Attachment Parenting and Secure Attachment:

Exploring the Mother’s Experiences and Relationship with the Child

Terri McCarthy

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Supervisor: Aoife Gaffney

Program Leader: Dr. R. Reid

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Department of Psychology

Dublin Business School
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Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore Attachment Parenting and secure attachment taking a phenomenological approach, with the use of in-depth analysis to discover the meaning given to the lived parenting experiences of mothers with young toddlers. Four one to one semi-structured interviews were conducted, throughout which the participants were asked seven main questions, of which six were based on lived experiences, and one being an interpretative question. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore the lived parenting experiences of the participants. The audio files were transcribed verbatim, from which tables of themes were created across several stages. A Final table was created, followed by the creation of a narrative extract. Findings of the analysis suggest that the meaning of parenting is different for each person. Mothers feel the weight of responsibility, and experience stressful periods. However, the most important thing to the mother is the child’s happiness. Participants expressed that providing and caring for a child, allowing the child to explore the surrounding environment, as well as being physically present and having a strong Mother-Infant relationship when the child is young, allows the child develop a secure attachment.


**Introduction**

Though our civilisation has made several impressive advances over time (technological, scientific, etc.), an awareness has emerged that the children in the world are not happy, not secure, and are growing up in a problematic society where issues such as substance abuse, poverty, mental illness etc. are rampant. To correct and prevent the progression of such issues, it is imperative that the true cause of such problems is discovered. A phenomenon that may be looked at with regard to making the children in the world feel happy and secure, is parenting. As primary caregivers, parents have many duties to fulfil, some of which are to protect, care for, and teach children. The bond between a mother and child is powerful, and has the ability to shape an individual for better or worse. In order for children to grow into happy, secure and protected individuals, it is necessary for the mother and child to have a relationship good enough to encourage that to happen.

‘One senses intuitively that for the tiny child, mother-love, whether it comes from the biological mother or someone who has taken her place, promotes well-being. In the sunshine of her love, we grow and develop, take an interest in things and people, learn, acquire skills, become a proud member of the family.’ (Karen, 1994).

This research was inspired in part by a fascinating article on attachment interventions (Bakermans-kranenburg, Van ijzendoorn & Juffer, 2003), and also by an interest in Attachment Parenting. Attachment theory is often studied, but current qualitative research is lacking in the area of Attachment Parenting. This research offers an interesting new avenue to explore. Attachment Parenting is an interesting research topic, because it is validated by the meaning that people lend to it – it will be a useful approach to the individual who decides to believe in it.
This study explores Attachment Parenting taking a phenomenological approach, by means of an in-depth analysis of the lived parenting experiences of mothers with young children. Research was conducted around the topic of Attachment Parenting for several reasons: Attachment Parenting is a hot topic at present with just as many people promoting as demoting its value; the existing research on Attachment Parenting is quite lacking, particularly that of a qualitative nature; and there is a gap in the research at present regarding the ability of Attachment Parenting as a contributor to the development of secure attachment in children.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is an extremely detailed procedure which acknowledges that the role of the researcher is complicated by the researcher’s own thoughts and interpretations when trying to make sense of the participant’s experiences. It is an inductive method and consists of several stages. In the initial stage, exploratory comments about the transcript are noted. The second stage involves returning to the transcript, and shaping the exploratory notes into emerging themes. At the stage, it is important to create phrases which hold enough to remain grounded in the transcript but also offer enough abstraction to be able to gain a conceptual understanding. At this point, though still on the immediate text, the researcher will have been influenced by reading the transcript. The emerging themes are put into a table for the second stage. The second stage requires the researcher to study the emerging themes and grouping or clustering these together in line with conceptual similarities. At this point, the researcher must look for patterns in the emerging themes and create a structure which will help when elucidating converging ideas. These groups are given a label of a descriptive nature which will reflect the nature of the themes in each group. In the final stage, the researcher must create a table of themes which will illustrate the structure of major themes and subthemes. A quote, or extract, will be beside each subtheme.
This process must be carried out the same number of times are there are cases, for this research, this will be completed four times. Once all the transcripts have been analysed, and the researcher has created a table of major and subthemes for each, one more table of themes is created for the research as a whole. It is at this point when the themes will be reviewed for each participant, and amended and checked again with the transcript should it be necessary. This final table of themes will provide the researcher with the foundation for creating a narrative account of the study.

**Literature Review**

American Sociologist Sharon Hays refers to Attachment Parenting as ‘intensive parenting’, and characterises the approach as ‘expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive and financially expensive’ (Hays, 1996, p.8), and feels that any type of “intensive parenting” which favours the needs of the child over the needs of the mother, will be responsible for economic and maternal disadvantage. Attachment Parenting (AP) is a philosophy which offers guidelines to parents, designed to enhance and enrich their parenting experience, and suggests this approach promotes a meaningful attachment between parent and child. This is mediated through parental empathy and extended physical closeness (Sears & Sears, 2001). The term, coined by paediatrician William Sears, above all;

‘[...] means opening your mind and heart to the individual needs of your baby and letting your knowledge of your child be your guide to making on-the-spot decisions about what
works best for both of you. In a nutshell, AP is learning to read the cues of your baby and responding appropriately to those cues.’ (Sears & Sears, 2001, p.2)

The ideas of Attachment Parenting were present several decades ago in older teachings, such as *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (Spock, 1946) in which it is explained that mothers ought to raise their children using common sense, and be in physical contact with their children often. Spock noticed that parenting up to this point, was quite rigid and did not tend to the emotional needs of children, and so with this handbook, helped contribute to the shift from rigidity to flexible and affectionate parenting.

Sears (1982) at first, referred to the Attachment Parenting approach as the ‘the new continuum concept’. In 1975, Liedloff proposed that infants had not evolved to suit modern methods of parenting such as using cribs for sleeping, and bottle feeding babies, etc. Liedloff introduced the world to ‘The Continuum Concept’, teaching that for humans (especially babies) to have favourable emotional, physical and mental development, it is necessary to have the experiences to which people had adapted throughout evolution. From his reading of Liedloff’s work, William Sears introduced the Attachment Parenting approach and, along with wife Martha Sears, the Paediatrician associated the concept with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958) and coined the term ‘Attachment Parenting’ (Sears, 1985);

‘[...] I realized we needed to change the term to something more positive, so we came up with AP, since the Attachment Theory literature was so well researched and documented, by John Bowlby and others.’

The AP approach was structured around ‘The Baby Bs’, or attachment tools (Sears & Sears, 2001), of which there are seven:
(i) Birth bonding (or imprinting); there is a brief period of time after a baby is born during which the child is alert and can be bonded easily with. Sears proposes that the use of analgesics during birth will affect birth bonding (Sears 1983; 1982).

(ii) Breastfeeding; also known as ‘baby reading’, is claimed to accommodate mother-infant attachment due to release of oxytocin (promotes social bonding and allows the mother to be calm around her baby) during the process.

(iii) Baby wearing; this allows the child to be with the mother during everything she does, and is recommended to be actioned for as many hours possible during the day, and between 4-5 