviews did not concern whole life stories; neither were they a short presentation of a single specific experience nor was the focus on the analysis of the interaction between me as a researcher and the participants (see Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005). On the one hand, because of the longitudinal interviewing approach, the women's interviews cannot be said to form a single narrative concentrating on the beginnings of their motherhood for each woman. On the other hand, it is possible to construct individual narratives of this kind from the interviews. Furthermore, the interview data can be considered as compounded from a collection of (episodic) stories that the different women told about their life transition. The longitudinal interview data consisted of four different time points in which the events and the women's feelings and thoughts related to these events were talked about.

People will understand and rehearse their experiences in a storied form, if in the interview situation the researcher succeeds in remaining open to the interviewees' narration (Chase 1995; Mishler 1986; Polkinghorne 1995, 12–13). Following Chase (1995), who depicted the idea of deep interviews as a site of life stories, I listened and read the transcribed interviews in order to locate interview passages in which there was a particular narrativity. I searched for passages in which the interviewee did not solely answer a specific interview question, but either she unfolded or we together constructed a story in the interview situation about the events that were somehow important in her transition to motherhood. This 'story' might be a clearly independent unity in the interview that the interviewee told unprompted. Or the story might consist of excerpts from the same or different interviews where the interviewee has returned to or supplemented a theme discussed earlier. In practice, the narrative research methodology offered a means for making sense of and analysing the huge amount of interview transcripts. I chose the themes that produced narrative talk as the focus of the analyses.

Donald Polkinghorne (1988, 161–177; 1995) draws a line between narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives. Narrative analysis moves from elements to stories in order to form stories about personal narrations, for example, in interview situations (Polkinghorne 1995). The way of knowing is a narrative one. The analysis of narratives, in turn, concentrates on the diverse features of narratives in order to find the form and structure of the narratives and to categorise them. The analysis of narratives is related, according to Polkinghorne, to the paradigmatic way of knowing. The present study utilises both narrative analysis by searching and summarising into stories the diversity of experiences related to the women's transition to motherhood, but also the analysis of narratives by paying attention to narrative form.

Namely, the experiences somehow pertinent to the women's identities and their lives also became visible in *how* they narrated their experiences. Elliott (2005, 43) has argued that the content and the evaluative dimension of narratives work together, thus the form and structure of how the mothers interpreted and evaluated the beginning of their motherhood together with the topics discussed could reveal the meaning of their life events for them. The definitions offered by Porter H. Abbott (2002) were helpful in understanding the concept of narrative. He (2002, 12–17) distinguishes analytically between a narrative, a narrative discourse and a story. A story refers to a course of events and actions, to the content of a narrative. Ken Plummer (2001, 187) gives an example: "She was rich, then she lost her money and then (as a result) she was poor"; thus the prevalent idea of a story is that it tells something about some events that have happened to somebody. Narrative discourse, in turn, refers to the ways of narrating, writing, or presenting a story, to the form and structure of a narrative: how the story is expressed (Abbott 2002, 13). Thus, narrative is kind of a top notion referring both to the presentation of an event or events and to the events themselves (Abbott, 2002, 16). Narrative includes at least one or two events as a minimal condition for it to exist (Abbott 2002, 12–13).

Personal narratives or life stories can inform about diverse aspects of life events and their meaning for the narrator. It has been claimed that when we narrate stories about ourselves, we also set scenes, introduce central characters, portray events, actions and thoughts, and detail evaluations, conflicts and negotiations related to these experiences (Mishler 1986). With respect to meaningfulness, it has been argued that the most important aspect of narrative is that it enables us to evaluate the meaning events and actions have for us (Fludernik 1996, 29; Labov 1972; Marander-Eklund 2000, 31–33). In William Labov's (1972) famous analysis of the fully informed narrative, narrative consists of six parts:

1) Abstract: an abstract of the subject of the narrative
2) Orientation: time, place, situation and characters
3) Complicating action: what actually happened
4) Evaluation: the meaning and importance of the action
5) Resolution/Result: what finally happened
6) Coda: returns the perspective to the present.

An essential component in Labov's model for the present study was to recognise the importance of the evaluative function of narrative as a crucial aspect of the interviewed women's talk. The stories people tell about their lives often involve (moral) evaluations about events, the self and a good life (Elliott 2005, 42–46; Labov 1972; Plummer 2001, 187). Labov (1972) states that the evaluative elements of narratives tell us what is important, dangerous, complex, hurtful or unusual in narratives. Personal narratives offer us a space in which to evaluate how we ought to live our lives, what ways of behaving, thinking and being are right or wrong in relation to other people (Frank 2002; Vilkko 1997, 52). I considered evaluation mediated experientiality as a crucial aspect of the women's talk about their experiences (see Fludernik 1996, 29, 50).

Thus, one objective of the analysis was to understand the women's evaluations over the long term, i.e., as these engaged during four successive interviews. I paid attention to the evaluative parts of the narratives. The women reflected lengthy on the meanings of their own actions, feelings and thoughts as well as on the meanings of actions of the other persons involved in the women's lives. It was often possible afterwards during the analysis to infer important characteristics of the narration from their formal or linguistic aspects (Abbott 2002; Hyvärinen 1994, 57–63; Labov 1972).

It has been claimed that in the process of narrating, a distinctive norm develops about the pace, about how detailed the narration of the events is going to be (May 2001, 85). However, the pace may also shift in the course of the narration. A detailed, decelerated pace often foregrounds important events or turning points (May 2001, 85). An accelerated pace may mean that the events are not relevant or they are difficult to talk about. Further, a narrative can be analysed in terms of the kind of language the narrator uses: negation, repetition, moral language, relational language (e.g. use of the we-form), metaphors, pauses, silences, hesitations, and qualifications that might be important (Abbott

2002; Hyvärinen 1994, 57–63; Labov 1972). These linguistic characteristics were detected in the women's detailed evaluations. In choosing the different narrative threads which to follow in the analysis, I paid attention to which events produced narrative talk and were told in decelerated pace. Furthermore, related to these events the women often used repetition, qualifications and moral evaluation; for example, the women pondered their actions in terms of what are good or bad, right or wrong ways of mothering (see Kaskisaari 2004; Mauthner & Doucet 1998; Ribbens 1998).

In the present study crucial for the analysis was to see how the different persons and relationships were described and evaluated. The women's stories were profoundly relationship stories, that is, stories about their selves as relational selves. When studying relationality in narratives an analysis focusing on the characters and the self in stories is useful in making sense of the meaning of different persons and of their relationships with the narrator (e.g. Conville 1998). Narrative includes the characters who are presented in the story, from which it might be also possible to infer those who are not mentioned in the story (Franzosi 1998). Character traiting refers to the positive or negative portrayal of actors and to the attribution of action to actors (Franzosi 1998). It can be inferred explicitly from adjectives or the traits of the characters can be interpreted implicitly from their actions. The term positioning refers to aspect of narrative similar to that of character traiting. Positioning refers to the analysis of the central characters and how they are positioned, characterized and evaluated in the narrative (Wortham 2006).

Also traceable in the women's narratives was the narrative tone. The general tone of a narration can be progressive, regressive or stable (Gergen & Gergen 1986). In the progressive case life events turn out to be going well for the narrator, while in the regressive case they are going badly. If the tone is stable, this means that the progressive or regressive tone continues. In narrative analysis, individual narratives are often analyzed as a whole and categorized as belonging to a certain genre and having a certain tone (e.g. May 2001, 84–85); however, a genre and tone may shift during the narrative; and a narrative may comprise multiple genres and tones (Abbott 2002, 45–46). In the present study, the longitudinal approach revealed clear shifts in tone between successive interviews.

The analytical process was long and consisted of different components. Figure 3 shows the general analytical model. Phase two consisted of making summaries of the women's interviews. I made summaries in which I picked out all the thematic wholes as stories, named them, illustrated the central points of these wholes and marked the number of transcribed pages in which these thematic areas were discussed (see Fraser 2004). These summaries worked as a way to cope with and structure the data, to see which topics were productive of narration for each woman from one interview to the next interview (phases three and four). In addition to these summaries, I read the original transcriptions and listened to the original tapes, not only because they showed the interactional, verbal and linguistic means of narrating, but also and more impor-

tantly, narrative mediated experientiality in its emotional and evaluative richness.

I have used different styles in the different articles in presenting individual women's stories. For all the articles, I borrowed the idea of writing in the third person from Paula Saukko (2000). Writing the third person makes it explicit that the stories are moulded through my interpretation and that it is I, who have integrated, edited and reshaped, and thus told these stories (Polkinghorne 1995, 19; Riessman 1993, 13–14; Saukko 2000).

I tried to find both individual pathways from interview to interview and similarities and differences between the women on how they talked about their everyday life, mothering and relationships (phase five; cf. Thomson & Holland 2003). The focus of the analysis was, first of all, on the content of the narration, and secondly, on the form of the narration. Thirdly, I followed the changes of the narration for each woman from interview to interview in Article II and Article III. The role of the cultural narratives related to mothering and family life was also a focus of the analysis. In addition to reading the individual women's interviews, I compared the different women's narratives cross-sectionally in order to find what similarities and differences between the women might exist (phase six). At the same time, I read the literature in the field in order to find theoretical concepts that would adequately help in understanding the meanings of the women's narratives (phase seven).

I started the analytical process with the interviews conducted during the time of pregnancy. I analysed every mother's interview on its own. This yielded summaries out of four women's narratives, from which I identified three different narrative threads that were shared by all the interviewed women (Article I). Reading the women's four succeeding interviews and changes from interview to interview produced a description of the types of narratives found in the women's maternal responsibility stories (Article II) and portrayal of the different kinds of transformations viewed through their narration about the couple relationship (Article III). The fourth article analysed three separate, (micro) narratives or two episodic narratives from my data and one episodic life story from Marianne Notko's dissertation data. The process of analysing these short narratives was wholly different from the other attempts. The focus was on what and how something was said and described in these short narratives, and our suggestion was that the themes visible in these particular narratives 'represented' something present in other women's narratives as well (see Patton 2002, 230–242). Table 3 summarises the analytical methods used in each article separately.

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ 1. Reading the interview│
│ transcriptions and      │
│ listening to the tapes  │
└─────────────────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │ 2. Making individual     │
                │ thematic and story       │
                │ summaries of the         │
                │ transcriptions           │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │ 3. Analysing and         │
                │ choosing themes that     │
                │ produced narrative talk  │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │ 4. Following the chosen  │
                │ story-lines for each     │
                │ individual woman         │
                │ throughout the four      │
                │ interviews               │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │ 5. Identifying the       │
                │ characteristics of the   │
                │ narratives               │
                └──────────────────────────┘
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Narrative content

Narrative form

Changes in form and content of narratives from interview to interview

Searching for references to the dominant cultural narratives

6. Comparing the narration of each individual woman cross-sectionally

7. Searching for theoretic concepts capable of capturing the women's narration

8. Writing up the findings based on the analytical process
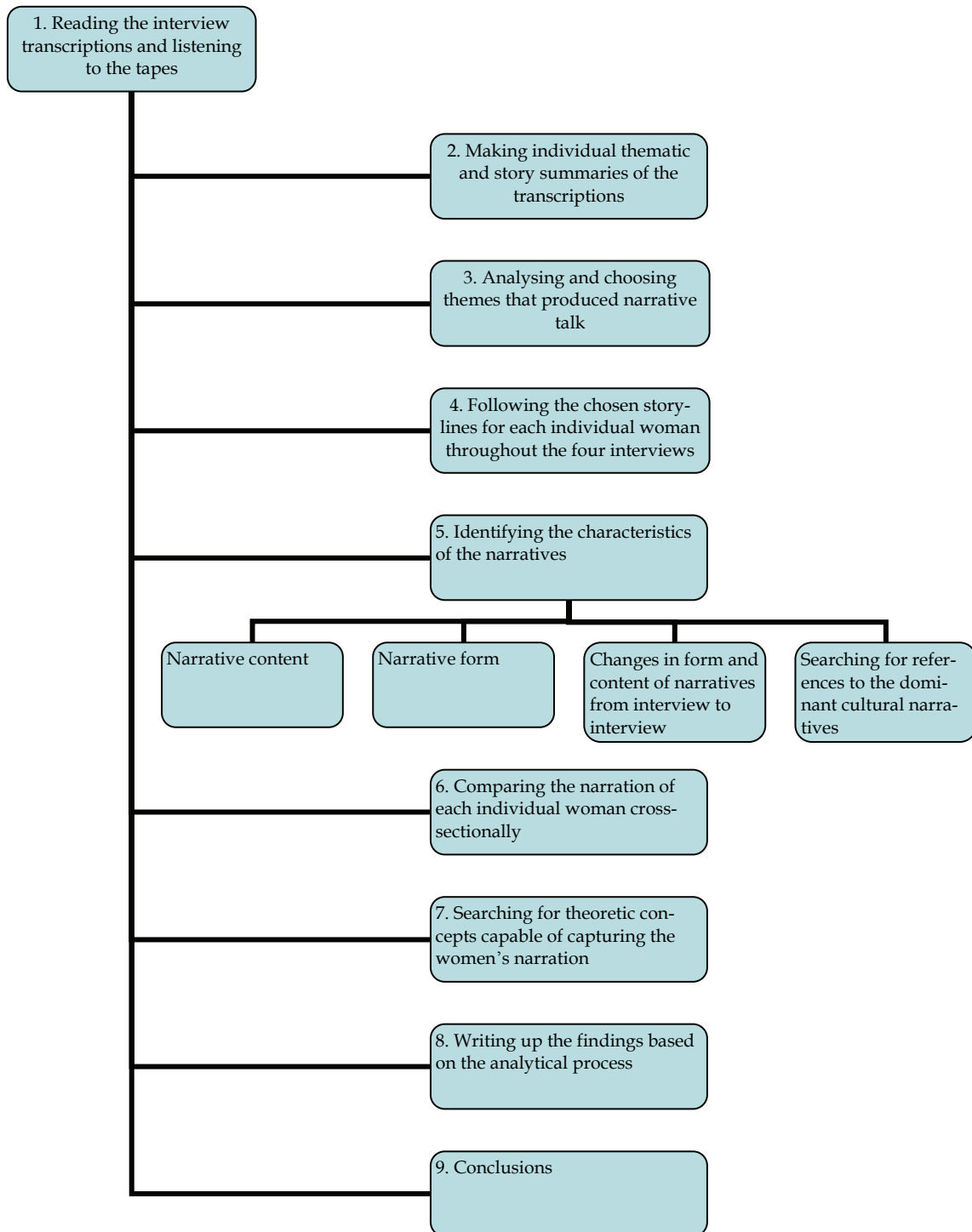
9. Conclusions

FIGURE 3   The general analytical model

TABLE 3   The analytical methods applied in the different articles

Article	The focus of the analysis	Method of analysis
Article I	- Narrative analysis of the narration on the choice to become a mother, particularly in four women's interviews.	- Constructing four women's narratives on the basis of the women's first interviews, analysing the central narrative threads of these narratives.
Article II	- Narrative analysis of all four of the seven women's successive interviews during one year. - Focus on the content and form of mothers' narratives about the child, daily care and mothering, and the changes in them from interview to interview. - Analysis based on dialogue between the women's stories and the theoretical concepts used in the article.	- Cross-comparison of the seven women's narration. - Focus on evaluative parts of women' stories, on emotions talked about, and on the narrative form: repetition, qualifications, use of moral language. - Two narratives were constructed on the basis of the two different types of narrating observed in the interviews: the narrative of desirable responsibility and the narrative of maternal vulnerability (see also Appendix 2).
Article III	- Narrative analysis of all four of the seven women's successive interviews. - Focus on the content and form of the narratives that concerned their mothering in relation to the couple relationship and partner's fathering, and the changes in them from interview to interview. - Analysis based on dialogue between the women's stories and theoretical concepts used in the article.	- Analysis of tone (progressive/regressive/stable) of the women's interviews. - The analysis concentrates on positioning and evaluation in the women's narratives that concern how the self is narrated in relation to the partner (see also Appendix 3). - Three different transformations of the couple relationship were constructed on the basis of cross-comparison of the changes in the women's narration: smooth, turbulent and cumbrous (a subtype) transformations.
Article IV	- Narrative case analysis of two women's (micro)narratives focusing on female family relations.	- Analysis of the features of two women's narratives. - Concentrating on how the self is narrated in relation to the female family members. - Character traiting is utilised.
Article I, II, III, IV	- Analysis of intertextuality and encounters with the (dominant) cultural narratives.	- Analysis of the use of moral language and verbs. - Analysis of open identification with or rejection of cultural narratives related to motherhood, the couple relationship and family relations.

The final decision over where to concentrate and through what kinds of analytical lenses to read the data for the four different articles were only made after reading the women's interviews and focusing on the experiences that they highlighted as meaningful and that produced narrative talk. This does not mean that narrative talk was produced on all the topics chosen for every woman; instead the women's experiences showed variation. It is acknowledged in narrative research that the turning points of life and situations where one's own life departs from the expected or normal more easily produce narratives than the fluently proceeding life (Abbott 2002, 156–174). This can be seen in the present study in the individual emotions and moral considerations that followed when the women confronted unexpected situations, difficulties and problems during the year. Their experiences and emotions did not at the time find articulation

and consequently this led to a need for reflection in the interview situation. Sometimes, and particularly for some women, their everyday life ran smoothly with no unforeseeable surprises or deviations from what they had expected. Thus, this did not produce as much narration. However, analysis of all the narration produced by the women showed more clearly the special features of different narrative modes and thus challenged the interpretations I had made on the basis of one woman's stories or caused me to consider carefully the theoretical lenses used in illuminating the women's experiences and stories.

3.5   Reflections on the 'truth', credibility and ethics of the study

Doucet and Mauthner (2002) see epistemological considerations as an ethical issue, an issue of knowing responsibly. They argue for building ethical relationship with the receivers of the research by being as reflective, honest and transparent as is reasonable with regard to the epistemological, ontological, theoretical and personal assumptions, and especially, analytic and interpretive processes that inform and are conducted in the research. I have aimed at making the research process, that is, the epistemological, theoretical and methodological assumptions, decisions and solutions, as transparent as possible. Noting carefully the assumptions and decisions underlying the findings help to ensure the validity and reliability or credibility and plausibility of the research effort (see e.g. Plummer 2001, 152–159; Riessman 2008, 185–193). A related issue, commonly discussed in statistical research, concerns the representativeness of the sample or the generalisation of the findings. I would argue that in their particularity the present women's stories reveal features that are present more generally in the lives of today's educated, middle-class new mothers' lives (see Chase 1995; Riessman 2008), even if the different women's responses may differ.

The truth about experiences described through narratives is not objective truth but that a subjective and particular truth (e.g. Riessman 2008, 186). Jerome Bruner (1986, 11–15) proposed two different modes of thinking: paradigmatic, or logico-scientific, and narrative. These modes provide their own way of ordering experience or of constructing reality. According to Bruner (1986, 11) it is easy to separate the paradigmatic and narrative criteria of truth from each other: a good story differs in many ways from a well-formed argument. A good story convinces by its lifelikeness and truth as verisimilitude whereas a well-formed argument convinces of its (universal or generalised) truth. In addition, the 'truth' and knowledge represented as a result of a study such as the present one needs to be seen as an interpretation made from a particular perspective. Here the interest lay in understanding the beginning of motherhood from mothers points of view, with special focus on the changes they perceived in their identities, everyday lives and relationships. The value of the findings lies not in reporting the facts, but in understanding the meanings of the process of becoming a mother for the individual women (see Riessman 2008, 187).

Participation in this study was voluntary and all the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the interview schedule before giving their consent. I assured them that unless they gave their separate consent, only I would read and use the interview data (see Plummer 2001, 217–218). However, it is unclear whether the participants generally, and in a longitudinal study in particular, know to what they are giving their consent even if they have been told the purpose of the research (see Miller & Bell 2002; Pösö 2008).

In the context of longitudinal interviewing, people's life situations may shift in unexpected directions and continuing in the research process may take on a different meaning for them, as also was the case in this study (Miller & Bell 2002). Are they then given the possibility to withdraw or persuaded to continue? At the beginning of the present study, I expected that some of the participants might drop out, for example, of disinterest, relocation or unexpected difficulties (cf. Miller & Bell 2002). However, all the women participating in this study were committed to the study; they all decided to participate in all four interviews without any prompting or pressure from me to continue. The interviews could be re-scheduled at the participant's request (see in more detail section 3.3.1). Thus, I assume that the interviews gave the women a forum or time to reflect on their feelings and everyday lives in a way they found congenial. The women had also the possibility to regulate what was talked about because of the phenomenological approach. In some cases, I found that some events or topics discussed in an earlier interview, particularly where these concerned family relations became difficult to talk about later, as if the women regretted talking about them in the earlier interview.

It has been claimed that interpretations need to be faithful to the experiences and the stories of the participants (Fraser 2004). Whose voices are heard and whose remain silent in the findings? What kinds of stories are we as researchers attracted to? Do we find one individual's story more poignant, more considered, important or revealing? Whose story would not be worth telling? Whose story might be too revealing? These questions became important for me. The women are the owners of their stories; however I feel that I have been privileged and thus have a responsibility faithfully to hear and re-present their stories in my dissertation (see Doucet & Mauthner 2002; Plummer 2001, 216–217). Consequently, I have tried to respect and take into account all the participants' voices and their stories in the analyses.

The reason for not presenting individual stories as wholes relates to hurt and harm (see Plummer 2001, 223–226). I obtained very detailed narratives from every participant about their personal lives; they had given their stories and their time to this study during a period in their lives characterised by unpredictable turns and moments. I did not want a participant to find the presentation and interpretation of her story as too revealing. The narratives, in some occasions, involved rather censorious criticism of their partners, and of other people as well. I still find some of the episodic narratives which I presented in the articles very illuminating, as they contained a lot of detailed information about the women's everyday lives and relationships. All the names used in the

articles are pseudonyms, and to assure anonymity I changed the pseudonyms and some details from one article to article in order to make it difficult to connect the narrative threads belonging to individual women.

4 MAIN FINDINGS

The main aim of this study was to capture the process of becoming a mother as a multilayered phenomenon, to identify the changes and ruptures belonging to the beginning of motherhood through the mothers' stories, and to consider how maternal identities are constructed through their everyday lives and relationality, and how these identities are narrated. When considering the question of how motherhood becomes part of a woman's life course (Article I), it became evident that in the present women's narration about their mothering, the wellbeing of the child was the most important life goal that these mothers strove for (Article II). At the same time, when the women reflected on their everyday lives with their babies and as mothers, they brought up the changes they had noticed in their couple relationships (Article III). Furthermore, their female relations also altered during the year (Article IV). This is to be expected, as their everyday life was built quite solely around their child, their home, their partner, some relatives and friends and visiting maternity health care professionals. This also shows that the women's life circle became narrower compared to life before the birth of the child. This may also, positively as well as negatively, intensify the women's close relationships. Thus, the women's narratives showed clearly that maternal identity and agency are relational. The findings were presented originally in the four articles. This chapter summarises the most important outcomes.

4.1 Narrating the choice to become a mother

I sought to answer to the first research question of how motherhood becomes part of the women's life course by examining the women's stories focusing also on the time before and during pregnancy. The choice of becoming a mother was something that the mother needed first to reflect on before pregnancy and then later on during her everyday life and the changes in her body in the course of her pregnancy (Article I). Three different narrative threads were found with

respect to the women's choice of becoming a mother: first, reflections between desiring and rationally choosing the right time for motherhood; second, feelings of ambivalence in making that choice; and third, the specific relationality between the women and their partners.

Choices and desires. The choice of becoming a mother was a morally evaluated process, during which the desire and rationality of the choice were reflected on. The interviewed women's stories show that their conscious planning and decision making came up against more unconscious elements in making that decision. The more unconscious or at least unspoken elements were related to the desire to become a mother, and thus the choice also had emotional, embodied, and unforeseenable aspects (cf. Bergum 1997, 30; Kaskisaari 1999). The desire to become a mother could be a long-lasting, powerful desire that was only partly open to explication. Most of the mothers had desired and wanted to become mothers; they wanted to take responsibility for a child and family.

However, the women bonded differently with motherhood. For two mothers pregnancy was a surprise or totally unexpected. Nevertheless, they chose to become mothers. At the time of the interview, they also talked about their positive feelings and expectations towards having a baby, even though they had needed to consider their unexpectedly changed life situation very carefully. For all the women the choice of becoming a mother involved both desire and rational considerations about their maturity to be a mother, their financial or living conditions, their job-related situation and their couple relationship. Equally, the choice to become a mother included embodied aspects, ambivalent feelings, thoughts, ideas, perceptions and ideals that are not similarly or simultaneously open to reflection and thus narrative construction.

Ambivalence in choosing motherhood. In several respects choosing motherhood caused the women ambivalence. In situations when the pregnancy was not planned, the choice contained more uncertainty and was thus in a more urgent need of reflection and thus different from planned pregnancies. Nevertheless, uncertainty was present, alongside, desire in all the narratives as fears about the wellbeing of the unborn baby increased through knowledge about the risks of pregnancies and medical foetus screening. At the same time, the fears and uncertainties indicate that in some sense the baby is present to the mother right from the beginning of pregnancy, that she feels the baby in her body and thus is already taking responsibility for the baby's wellbeing.

The questions related to the women's life course and work or career also aroused ambivalence. Many of the women in this study had made their choice to become a mother before entering the labour market after finishing their education. This was also related to the age of becoming a mother. Some of the mothers felt that they did not want to postpone their mothering any further because they were already near their thirties. Becoming a mother could still cause tension in relation to these two different life domains. One of the women became pregnant during her effort to get into university. She contemplated her relative youth, both her and her partner's life situation and goals, and her choice to become a mother. She needed to change the order of her life goals

very unexpectedly, which caused anxiety and uncertainty. Similar thoughts were in the mind of another woman who unexpectedly found her pregnant. She needed go on sick leave because of a too heavy a work load and because she was expecting twins. The study showed that the women contemplated the right time to become a mother with relation to what is culturally considered to be the right age to become a mother and the right moment in a woman's life course, i.e., only in a situation of permanent employment, in a marital relationship, and at the right moment in the work career (see Woollett & Boyle 2000).

Relationality between the women and their partners. It was not enough for the mothers to be ready for motherhood themselves, but they stressed that their decision to have a baby was the result of shared thinking together with their partners. Thus, making the choice to become a mother can be seen in terms of specific relationality rather than autonomy (see the discussion on the concept of 'choice' and autonomous/relational decision-making in Article I). A mutual decision provides a basis for shared future responsibility for the child, even if the future cannot be predicted with certainty. Trust towards their partners also obviated the need to consider the darker sides of the future sharing of parenting, even if discussions about the women's greater work load in the household or the divorces of parents of small children might be expected to have the opposite effect on their thoughts. The importance of shared choice might be also seen as affected by the discussions on shared parenthood and new fatherhood. However, responsibility towards child and family was something the interviewed women wanted to assume – even if it was expressed in terms of shared responsibility between the partners. The couple relationship also became a focus of the analysis in other ways, as described in Article III.

These three narrative threads are interesting in the light of reflectivity discussions. It might be argued that in postmodern era the contemplation of the life choices has become a way of being a responsible adult signifying careful life planning (see Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Miller 2005, 139–142; Vilkko 2000). At the same time, even if life transitions have become to be seen based more and more on an individual, free or autonomous 'choice', these decision processes are regulated, for example, by the structural and cultural factors related to gender, and a 'reasonable' (female) life course, as was the case in this study (cf. Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 42–46; Gordon 1990; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005, Miller 2005, 139–142). Different life decisions are to be seen needing conscious life planning, which in turn becomes a virtue, and further, the unexpected 'failures' become attributed as a fault of the individual's own irresponsible behaviour (Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 45–46; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005). The women in the interview situation tried to make sense of their 'choice' in order to become a responsible mother and to anticipate their lives with the child, even if the consequences of this choice cannot be known beforehand for certain.

4.2   Narratives of responsibility and vulnerability

I was interested in how the mothers talked about their relationship with their baby and their own everyday mothering and how their stories about these changed during the first year (Article II). I constructed two distinct narratives on the basis of the different narrative means used in the women's talk: the narrative of desired responsibility and the narrative of maternal vulnerability (see details Appendix 2). Even if all the mothers' interviews involved both narratives, their relative predominance varied widely from interview to interview or mother to mother. The successive interviews had a very different emotional tone, and on some occasions, especially the third interviews, turned to be morally very heavily laden. However, an important finding is that there exist two sides to maternal experience either of which cannot become wholly understood without the other.

   The narrative of desirable responsibility discussed the positive aspects of caring and responsibility for the baby. The plot constructed a clear transformation in the women's lives compared to their lives before the baby throughout the interviews. It was a transformation which was or turned out subsequently to be a positive one and which they narrated as actively chosen already before or during pregnancy. By means of the narrative of desirable responsibility the women were able to give coherence to their lives as a new mother and to narrate their love towards the baby and the pleasures of their responsibility for the baby. From the mothers' perspective, the child was talked about as a source of joy and pleasure, as giving a new meaning to life. Being a mother and taking care of the needs of the child were described as new, important life goals which the women aimed to fulfil. The women were morally committed to do their best to fulfil their role as a good mother. Further, in this narrative the baby's needs and the mother's own needs were described to coincide, i.e., taking care of the baby's needs was what the mothers wanted to do. The narrative of desirable responsibility indicated that becoming a mother and mothering the child were important, deeply fulfilling experiences for those women.

   The narrative of maternal vulnerability in turn showed the shadow side of maternal care. To be precise, this narrative consisted of numerous episodic narratives. The narrative of maternal vulnerability embodied stories about the contradictions of time, being alone and trying to cope with the baby, feelings of tiredness, incompetence and a heavy burden of emotion work, even collapse. The women described diverse practical, embodied tasks alongside responsibility and emotion work related to these tasks. They had to be responsive to the baby's feelings, moods and needs. The negative sides of mothering, however, were not linked to the child, but to the heavy burden of care work. Conversely, the mothers stressed that the child was the best thing in their life and not responsible for any of their negative reactions. Vulnerability was manifested in ruptures of the mothers' images of themselves as good, competent and caring mothers. However, the burden of mothering was evaluated and coped with

through a strong moral commitment and through caring about and loving the child.

Everyday life for the women was characterised by a non linear idea of temporality (see Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Felski 2000). In this sense maternal agency emerged, more generally, through countless repetitive actions, through the developing of routines and habits, and ruptured routines, and through good moments and bad moments. Felski (2000) situates repetition as a temporal mode in everyday life and sees it as structured by the contradiction between linear and cyclical time. The relationship with the baby was based on this repetition: (breast)feeding, carrying, comforting and pacifying. Offering security, caring for and caring about were constructed through everyday moments. These routines also affected the women's sense of self. On the one hand, they were enjoying their daily lives, routines and habits with their babies and evaluated this as a significant, meaningful life change compared to their past lives. On the other hand, they felt that bearing responsibility and performing the obligations belonging to daily mothering occasionally caused feelings of frustration, tiredness, anxiety and exhaustion (see Oberman & Josselson 1996). Somehow they did not have the means to join these two different experiential realms into a single intelligible picture of themselves (see Parker 1997).

By drawing on the concept of emotion work, the ambivalent emotions, present in the narrative of vulnerability, became intelligible (see Arendell 2000; Hochschild 2003; Strazdins & Broom 2004). Through the narrative of maternal vulnerability the women tried to make sense of their own feelings of tiredness, incompetence, unfairness, anger and disappointment, i.e., they did emotion work (see Arendell 2000). They also did emotion work to square their feelings with the hegemonic cultural storylines. Emotion work transformed their negative feelings in situations where they were tired or unable to fulfil the needs of the baby, to follow their moral commitment to take care of their baby. In this process the mother's own needs were postponed or denied. These attempts caused most of the feelings of ambivalence and inexplicability. It was not always easy for the mothers to admit their incompetence, tiredness or exhaustion. Emotion work demanded mental resources and moral commitment.

Through the ethics of care, I was able to see everyday mothering within the moral domain, as relational, and linked with everyday social situations (see Sevenhuijsen 1998; Smart 1991). Early motherhood and caring for the infant involved moral ambiguity related to the questions of responsibility and vulnerability. The findings of this study indicated that mothering is an ethical disposition: caring for the baby invokes specific kinds of emotionality and morality. It involves deep feelings of joy and pleasure, but at the same time emotion work and negative feelings related to care. Early motherhood is the beginning of a process towards agency that takes seriously the presence, dependency and needs of the other, the baby.

4.3   Sharing parenting with the partner: harmony or relational turbulence

From pregnancy onwards the beginning of motherhood was not only something that happened between the mother and the child, but was a far more complicated process in which care for others and the self were under negotiations and also prone to moral conflicts. Particularly in relation to the couple relationship, new parental and spousal identities were formed through relational negotiations, conflicts and adaptations in everyday life with the baby at home (Article III). It is crucial to see how these routines and practices, regarded generally as mundane and trivial, when viewed through a temporal perspective, become significant for the couple relationship. This substantiality derives from repetition in conducting routines, the occasional burdensomeness of which becomes hence visible and understandable.

The women's narratives showed that at the beginning of their motherhood the women needed to re-orientate their identities not only as mothers but also as partners in their couple relationship, and for some women this caused biographical disruption. This disruption was related to conflict or turbulence in their couple relationship. A relational turbulence model was used to explain how different life transitions and changes can cause relational turbulence. In this situation aspects of relationships are questioned and renegotiated (see Knobloch 2007; Solomon & Knobloch 2004).

From the four successive interviews it was possible to construct three narratives of the transformation of the couple relationship: the smooth, the turbulent and the cumbrous transformation narratives (for details see Appendix 3). All the mothers' narratives began optimistically in the first interview. These narratives involved the use of the we-form, descriptions of loving and understanding one's partner, delineations of intimacy and strengthened closeness in the couple relationship. The future parenting and responsibility for the child were seen as shared life goals for both partners (see also Article I).

In the *smooth transformation narrative*, for two women the situation remained stable and reorientation, the linking of parenthood to the couple relationship, was narrated as occurring harmoniously, and parenthood was described mostly as shared. The *turbulent* and *cumbrous transformation narratives* (three and two women, respectively) were divided into four phases, labelled as follows: 1) the optimistic beginning, 2) cracks in romance, 3) relational turbulence leading to biographical disruption, and 4) adaptation and reorientation. These five women's narratives concerning their couple relationships took a clearly regressive turn in the third interview. These five mothers' narratives about their couple relationship turned out to be emotionally loaded, recounting the mothers' shifting feelings from happiness and understanding to anger, solitude, tiredness, frustration and exhaustion. In this phase these five women's narratives showed a biographical disruption that was related to relational turbulence.

The *turbulent transformation narrative* described an ambivalent attempt by the three women to make sense of their emotions – emotions that were contradictory more towards their couple relationship and their partner's behaviour than towards their mothering. This study demonstrates perceptions of the inadequate participation and lack of reciprocity in parenting of one's partner may arouse negative emotions productive of relational turbulence.

In the third interview two women's *cumbrous transformation narrative* contained features from both the smooth and turbulent transformation narratives. The disruption narrated and felt by the women was related more to the discrepancy between trying to do the best they could with their babies and their own exhaustion in a tough life situation. According to these two women, despite their partner's involvement in caring for their babies and in domestic work, their situation easily caused friction and disputes between the partners.

The fourth interview involved the theme of adaptation and of narrative reorientation to the changes in their lives and to closure in relational turbulence for all five women whose narratives were classified as of the turbulent and cumbrous transformation types. The narratives from the fourth interviews with these women could be interpreted as containing a longing for romance and intimacy and for the restoration of the couple relationship, even if the year had also marked the couple relationship in negative ways. The roles in the couple relationship had to be negotiated and created anew. It meant a shift towards accepting gender differences between mothering and fathering, and creating clearer distinctions between parenthood and the couple relationship that enabled new understanding between the partners. However, it needs to be taken into account that the fourth interview, because being the last interview, could tempted the women to narrate their life situation as showing coherence, development and closure (Abbott 2002, 51–61; Byrne 2003; Thomson & Holland 2003). In other words, the women might have wanted to believe in and tell a 'happy ending' to their narratives although the future remained unknown.

Richard Conville's (1998) analysis of dialectical contradictions shed light on the shifting emotions in the women's narration from interview to interview. Conville describes the dialectics involved in the relational transition process as forming a helix, which starts from a state of security in the relationship, which was the case in the optimistic beginning in this study. The helix moves through disintegration, experiencing and noticing mutual differences as problematic, into the phase of alienation. In this phase the relationship reaches its turning point (Conville 1998; see also Knobloch 2007; Solomon & Knobloch 2004). In the present study, cracks in the couple relationship and the phase of relational turbulence in the turbulent and cumbrous transition narratives are much the same as the two phases identified by Conville. For these women, the process of reorientation required to overcome their sense of relational turbulence was an active process in which the roles in the couple relationship had to be negotiated and created anew. This resonates with Conville's (1998) idea that in order to overcome the turning point in and to regain certainty about the relationship, both parties' actions need to become defined differently.

The emotional tone of the narratives in the different phases of the turbulent and cumbrous transformation types concerning the women's couple relationship showed some similarities with how the mothers talked about their maternal responsibility (analysed in Article II). The first and second phases were linked with the timing of the higher 'prevalence' of the narrative of desirable responsibility. In cases where these mothers' narratives of responsibility adhered more closely to the narratives of maternal vulnerability, they also talked about relational turbulence in their couple relationship. In the case of the smooth transformation, the two women's narratives about maternal vulnerability were produced in the early phase of mothering.

It has been argued that a woman needs a perfect partner in order to be able to carry out intensive mothering (Fox 2001). When the women in this study were satisfied with their partner's share of the work and expressed understanding of their partner, harmony in the couple relationship could be inferred (cf. Thagaard 1997). Harmony could change into frustration and disappointment with the partner's attitude to sharing, which the mothers, in turn, tried to cope with and accept. Arendell (2000) has also pointed out that the negative feelings that mothering arouses may be directed not towards the child but towards the partner. It is possible that traditional and gendered cultural narratives supported the couple relationship at difficult times by enabling the women to accept gender imbalance as 'belonging' to the normal couple relationship and parenthood (Squire 2003; Thagaard 1997). The above mentioned narratives offered assurance for narrative reorientation, but they did it at the expense of women's well-being and prohibited change in gendered power and labor division positions (cf. Husso & Virkki 2008; McNay 2000; Wood 2001).

4.4 Problematic woman-to-woman family relationships at the beginning of motherhood

Many mothers' interviews included talk and stories about other women. These other women were often relatives, friends or professionals in maternity and child health-care. Two rather contrasting dimensions were related to the stories concerning other women; either descriptions of support and shared experiences or interference in the women's mothering. The mothers started to talk about other women and female relatives unprompted. The amount of and importance attributed to the stories about problematic relationships with other women was unexpected not only for me, but also for one of my colleagues who was doing her dissertation on emotional violence in family relations (Notko 2009), and we began to discuss this phenomenon together. It resulted an article about problematic woman-to-woman family relationships (Article IV). In the article, we explore how both the beginning of motherhood and two women sharing a home could cause strong feelings of hurt in the women we studied.

The beginning of motherhood seemed to be a cause of conflict between women, even if it might also bring them closer to each other. The latter is also a cultural expectation. It may be argued that motherhood is at the centre of family relations and of meanings linked to gender. The beginning of motherhood gives a woman the possibility to practice agency through motherhood. This also has consequences for structured sets of power relations in adult family relations (see chapter 2.5.1; Article IV; Connidis & McMullin 2002a).

In the case of becoming a mother, woman's social role is transformed from that of childless woman and daughter to that of a mother of a child. Mothers have traditionally occupied a higher position than daughters or other women without children. In one sense, becoming a mother could be linked to becoming 'an adult', becoming a responsible, a sensible, independent person (see Susanna's narratives in Article IV; cf. Niemelä 2005; Ribbens McCarthy, Edwards & Gillies 2000).

Becoming a mother means new negotiations vis a vis the power hierarchies between (related) women. Ambivalence arose in situations and relationships where the mother saw herself as a competent mother and as 'an adult', while the other woman somehow acted in a way that ignores this new agency or played it down. In female family relations the situation is more difficult on account of the expectation of receiving support and help from close female relatives. For example, the triad child-mother-grandmother is assumed to become positively stronger after the child is born (e. g. Stern 1998).

The interviewed women reported that they felt their mothering capacities were evaluated negatively and their means of caring were the subjects of interference by other women. Consequently, they felt hurt and insulted about being given 'advice'. The hurtfulness of these insults, which an outsider might deem rather minor, becomes more understandable, when the baby is seen as a 'metaphoric body' for the mother, i.e., related to one's sense of identity in a deep way (see Dovey 1985, 41). Furthermore, the cultural narrative of good mothering assigns responsibility for the child primarily to the mother. When a new mother adopts the idea that she has primary responsibility for the baby, she easily experiences other women's interference as hurtful and judgemental about her abilities as mother. While it has been assumed that women are not as competitive as men, the study suggests that motherhood, home, childcare and the private sphere can become realms that offer competence for women, but also lead to competition and conflict between them. The cultural narratives related to femininity and family relations do not allow these difficult issues to become under scrutiny. They only polarise the characteristics of these relations by seeing women either as good and supportive or as evil and their relationships thus problematic. Consequently, difficulties in female family relationships remain unspoken.

4.5 Impact of cultural narratives on the women's personal narratives

The third aim of the study was to acknowledge the impact of the cultural narratives concerning family relations and motherhood on women's personal narratives. Neale and Flowerdew (2003) have named this phenomenon taking into account the interplay between temporal and cultural dimensions of personal narratives. In the present study the women identified themselves with and utilised different dominant cultural narratives around family life and mothering as well as resisted them (see Andrews 2002; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes 1999). The present research confirmed that resisting cultural narratives is not always conscious or well-articulated. Conversely, experiencing, feeling, understanding, i.e., living with different, mutually contradictory cultural narratives was more about being situated in between and feeling ambivalent with those narratives.

The women's choice to become a mother had already been evaluated through cultural and normative narratives that related to the proper timing of motherhood (Article I). The individual mothers reflected on their desires and choices about becoming a mother in a cultural landscape that imposes the demand of careful life planning and responsible motherhood (e.g. Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Vilkko 2000). It can be argued on the basis of these women's stories that at the level of cultural narratives there is a very narrow 'right' moment to become a mother (cf. Berryman 1991; Kelhä 2005; Phoenix 1991). In other words, ambivalence arose because the women tried to follow the narrative and the norms of an adult, rational subject who plans and reflects on her life course, mothering and relationships in an ethical manner (see Frank 2002), while at the same time, they were experiencing their lives as embodied, relational and emotional female subjects.

Cultural narratives continued to have an impact on the women's interviews after the child was born. Being a good mother was something that the women aimed at. The women in this study wanted to position and identify themselves within the narrative of 'good mothering', create their identities and give coherence to their lives as responsible, new mothers (Article II; cf. May 2008). At the same time, they had feelings of not living up to the ideals and thus they had to learn to cope both with the demands of this narrative and with the ambivalence it produced in their everyday life (cf. Parker 1997). The narrative of maternal vulnerability embodied 'moral monitoring' and 'epistemological struggles' between the dominant cultural narratives and the mothers' personal stories (for more on these concepts see Miller 1998; 2005; Ribbens 1998).

The cultural narrative of 'good mothering' played a dual role in the interviewed women's lives: it tempted them into intensive mothering, but at the same time it created an elusive moral imperative (see Hays 1996; Lupton 2000; Parker 1997). The dominant narratives of mothering have moral obligatory power: even the most trivial practices of mothering become morally laden (Chase 2001; Murphy 2000; Ribbens 1998). They lead mothers to question the

moral quality of their mothering, because the dominant narratives have scientific authority behind them, and they strongly polarise good and bad (see Abbott 2002, 44–45; Chase 2001; May 2008; Perälä-Littunen 2004, 186). The fantasy of the perfect mother does not allow motherhood to involve the shadow sides of mothering and caring (see Chodorow & Contratto 1992). Thus, these shadow sides become attached to bad mothering, to failure as a mother and to silence about difficult matters (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; May 2008; Miller 2000; Nousiainen 2004).

At the very beginning of becoming parents, all the women interpreted their couple relationship more in the terms of a 'pure relationship', in which two equal partners love each other; however with parenthood this image of the relationship quite often became more 'traditional', 'undemocratic' (see Giddens 1992; Jamieson 1999; Thagaard 1997). Notably, parenting had been included in the women's ideal of a couple relationship from the very outset of their relationships. Becoming a parent was considered an important aspect of the couple relationship. The desire to be a mother may even have been present prior to the couple relationship. This somehow contradicts Jallinoja's (2000) claim that the child is a 'third' in a romance. The women yet delayed their desire to have a child and to become a mother for the sake of the couple relationship, until their partner was ready for it (see Article I).

According to the culturally dominant narratives, it is predominantly the mother who puts the child's needs first and feels responsibility for the baby. In other words, the difficulties the women experienced in sharing parenting tasks with their partners engendered ambivalence between the ideal of shared parenting and managing by themselves (see Perälä-Littunen 2007; Vuori 2001). These contradictory identifications and goals were interpreted to follow from the women's original vision of the birth of the child as the fulfilment of the couple relationship and the wish for shared parenthood, accompanied with the objective of becoming a good, managing, competent mother and practicing intensive mothering. This ambivalence may be connected to the strong emphasis placed on gender equality in Finnish public discussions and in official family policy (see Forsberg 2005; Julkunen 1999; Pylkkänen 1999; 2008).

It is nevertheless understandable that the women could compensate for not achieving the ideal of sharing parenthood by adopting primacy in taking care of the baby. Finland, in particular, has a cultural narrative of a strong woman. This narrative has a long history with its origin in an agrarian society (e.g. Helsti 2000; Julkunen 1999). Surviving is a Finnish, national narrative (Hänninen 2000, 51), of which the gendered 'female' version carries an expectation of a strong female agency in the case of motherhood (Jokinen 1997; Nätkin 1997). It has been argued that women have agentic power in relation to child-rearing contrary to their low power position in relation to the couple relationship (Johnson 1988; Jokinen 2003; Oberman & Josselson 1996; Perälä-Littunen 2007; Thagaard 1997). In this sense, the idea of a somewhat autonomous agentic position is historically inscribed in (Finnish) motherhood.

Ambivalence in relation to the couple relationship can partly be seen as deriving from structured sets of power relations, where the social role of a man, father and husband has traditionally been more privileged than that of woman, mother and wife (Connidis & McMullin 2002a; 2002b). These positions, based on an embedded gender division, are given form in different cultural narratives concerning gender and family relations. These traditional narratives exist side by side with the newer ones. Identification and refusal to identify with are not purely cognitive, but emotional and moral, chosen and evaluated through how they can make sense of our lived experiences and offer our identities the security they need (see McNay 2000). Seen in this light, balancing between contradictory cultural narratives and constructing their identities as mothers and partners were bound to ambivalence (see Adkins 2003; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005; McNay 1999).

Strong cultural expectations are also inherent in female family relations, as was shown in Article IV. Family and kinship relations are presumed to be based on caring, solidarity and (mutual) responsibility, and it is often assumed in our culture that women are the most capable of and most responsible for maintaining these relationships (Connidis & McMullin 2002a; Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Finch 1994; Finch & Mason 1993). Further, motherhood is loaded with gender-specific and powerful meanings on which women build their identities as mothers. Consequently, the structured sets of power relations based on cultural taken-for-granted expectations exist between women as well. Becoming a mother made visible the adult female family relationship hierarchies and motherhood hierarchies and showed ruptures when attempts were made to negotiate them. The new mothers were able either to resist these hierarchies or the hierarchies caused them to feel ambivalence in these relationships.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Understanding the everyday ambivalence of early mothering

This study concentrated on the beginning of motherhood, which forms a specific phase in parenting for many reasons. Even in a small sample, particular narratives may reveal something more general about what is considered as noteworthy or normal in our culture (Andrews 2002; Denzin 1989). The women in this study valued motherhood and the couple relationship in the context of what they considered to be a good life of a woman, and they sought to realise their ideals even, at times, at the cost of their own well-being (cf. Choi et al. 2005; Fox 2001; Woollett & Parr 1997). Moreover, the study of a few cases makes possible a detailed, systematic reading of temporal changes of narration (see Elliott 2005, 11). The longitudinal data brought out the eventful and intricate nature of changes in everyday life, relationality and the formation of maternal identities during the transition to parenthood from the women's perspective.

The findings show that pregnancy, and especially the birth of and subsequent life with the baby radically changed the women's everyday lives, prompting them to talk about these things in order to make sense of their lives. The successive interviews showed that the women's maternal, spousal and parental identities were constructed on a daily basis in and through various but repeated concrete and mundane events, actions and situations. This study, thus, supports the idea that the unpredictable flow of mundane events and actions is important in explaining family life (Daly 2003; Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Rönkä, Malinen & Lämsä 2009).

Everyday events in families are often profoundly relational; that is, they concern or are shared with other people, or carried out in order to meet other people's needs, and thus involve relational negotiations, conflicts and adaptations, processes in which different emotions and morality play a significant part. The study showed that emotions are bound to relationality, they arise, are felt, transmitted and managed in interaction (also Daly 2003; Larson & Almeida

1999). When becoming a mother and the mother-child relationship were contemplated with the help of the ethics of care, complex and ambivalent experiences became understood as part of the moral commitment of responsibility for the child.

Taking an everyday perspective revealed that research on care and responsibility for an infant needs to take into account the fact that daily care work is constructed around routines, repetitions and practices. At the beginning of motherhood the mother's relationship with the baby is built on full-time presence and of physical, embodied closeness. From the mother's point of view caring for a baby involves both the relationship between the mother and the child and care work. Care (work) embodies and arouses feelings (Arendell 2000; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 84). The relationship with the baby, on the one hand, was based solely on very positive feelings, such as desire, love, pleasure and joy. Care work, on the other hand, produced both positive feelings of being needed, competence, pride and self-esteem and negative feelings of uncertainty, concern, guilty, having a bad conscience, tiredness, frustration and even exhaustion. Positive feelings enabled the women to construct their new identities as mothers acting in the best interests of their children and as committed, responsible and morally engaged mothers. Negative emotions, in turn, related being constrained and burdened to carry on care work despite the contradictions of time, being alone and trying to cope with the baby. These were not easy to talk about.

Morality is an important aspect of mother-child relationship and was present in how the women evaluated their emotions, actions and goals in relation to the baby. The morality is grounded on the ethics of care, on the mother's caring about and on her ability and willingness to take responsibility for her child's wellbeing (see Sevenhuijsen 1998, 83). Love and caring about one's child are strong emotions, but they also constitute a moral disposition. Morality informs and maintains care work. The beginning of motherhood can be seen as a learning process, during which the moral disposition and knowledge and skills demanded in care work are learned and digested.

The interaction between the mother and the child and practical care work also involve emotion work (Arendell 2000; Strazdins & Broom 2004). Morality is linked with emotions through emotion work, which enables maintenance of the ethics of care despite the mother's own feelings of tiredness and exhaustion or despite the child being 'difficult'. 'Moral monitoring' of the mother's own feelings and the 'epistemological struggles' between the mother's own experiences and the cultural narratives of motherhood can se seen as a part of the process of emotion work (Miller 1998; Ribbens 1998).

According to the findings of this study, ambivalence can be attributed to the role of morality in women's feelings, perceptions and actions (also Lefkowitz & Fingerman 2003; Lupton 2000; Oberman & Josselson 1996). Deborah Lupton (2000) claims that motherhood may be seen both as a source of self-fulfilment and as a constraint upon it. Parker (1997) points out that acknowledging and accepting the presence of ambivalence renders it a constructive

rather than destructive force. For the mother, recognising her needs and desires in addition to the child's needs and accepting the co-existence of positive and negative emotions are ongoing struggles in mothering (Oberman & Josselson 1996; Parker 1997).

Mothering is reflected in the couple relationship in terms of who is responsible for fulfilling the baby's needs and whose needs are important. The women considered what were the 'right' ways to think about their partner's share of the work in caring for the baby, and how fair the 'balance' is between them and their partners. The women often considered it fair and 'right' that they had greater responsibility for the baby and the home (also Fox 2001; Thagaard 1997). The study showed that in the case of heterosexual couple relationship, the couple need to develop their own ways of sharing parenthood and continue their mutual relationship in a changed life situation (also Allan 2008; Jallinoja 2000; Knobloch 2007; Solomon & Knobloch 2004).

Becoming a mother triggers the cultural expectations related to family life that need to be reconciled. The present study supports Allan's (2008) idea that becoming parents for the first time has become a more complex endeavour than before, since the birth of the first child has become a phase during which the couple, and as was seen in this study, particularly women, face and need to accommodate the very contradictory cultural expectations, roles and responsibilities that are circulated in cultural narratives (also Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

There were also differences between the women in how these expectations and negotiations were lived through in the couple's everyday lives. For some women shared parenting was a harmonious experience, for others it was a process of wishes, becoming disappointments, of discrepancies between hopes and daily reality and gradual adjustment. Other studies also have shown that the birth of the first child attenuates, especially in women, satisfaction with and feelings of intimacy in the couple relationship, while it also increases conflicts in the latter, even if the birth of the first child may at the same time strengthen commitment towards the partner (cf. Belsky & Kerry 1994; Cowan & Cowan 1992; Shapiro, Gottman & Carrére 2000).

Ambivalence in their couple relationship narrated by the women can also be interpreted as caused by competing morals in relation to child and partner. As has also been shown in other studies (May 2005; Ribbens McCarthy, Edwards & Gillies 2000), mothers' ethics of care towards the child becomes more important than care for the partner or equality in the couple relationship. In relation to the couple relationship, however, the ethics of care towards their partner conflicted with the ethics of justice and equality when the women pondered the question of sharing care for the baby with their partners (cf. Jallinoja 2000, 108–112; Thagaard 1997).

Motherhood has been seen as an individual responsibility in Western countries, even if it is an illusion that a mother can be all-powerful, tireless and ever-managing (e.g. Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Choi et al. 2005; Fox 2001; Hays 1996; Parker 1997). The interviewed women were embedded in their culture and faced with the various gendered, cultural and social narratives that

surround family life (Andrews 2002; Miller 2000; 2005, 46–65). The present day ethos insists that individuals make 'a life of their own', and make their own choices and decisions (Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma & Thomson 2005). There is a major change in new mothers' everyday lives in how the dilemmas between individualisation and relationality can be solved (also Miller 2005, 141–142). This means that moral dilemmas and ambivalence; the question about how to fulfil one's own needs and aims while simultaneously taking care of others' needs are part and parcel of mothers' everyday lives (Bauman 1995, 1–2; Miller 2005, 141–142; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 16–19).

Traditional gendered family roles can offer a basis for a sense of security, coherence and intelligibleness in identity formation, as it presupposes acting according to what is considered to be normal, right or accepted in our culture (see Andrews 2002; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes 1999; May 2008; McNay 2000; Somers 1994). Jokinen (2003, 11) argues that the various layers of everyday life are gendered and mediated through power. Particular duties and routines belong historically and culturally to women and others belong to men, and thus the meanings of them are different for women and men (see Edward & Ribbens 1998; Holmes 2009; Salmi 2004, 17–21). Consequently, altering these conventions challenge the subject (Jokinen 2003). Wood (2001) has argued that acting against the hegemonic cultural narratives demands more conscious working than accepting them. Thus, resisting the cultural narrative of 'good mothering' easily impairs a woman's sense of herself as a morally acting mother in ways that go beyond the occasional inability to fulfil the child's needs on the daily practical level (Parker 1997).

The change and continuity experienced in everyday life are based on processes of acting according to one's aims and principles, i.e., what we promise ourselves (Ricoeur 1991b). These promises are partly culturally negotiated and partly negotiated in everyday relationships. The centrality of morality as an aspect of these relationships and negotiations was clearly shown in this study. The questions about how to treat others and bear responsibility were solved again and again on a daily basis. Feelings of frustration, stress, guilt, exhaustion or unfairness may reveal the discrepancy between our attempts to act according to our principles of ethical rationality in our close relationships, but we feel at the same time that these attempts do not result in a good enough state of affairs (Adkins 2003).

The ambivalence women live through is bound to relationality and normative cultural narratives (May 2008; Miller 1998; 2005, 60–65; Morgan 2004; Ribbens 1998). In this study the women narrated how they performed their maternal agency. In this process their own and their partner's or their female family members' expectations, in which are inscribed the cultural taken-for-granted expectation of how to behave in these relationships, produced ambivalence about according to which standards and expectations to act. The existing structured sets of power hierarchies affected how the women were able to act and negotiate in these situations, valuing opposing courses of action (also Connidis & McMullin 2002a). A high level of normativity affects most those persons who

are much attuned to reflect on the morality of their actions, such as new mothers.

The dominant cultural narratives of family relations are powerful for women when becoming mothers because then they are in the middle of new responsibilities, tasks and roles and thus reconstructing their identities. However, women do not fully adapt to or identify with these conventions or norms, but these temporal identity formation processes embody ambivalence (also Adkins 2003; McNay 2000, 76–80). Ambivalence arises in negotiating the structural factors, norms and narratives characterising the different realms of life in people's everyday actions and interactions (Connidis & McMullin 2002a). On the basis of these women's stories, it might be claimed that social change in the family realm happens partly through the ambivalence experienced in women's everyday lives. Ambivalence causes a need to reflect on and consequently a need to try to adapt oneself to fit in the gendered aspects of everyday family relations, but also to renegotiate and alter them (Bennett 2004; McNay 1999; 2000, 76–80; Miller 2005, 141–142).

5.2 Methodological conclusions – unspeakable motherhood?

This longitudinal qualitative study produced rich data that made it possible not only to follow individual pathways and trajectories, but also to compare and discuss the narratives of the individual women cross-sectionally in order to find similarities and differences within the data (see Thomson & Holland 2003). The longitudinal interviewing also enabled a dialogical relationship to develop between the participants and the researcher, so creating confidence (cf. Lahelma & Gordon 2003; Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005). Confidence is often understood as necessary for creating a trusting environment that will allow of in-depth interviewing and 'confessions'. However, in the present instance, it might be more related to the fact that the participants became convinced about my interest in their ordinary everyday life, which they themselves sometimes suspected of being boring to listen to.

The strength of a narrative approach combined with longitudinal research was that it enabled contemplation of the transition to motherhood as a temporal phenomenon in ways that made it possible to investigate change (see Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005; McLeod 2003). The most valuable benefit of longitudinal interviewing is the information it provides about temporal changes and continuities in the as-they-are-happening sense (see McLeod 2003). Such changes were described from an everyday viewpoint that brought the meaning of mundane, repetitive actions, interactions, routines - and ruptures in them – under the spotlight. This closeness to everyday life also made the women's relationships and their daily maintenance through negotiations, emotions and conflicts visible.

The focus on everyday life and the longitudinal interviews might also have encouraged the women to talk about the different aspects of their mothering without a need to produce a coherent picture of their lives (see Byrne 2003; Frank 1995). This was also visible in narrative form used; narratives were often constructed from very detailed descriptions about the women's everyday lives, episodic stories about everyday events and interactions, and feelings and thoughts related to these events (cf. Freeman 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006).

Freeman (2006) suggests that 'small' and 'big' stories tell different regions of experience. Because of the focus on everyday lives, the narration in the interviews remained close to everyday actions and experiences rather than comprising more distant reflection on the women's mothering. This supported the presupposition that it can be difficult to describe the everyday basis of mothering retrospectively and that it might be easier to 'leave out of the story' mothering experiences departing from the ideal after these had been lived through (Miller 2005, 62–64). However, I now know that the opposite may also be true (see Freeman 2006; McLeod 2003; Miller 1998). I found, in line with Miller (1998), that disclosures of the self were sometimes easier when made retrospectively. Many difficult events and emotions were only narrated retrospectively in a later interview. As Freeman (2006) and McLeod (2003) argue, temporal and emotional distance from events enable sense-making from the standpoint of what the meaning is for one's sense of self.

The process of becoming a mother seems to demand a lot of reflective work, for example, reflection on choosing motherhood, on how to respond and react to the baby's needs, or how to respond to the discrepancies of their couple relationships. Reflection involves embodied, relational and temporal aspects (see Adkins 2003). Miller (2005, 8–9), who studied mothers' accounts of the transition to motherhood, emphasises that narratives enable us to see historicity, temporality and relationality in relation to social action during the transition to motherhood, and thus to grasp how transitional events are made understandable, interpreted, reflected on and constructed narratively to invest them with coherence and unity.

Combining or mixing a narrative approach with longitudinal interviewing shed light on the processes of maternal identity work and on the changes in the mothers' identities (see McLeod 2003; Thomson & Holland 2003). One mark of the need for identity work was that the women's narratives included a great deal of evaluative talk which conveys what is important or crucial in the experiences being narrated (Fludernik 1996, 13, 29; Labov 1972; Marander-Eklund 2000, 31–32). The prevalence of evaluative talk in the women's interviews demonstrates the need to reflect on the changes that have happened in their lives, i.e., they have rebuilt their identities to include their mothering as a part of their self images. Thus, when they compared their everyday actions, emotions, life goals and relationships with the situation before the birth of the child, they were trying to figure out who they were, and in what sense their relationships and their identities had changed compared to their previous life without a child. As one of the mothers said in her fourth interview: "*This is the situation,*

I'm not going to be free of it ever in my life. I'll always be a mother. [. . .] There is never going a situation in which you aren't somebody's mother."

This was related to the emotional thickness of the talk as well. In this study the women tended to narrate recent events through reflecting on the feelings they had that departed from the 'emotional landscape' of the past, i.e., from the time before being a mother. The women reflected at length on their emotions related to their new life situation, signifying their need to understand these 'weird' emotions. Their reflection shows that they experienced emotions that they had never before felt, and that these emotions were not always easy to deal with or incorporate into their images of themselves as mothers, partners and women.

Becoming a mother meant a process of narrative re-orientation to include mothering and the post-natal changes in the women's lives in the women's images of themselves and in their life stories (cf. Bury 1982; Frank 1995; Hänninen 1996b). This process has a temporal, ongoing nature, during which everyday events and actions are given meaning as a part of the women's identity work. Becoming a mother could produce biographical disruption in identity construction, as their earlier expectations and ideals of life with the baby became somewhat challenged and disrupted in everyday family life (see Bury 1982). This disruption was manifested in the narrative of maternal vulnerability (Article II) and through changes in the couple relationship, which was described as going through turbulent or cumbrous transformations (Article III).

These temporal processes signified that the women had difficulty in making sense of these diverse events, interactions and feelings that they were going through and in trying to fit experiences and feeling never felt before into their sense of self. It is possible that in reality people (temporary) lack narrative re-orientation, i.e., people try to conform to (difficult) life circumstances without feeling that they are making progress or even making sense of their lives, and thus they feel lost (Bury 1982; Frank 1995; Miller 2005, 9; Notko 2009). Sometimes becoming a mother was in total contrast with the idealised picture about the transition to motherhood. It demanded narrative work and re-orientation in order to fit such disruptive events into one's sense of self.

This study also has limitations that need to be taken into account in forming a correct picture of its accomplishments. The methodological limitations concern the appropriateness and applicability of taking a narrative approach. The diversity of narrative analytical concepts and approaches produced confusion during the analytical process and in writing up the findings. The interviews have not been interpreted through a specific, systematic narrative analytical method, but diverse methods of narrative analysis were rather freefloatingly utilised in answering the research questions. These difficulties stem from the nature of longitudinal data and the episodic, messy nature of the women's everyday stories. These might be incompatible with the accepted methods of analysing a retrospective narrative.

Narrative analysis focuses on researching human life and meaning-making processes through commitment to their actualisation in individual, particular accounts as wholes, respecting individual agency and intentionality, in-

stead of splitting them into thematic categories (Chase 1995; Riessman 2008, 12). The representation of the data in this study somewhat collided with this principle, as the individual storylines were not represented as wholes. In any case, narrative methods benefitted the study and gave the findings greater credibility by enabling the women's narratives to be understood and interpreted as temporal, meaningful for their identity construction, as social and relational (Elliott 2005, 4–11; Ricoeur 1991a; 1991b). Narrative analytical methods offered a means for reading and interpreting the interviews at the level of text in order to show that the women's experiences, i.e., the content of the interviews, related to how the women talked about their experiences. This also made it possible to understand and research the relation between the personal narratives and the dominant social and cultural narratives and story models.

5.3   Challenges for the future studies

As the focus of this study was limited to the questions concerning the everyday aspects of early mothering, many important issues in the interviews remained without detailed notice. I bring forward very briefly one such issue. The ambivalence in relation to combining mothering and work, which was discussed shortly in Article I, continued to be an issue for most mothers throughout the year. The youngest mother continued and sought to balance her studies along with her mothering. Some women pondered more over whether to enter into or return to working life, and what might be expected from them by their employer or their close relatives. Some women had already decided that they would continue working soon after parental leave. Along with these reflections the mothers emphasised how the birth of the baby had changed the order of their aims and goals: the child came first also in relation to work at the beginning of motherhood. At the same time, their partners' working was contemplated, but also taken somehow as 'given'. Hays (1996, 172–178) considers mothering as a site where the ambivalence between the two opposite realms of nurturing personal relations and competitive pursuit of self-interest is played out. In this sense mothering in relation to work is an important theme for future study.

It would be beneficial to trace the differing trajectories and characteristics related to the transition to parenthood. The focus of this study was only on women's experiences and narratives. However, it revealed the complexity of gendered identifications in parenthood. It would, therefore, be vital to study paternal narratives alongside maternal ones. In future more research needs to be carried out with larger samples and including the both parties of the relationship in order to find out the diverse gender-related and relational aspects of the transition to parenthood.

While the study reported here focuses on this early phase of parenting, parenthood continues over 20 years, even if in transformed ways. More empha-

sis might be focused on parenting as a temporal, long term process, with diverse phases, which demands time and care on the part of parents. This is of particular concern at present, as the world around us is changing in a direction that requires increased parental and adult vigilance, skills and energy. Parenting has become a more demanding responsibility at the same time as couple relationships have become more vulnerable and the family support systems of society have been imprudently diminished.

Such research, concerned with time and temporality, could take either of two different directions. First, it would be important to take into account the longer-term nature of parenting and the changes in parenting and families from mothers', fathers' and children's points of view, even if longitudinal research always means more effort, money and collaboration (see Thomson & Holland 2003). A second challenge for future research would be to investigate the temporal aspects of everyday family life in detail; what kinds of role time, daily and weekly rhythm, and repetition play in everyday family life and in family relationships (see e.g. Rönkä, Malinen & Lämsä 2009).

Despite similarities, women's experience of mothering differs, as was seen in the present study of just seven women. This study suggests that mothering should not be understood as based on female instinct, nor as taken-for-granted, self-evident and the same for all women, but as an individual learning process different for each woman. The ideals and norms of good care deriving from the theories of child development need to be separated from early mothering as seen and studied from the point of views of women themselves. This does not mean dismissing developmental theories, but instead also seeing a woman's relationship with mothering as deriving from her experiences as a mother, from her life situation, life history, personality and the support she receives from other people. Nor are all babies the same. Questions related to the ambivalent feelings entailed in mothering, of problems of coping with the baby and the frictions that arise in the couple relationship need to be taken into account both in research and in child health-care.

Another important challenge is how to take into account and research the dailyness of mothering, as it is primarily in non-verbal, embodied actions that emotions and morality play significant roles. Women's mothering is tightly embedded in women's (moral) identity. Mothering is a multifaceted experience that demands the sensitivity to listen to the mother's own experience without supposing that coping with a baby somehow inherently belongs to motherhood. The uncertainties and ambivalences of mothering need to be acknowledged as part of mothering so as to avoid reproducing the conventional image of 'good mothering'.

YHTEENVETO

Äidin vastuu ja muuttuvat perhesuhteet äitiyden alussa

Tutkimuksen tausta

Äitiydestä ovat olleet kiinnostuneita eri asiantuntijatahot ja tieteenalat, muun muassa lääketiede, psykologia ja psykiatria. Tällöin naisten äitiyttä on tutkittu enimmäkseen lapsen (ihanne)kehityksen näkökulmasta, jolloin eri tieteiden kautta on muodostunut kuva 'hyvästä äitiydestä', joka määrittelee miten äidin kuuluu toimia lapsensa kanssa (Phoenix & Woollett 1991; Vuori 2003; Wetherell 1995). Samalla kuitenkin äitien psykologiset, sosiaaliset ja muut erot ovat usein jääneet huomiotta. Äitiyteen liitetään kulttuurissamme monia ihanteellisia arvoja, merkityksiä ja normeja, jotka kaventavat yksittäisten äitien mahdollisuuksia olla omanlaisensa äiti (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Hirsjärvi, Laurinen & tutkijaryhmä 1998, 18–21). Naistutkimuksessa äitiyttä onkin käsitteellistetty äitimyytin, äitiyden ideologian ja instituution kautta (Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Letherby 1994; Meyers 2001; Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd 1991; Rich 1977; Wetherell 1995).

Naisen on vaikea tunnistaa ja kertoa omista kielteisistä ja ristiriitaisista kokemuksistaan äitinä, jos yleisesti oletetaan, että lapsista huolehtiminen on vain naisten velvollisuus ja että naiset kokevat aina äitiyden 'luonnollisesti' palkitsevana (Alasuutari 2003; Hays 1996; Parker 1997; Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd 1991; Tardy 2000). Lapsen parasta korostavan näkökulman seurauksena äidit voivat kätkeä jaksamattomuuttaan tai osaamattomuuttaan ja tuntea syyllisyyttä siitä, etteivät ole sellaisia kuin äidin pitäisi olla. Toisaalta myös nainen voi tarrautua kiinni 'hyvän äidin' ihanteeseen, jonka toteuttamisen hän kokee palkitsevana. Äitiydestä voi tulla suoritus, jossa voi päteä ja onnistua, mutta kääntöpuolena on epäonnistuminen ja väsyminen.

Äitiyttä onkin kuvattu nykynaisen kannalta ristiriitaiseksi tai vastakkaisia tunteita herättäväksi (Jokinen 1997; Oberman & Josselson 1996). Tätä on selitetty yhtäältä juuri äitiyden ihanteiden rajoittavuudella ja normittavuudella, ja toisaalta itsensä toteuttamista arvostavalla länsimaisella kulttuurilla. Jälkimmäiseen selitysmalliin kietoutuvat työelämän arvostaminen itsensä toteuttamisen väylänä sekä tasa-arvoajattelu, jonka mukaan naisilla pitää olla yhtäläiset mahdollisuudet kouluttautumiseen, työelämässä etenemiseen ja samapalkkaisuuteen miesten kanssa. Silti äitiys ja vastuu perheestä kuuluvat yhä monen naisen elämään (Gordon 1990, 14–15; Perälä-Littunen 2007). Työn ja perheen yhteensovittamisesta on tullut yksi modernin naisen elämää jäsentävä ja siihen jännitteitä luova tekijä (esim. Kinnunen & Mauno 1998). Työelämä ja ura saattavat säädellä jo valintaa lapsen hankkimisesta.

Tämän tutkimuksen kohdistumista esikoisen odotus- ja vauva-aikaan voi pitää perusteltuna siksi, että nämä kuukaudet ovat tärkeä ajanjakso, jota kutsutaan psykologiassa usein vanhemmuuteen ja äitiyteen siirtymäksi (transition to parenthood and motherhood). Monelle nykynaiselle tämä on aikuiselämän

merkittävä käännekohta, jolloin omaa elämää koskevia päätöksiä arvioidaan uudelleen, elämäntapa muuttuu ja kohdataan uusia rooliodotuksia (Rönkä, Oravala & Pulkkinen 2003). Vanhemmaksi tulo voi myös merkitä parisuhteen käännekohtaa, jolloin puolisoiden suhde, roolit ja tehtävät neuvotellaan uudelleen (Allan 2008; Jallinoja 2000). Tämä voi aiheuttaa parisuhteeseen kuohuntaa. Aiemmat tutkimukset osoittavat, että vanhemmaksi tulo voi heikentää tyytyväisyyttä parisuhteeseen, lisätä ristiriitoja, sukupuolistaa perherooleja sekä muuttaa erityisesti naisen suhtautumista parisuhteeseen (Belsky & Kerry 1994; Belsky, Lang & Rovine 1985; Cowan & Cowan 1992; Ruble et al. 1988; Shapiro, Gottman & Carrére 2000).

Perhetutkimus ja erityisesti äitiystutkimus on monitieteistä ja varsinkin naistutkimuksella on pitkät perinteet äitiyden tutkimisessa. Teoreettisesti tämä tutkimus kiinnittyy ensinnäkin äitiyden (alkuvaiheen) feministiseen tutkimusperinteeseen, toiseksi arjen tutkimukseen sekä feministisen että perhetutkimuksen näkökulmista ja kolmanneksi äitiyden moraalisuuden teoretisointeihin. Äitiyttä lähestytään tässä tutkimuksessa arjen tutkimisen näkökulmasta (esim. Daly 2003; Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Felski 2000; Jokinen 2003; 2005; Rönkä, Malinen & Lämsä 2009; Salmi 2004), ja tavoitteena oli saavuttaa haastatteluaineisto, jossa kerronta perustuu äitiyden arkeen. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa otetaan huomioon äitiyden moraalisuus, joka yhtäältä perustuu äitiyden normittamiseen ja moralisointiin, ja toisaalta äitiyden (ja vanhemmuuden) päivittäisen arjen moraalisiin valintoihin ja kysymyksiin. Äitiyden vastuun moraalisuutta lähestyttiin hoivan etiikan teorian, tunnetyön sekä ambivalenssin käsitteiden avulla (Adkins 2003; Arendell 2000; Hochschild 2003; McNay 1999; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Tronto 1994).

Tutkimuksen metodologinen lähestymistapa, tarkoitus ja tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, millaista on tulla äidiksi nykyyhteiskunnassa, jossa äiteihin ja äitiyteen kohdistetaan monia ristikkäisiäkin odotuksia ja vaatimuksia. Tutkimus keskittyy äitiyden alkuaikaan: odotukseen, lapsen syntymään ja ensimmäiseen elinvuoteen. Metodologisesti tutkimus yhdistää hermeneuttista fenomenologiaa feministiseen ja narratiiviseen lähestymistapaan. Keskeistä on kokemuksellisuus, koska fenomenologian mukaan ihmisenä oleminen on aina kokemuksellista tai elämyksellistä (Bergum 1997; Laine 2001). Kokemuksellisuus määrittyy perustaltaan ruumiillisena ja täten sukupuolisena, relationaalisena sekä esinarratiivisena (esim. Battersby 1998; Mason 2004; Ricoeur 1991a; Young 2005). Äitiys nähtiin siten relationaalisena, ihmissuhteissa syntyvänä ja niistä riippuvaisena. Äidin ja lapsen suhteen lisäksi naisten äitiyden kokemuksiin kietoutuu suhde puolisoon ja muihin läheisiin ihmisiin.

Kokemukset kietoutuvat tiiviisti yhteen erilaisten kulttuuristen ja sosiaalisten kertomusten kanssa. Kulttuuriset kertomukset antavat mahdollisuuksia tai malleja järjestää omaa henkilökohtaista elämää. Niiden avulla voi ennakoida, miten erilaisissa tilanteissa useimmiten käy, mitä tyypillisesti tapahtuu tai miten tilanne koetaan. Kulttuuriset kertomukset voivat toimia myönteisinä malleina toiminnalle tai henkilökohtaiselle merkityksenannolle; toisaalta ne voivat

toimia myös varoittavana esimerkkinä. Lisäksi ne voivat toimia normatiivisina malleina käyttäytymiselle, ajattelulle tai sopeutumiselle erilaisissa tilanteissa. Kulttuuristen kertomusten käsitteellä voi selittää äitiyteen, naiseuteen ja perheeseen liittyvien kulttuuristen mallien, fantasioiden ja uskomusten mahdollisia vaikutuksia yksittäisten naisten äitiyteen. (Andrews 2002; Hänninen 2000; Wood 2001.)

Tämän väitöskirjatutkimuksen tavoitteena oli:

(1) analysoida, miten äidiksi tulevien naisten elämänkulun ja arjen muutokset tulevat kerrotuiksi äitiyden alussa,
(2) tutkia, millaisista oman minän ja relationaalisuuden muutoksista ja prosesseista haastatellut naiset puhuivat äidiksi tultuaan sekä
(3) tutkia, miten äitiyteen, vanhemmuuteen, perheeseen tai yleisemmin naisen elämään sosiaalisesti ja kulttuurisesti liitetyt kertomukset näkyvät tutkittavien naisten äitiyden kokemuksissa ja kertomuksissa.

Näitä tavoitteita lähestyttiin neljän eri osatutkimuksen avulla. Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa keskityin naisten valintaan tulla äidiksi (artikkeli I). Äidin ja vauvan välinen suhde sekä äitiyden arki vauvan kanssa olivat toisessa artikkelissa tutkimuksen kohteena (artikkeli II). Kolmannessa artikkelissa tutkin naisen ja hänen puolisonsa välisen suhteen ja heidän keskinäisten roolien ja vastuiden muutoksia vauvan ensimmäisen elinvuoden aikana (artikkeli III). Neljäs osatutkimus puolestaan teki ymmärrettäväksi naisten keskinäisten perhesuhteiden ongelmallisuutta äitiyden alussa (artikkeli IV). Äidin ja lapsen suhdetta sekä naisen ja hänen puolisonsa välistä suhdetta tarkasteltiin sekä arjen näkökulmasta että ajallisesti muuttuvana pitkittäistutkimuksen keinoin.

Tutkimuksen toteutus
Tutkimus oli pitkittäistutkimus, jossa olen haastatellut ensimmäistä lastaan odottavaa seitsemää äitiä kerran ennen lapsen syntymää ja kolme kertaa lapsen syntymän jälkeen (kun lapsi on n. 1 kk, 6 kk ja 12 kk). Haastatteluaineistonkeruu alkoi marraskuussa 1999 ja jatkui vuoden 2001 syksyyn asti. Sekä pitkittäistutkimuksen että narratiivisen lähestymistavan vahvuutena on se, että ne mahdollistavat äidiksi tulon tarkastelemisen ajallisena ilmiönä siten, että muutoksen tutkiminen tulee mahdolliseksi. Tutkittujen naisten elämän keskeisimmät muutokset ja samalla jännitteet äidiksi tultaessa liittyvät päivittäiseen arkeen, erityisesti uuden ihmisalun elämän turvaamisen vastuullisuuteen, ihmissuhteiden muutoksiin sekä äitiyden ja vanhemmuuden sukupuolistuneisiin ja niitä sukupuolistaviin merkityksiin.

Analysoin pitkittäishaastatteluita kertomuksina tai materiaalina, josta etsin kertomuksia. Kertomus saattoi olla haastattelussa selkeästi itsenäinen kokonaisuus. Esimerkiksi äidin ja isän toiminnan eroista syntyy helposti pieniä kertomuksia. Kertomus saattoi myös muodostua haastattelujen eri kohdista, joissa on palattu aiemmin puheena olleeseen teemaan tai täydennetty sitä. Tämä palaaminen on voinut tapahtua oma-aloitteisesti tai minun aloitteestani, mutta keskeistä teeman muodostamissa on ollut se, että kyseessä on ollut haastatelta-

van itsensä kannalta merkityksellinen tapahtuma, tilanne tai episodi. Lisäksi seitsemän naisen neljä pitkittäishaastattelua muodostavat ajalliset kertomukset äidiksi tulosta naisen elämässä.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa pohdin naisen valintaa tulla äidiksi samanaikaisesti sekä parisuhteessa elävän, ruumiillisen naissubjektin haluna että kulttuurisesti rajoitettuna valintana. Valinnan rajoittavuus tulee selkeimmin esille siinä, miten naiset kertovat äitiyden ajoittamisesta ja ajoittumisesta omassa elämässään. Toisessa artikkelissa keskityn äitiyteen lapsen ja kodin hoitoon liittyvänä arjen hoivana ja vastuuna. Artikkelissa kiinnitän huomiota hyvän äitiyden kulttuuristen kertomusten ja äitien kertomusten moraalisuuden yhteenkietoutumiseen. Pelkistetysti äitiyden alun kerronnassa on nähtävissä äitiyden ehkä perustavin ristiriita: äitiys, hoiva ja vastuu koetaan nautintoa tuottavana ja omaa elämää syvästi uudelleen merkityksellistävänä mutta äitiys samalla on kuluttavaa ja se sisältää haavoittuvuuden mahdollisuuksia. Tämän prosessin moraalisuus on kaksinaista: vastuuta ja huolta lapsesta, mutta myös hyvän äitiyden kulttuuristen kertomusten normittavuutta ja kuormittavuutta.

Kolmas artikkeli käsittelee äitiyden, isyyden ja parisuhteen yhteenkietoutumisia ja jännitteitä. Tutkin äidiksi tuloa ja vanhemmuuden alkua sukupuoleen ja parisuhteeseen yhteydessä olevana. Vauvavuoden aikana uusien äitien ja isien (keskinäiset) tunteet, tehtävät ja vastuut ovat monien muutosten alaisina. Haastattelemieni naisten kerronnasta oli selkeästi havaittavissa, miten ajan kuluessa he kertovat arjen ja erityisesti tunteidensa muutoksesta, jolloin samalla useimpien naisten kerrontatapa muuttuu alun optimistisesta kerronnasta kohti kerrontaa, jolle tunnusomaista on jonkinlainen omaelämäkerrallinen katkos. Osalla naisista parisuhteen ristiriitojen lisääntyminen ja sukupuolten eriytyvät roolit ja vastuut johtivat parisuhteen kuohuntaan, josta selviämiseksi tarvittiin kerronnallista uudelleenorientoitumista ja sopeutumista sukupuolittuneisiin perhe-elämän rooleihin. Näihin liittyvät ristiriitaiset kulttuuriset kertomukset tuottivat ambivalenssia naisten kerrontaan ja kokemuksiin.

YTM Marianne Notkon kanssa kirjoitettu yhteisartikkeli, väitöskirjan neljäs osatutkimus, keskittyy rajatummin pohtimaan naisten keskinäisten perhesuhteiden ongelmallisuutta erityisesti äitiyteen ja kotiin liittyvänä asiana sekä siihen, miten tästä ongelmallisuudesta kerrotaan. Äidiksi tulo sekoittaa naisten välisten perhesuhteiden rooleihin sekä äitiyteen liitetyt kulttuuriset hierarkiat, jolloin äidin, tyttären, isoäidin tai anopin sekä tuoreen äidin ja kokeneen äidin rooleihin liitetyt valtapositiot tulevat neuvottelun ja myös ristiriitojen kohteeksi. Esimerkiksi kulttuurisesti edelleenkin ajatellaan, että päävastuu lapsesta on äidillä. Toimiessaan tämän oletuksen mukaisesti tuore äiti kokee helposti toisten naisten neuvot ja puuttumisen arvosteluksi omalle äitiydelleen. Tätä kokeneemmat äidit voivat myös käyttää hyväkseen.

Äidiksi tuloa voidaan pitää monellakin tapaa naisen elämän yhtenä käännekohtana. Syntyvä vauva mullistaa niin naisen arkea, tärkeimpiä ihmissuhteita kuin omaa identiteettiä monin eri tavoin. Äitiyteen liittyy monentasoista ambivalenssia. Vastuu lapsesta on itsessään ambivalenttia. Vastuussa kietoutuvat

yhteen moraali, äidin ja lapsen suhde sekä äidin kokemus hoivatyöstä ja sen vaatimuksista. Lisäksi vastuun kantamiseen sisältyy käntännössä monia jopa vastakkaisia tunteita. Lapsi merkityksellistää myönteisesti naisen elämää, tuottaa iloa ja nautintoa, ja antaa pätevyyden kokemuksia, joilla on tärkeä merkitys naisen identiteetille. Samalla lapsen kanssa elämiseen yleensä sisältyy epävarmuuden, syyllisyyden, huolen, väsymyksen ja uupumuksen tuntemuksia. Vastuu lapsesta oli näille naisille moraalinen asenne sitoutua lapsen hyvinvoinnin turvaajaksi, mutta tähän kietoutuivat myös voimakkaat hallitsevat kulttuuriset kertomukset, jotka määrittelevät hyvän äitiyden tietynlaiseksi ja vaikenevat äitiyteen liittyvistä kielteisistä tunteista ja naisen omista tarpeista. Myös parisuhde ja muut läheiset ihmissuhteet muuttuvat. Nämä muutokset eivät aina tapahdu kivuttomasti, vaan äidiksi tulo voi käynnistää myös parisuhteen kuohunnan, jossa naisen oletukset ja odotukset lapsen syntymän jälkeisestä vanhemmuuden jakamisesta ja parisuhteen jatkumisesta seesteisenä voivat kokea romahduksen. Tähän liittyy myös kokemus äitiyden oletettua suuremmista vaatimuksista.

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Appendix 1. Outline of the topics of the four successive interviews

THE FIRST INTERVIEW DURING PREGNANCY

I introduce myself and inform the participant about the purpose of the research and the intended course of the interviews

1. Participant's background knowledge
-Tell me about yourself, who and what kind of person you are
-Tell me about your education and work

2. Background knowledge of the family
-Tell me about your partner
-Tell me about how and when you met
-What is your everyday life like?
-What do you and your partner do together?
-How would you describe you and your partner as a couple?
        -What do you talk about/agree/disagree on?

3. Participant's present life situation
-What kind of life are you living at the moment?
-What is your life with your partner like?
-What and who else are important in your life at this moment? For example, friends, hobbies, relatives etc.
-What part does the unborn baby play in your life? And in your life with your partner?
-Has pregnancy changed your everyday life? If so, how?
-Has the unborn baby changed your everyday life? If so, how?

4. Experience of being pregnant
- Did you dream about having a baby before this pregnancy?
-When did you/ you together with your partner start to dream about having a baby?
-What happened next, what did you feel then?
-How did everything start?
-What were the first moments of being pregnant like, what happened next?
-How did others react?
-How do you feel about being pregnant now?
-How do you 'feel' pregnancy and the baby?
-What has your mood been like during pregnancy?
-Have you thought about the future (childbirth, life with the baby)?

THE SECOND INTERVIEW WHEN THE CHILD IS ABOUT ONE MONTH OLD

1. Participant's present life situation
You have now a _-week-old baby. Tell me what has happened since the last interview.
-How would you describe giving birth?
-What was it like being in hospital?
-How would you describe the first days at home with the baby?

2. Experience of being a mother
-How do you feel about being a mother?
-How do you feel about your baby?
-What are days with the baby like?

3. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship
-How do you feel now that your partner is a father?
-How do you divide the work as a mother and as a father?
-What do you feel about your mutual relationship now?
-Has the baby changed your relationship with your partner?

4. Other relationships
-Have the relationships that you have talked about with other people changed since the birth of the baby?

5. Other

THE THIRD INTERVIEW WHEN THE CHILD IS ABOUT SIX MONTHS OLD

1. Participant's present life situation
It is about _ months since we last met. Tell me about what has happened since the last interview? What is your life like at this moment?

2. Everyday life with the baby and relationship with the baby
-Tell me about your shared moments with the baby lately.
-What do you do in the morning, afternoon, evening, at night?
-How would you describe your relationship with the baby?
-Are there things that you enjoy/ get frustrated about/are concerned about with the baby?

3. Experience of being a mother
-What are your days like? What do you do in the morning/afternoon/evening/at night?
-How does it feel being a mother?
-What do you think about motherhood?
-Have you thought about past events such as pregnancy, birthgiving?
-What are your own needs and wishes at the moment?

4. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship
-How do you feel about your partner's fathering?
-What kind of is your division of labour as a mother and a father?
-How do you feel about your mutual relationship?
-Has the baby brought changes to your relationship? If so, how?

5. Other relationships
-Have the relationships that you have talked about with other people changed since the birth of the baby? If so, how?

6. Other
-Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

THE FOURTH INTERVIEW WHEN THE CHILD IS ABOUT ONE YEAR OLD

1. Participant's present life situation
It is about _ months since we last met. Tell me about what has happened since the last interview? What is your life like at this moment?

2. Everyday life with the baby and relationship with the baby
-Tell me about your shared moments with the baby lately.
-What do you do in the morning, afternoon, evening, at night?
-How would you describe your relationship with the baby?
-Are there things that you enjoy/ get frustrated about/are concerned about with the baby?

3. Experience of being a mother
-What are your days like? What do you do in the morning/afternoon/evening/at night?
-How does it feel being a mother?
-What do you think about motherhood?
-Have you thought about past events that we have talked about earlier?
-What are your own needs and wishes at the moment?

4. The partner's fathering and the couple relationship
-How do you feel about your partner's fathering?
-How do you divide up the work as a mother and a father?
-How do you feel about your mutual relationship?
-Has the baby changed to your relationship? If so, how?

5. Other relationships
-Have the relationships that you have talked about with other people changed since the birth of the baby? If so, how?

6. Other
-How would you evaluate your financial situation? What is your family's financial situation like?
- Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

7. Participation in the study
-How have you felt about participating in this study?
-Why did you consider participating in this study?

Appendix 2. The analytical contours of the analysis of the women's narratives about their everyday lives with their babies.

The narrative of desirable responsibility	*The narrative of maternal vulnerability*
- The beginning of motherhood was constructed as a linear, intentional process - A more general framing narrative about adopting moral maternal agency; the landscape or background against which all events were told - In all cases this narrative was more coherent, positive and linear in time than the narrative of maternal vulnerability - The plot: 1) the choice to become a mother, 2) childbirth stories, 3) learning to know and to care for the child, and 4) following the growth of the child - The plot construed a clear transformation in the women's lives compared to their lives before the baby, a transformation which was or turned out subsequently to be a positive one and which they narrated as actively chosen already before or during pregnancy - The mothers' relation to their child was mostly narrated in this mode - Narration dealt with the desirability of mothering and with the closeness of the mother-child relationship - Responsibility was understood as a positive aspect of motherhood, which included growing pride, competence and self-esteem regarding the mother's nurturing skills - The baby's needs and the mother's own needs coincided, and the mothers wanted to do their best in bearing responsibility and caring for the infant. - The caring routines were dis-	- Focus of narration on the mothers' selves, on daily practical caring work and feelings related to it; care work was emphasised in the interviews - The plot was more ruptured than linear, episodic narratives - Stationarity and change alternated, the mothers experienced a contradiction between cyclical and linear time, and between the baby's rhythms and their own rhythms and time - Time as something the mother cannot plan or follow, i.e. it is determined from outside - The purpose or point of telling was to try to make sense of and attribute coherence to the experiences and contradictory feelings related to infant care and to cope with the challenges of early motherhood: the contradictions of time, being alone and trying to cope with the baby, feelings of tiredness, incompetence and a heavy burden of emotion work, even collapse - The women tried to make sense of their ambivalent feelings that seemed inexplicable - Discord between the needs of the baby and the needs of the mother - Deceleration of narrative pace: individual events were reported in great detail, and events and feelings were rehearsed and evaluated (see May 2001, 85); use of repetition - The stories had often a specific form: the narration contained qualifications that made those events and feelings sound more like exceptions than the normal state of affairs - A common structure was found in this narrative (see Labov 1972, Tiina's narrative below): Orientation:

cussed in a very general level • The purpose of the narrative was to be able to describe motherhood and the child as transformers, signifiers that positively changed the whole foundation of the mothers' lives • This narrative accorded with the cultural narrative of 'good mothering': the mothers constructed their new identities as mothers acting in the best interests of their children and as committed, competent and morally engaged mothers	The beginning of the narrative sets out the situation, which differs from the normal (in which Tiina is tired). Complicated action: The mother 'confesses' that she behaves wrongly or is not able to act correctly. (Tiina: '*occasionally, I'm extremely tired and then I feel that I shouldn't allow myself to be angry with the child'*.) Evaluation: The mother gives a rather normative evaluation about how a mother should behave (Tiina: '..*Yes, because I know of course that a parent is an adult. Like I should be able to control my feelings and sort of be the calm one.*') What comes next is a qualification, a reference to something which functions as extenuating circumstances. (Tiina: '*It affects me quite strongly, if I haven't slept well. Like, when I've slept well, I can.*') Coda: The narrative ends with a statement about how well things are, generally speaking. • Another common way of narrating was not reflecting on one's own feelings or senses, but simply reporting routines; reflection followed only in the next interview(s) • Moral evaluation at the centre of narratives about vulnerability (see Labov 1972; Plummer 2001, 187) • Involved 'moral monitoring', 'epistemological struggles' (Miller 1998; Ribbens 1998); runs counter to the dominant cultural narrative of good mothering

Appendix 3. The characteristics of the couple relationship narratives

The characteristics of the smooth transformation narrative

	Timing of the interview			
	First: during pregnancy	Second: the child at one month	Third: the child at six months	Fourth: the child at one year
Tone	Progressive, optimistic, the romantic genre	Stable	Stable	Stable
Positioning of the self in relation to motherhood and the child	Happiness Trusting Uncertainties regarding the future reflected Difficulties during pregnancy because of violent nausea	Happiness Gratitude Pleasure Closeness to the child Tiredness	Committed Easiness Closeness to the child	Committed Easiness Closeness to the child
Positioning of the partner as a companion in relation to self	Happiness Reciprocity Intimacy Friendship Sharing Support	Happiness Reciprocity Intimacy Friendship Sharing Support	Reciprocity (mother-originated) Intimacy Friendship Sharing Support	Reciprocity (mother-originated) Intimacy Friendship Sharing Support
Positioning of the partner as a father in relation to self	Trust in the partner as a good father	Appreciation, pride Trust Ideal of fairly equal responsibility	Appreciation, pride Trust Ideal of fairly equal responsibility	Appreciation, pride Trust Ideal of fairly equal responsibility

The characteristics of the turbulent transformation narrative

	Timing of the interviews			
	First: during pregnancy (phase one)	Second: the child at one month (phase two)	Third: the child at six months (phase three)	Fourth: the child at one year (phase four)
Tone	Progressive, optimistic, the romantic genre	Progressive, optimistic, the romantic genre; events toned regressively	Regressive, tragic	Turning progressive
Positioning of the self in relation to motherhood and the child	Happiness Trusting Uncertainties regarding the future reflected Difficulties during the pregnancy (Petra: consideration of abortion, Jaana: exhaustion, Alma: exhaustion because of twins)	Happiness Gratitude Pleasure Closeness to the child Talk about success and failure in breast-feeding	My life has been changed Committed Intensive Tiredness and exhaustion Captive, binding Isolation (Over)burdened Closeness to the child Talk about success and difficulty of breast-feeding (except Petra) Easiness (Minna)	Committed Relief Less tired (except Minna) Closeness to the child
Positioning of the partner as a companion in relation to self	Reciprocity Intimacy Friendship Sharing	Reciprocity Understanding Intimacy, love Friendship	His life has not been changed Frustration, anger Comparison Disappointment Blame Partial understanding	Understanding Parenting overwhelms the partnership Friendship Occasional frustration
Positioning of the partner as a father in relation to self	Trust in partner as a good father	Admiration Appreciation Trust Ideal of fairly equal responsibility, but also accepted gendered positions Use of humour in narrating gendered positions Gives partner time to enter into fatherhood	Needs to be compelled Criticism of unacceptable, unbalanced, gendered positions Partner supposes the mother capable of caring Partner doesn't know the routines, hasn't been one-to-one with the baby	Appreciation Trust Accepts gendered positions and sharing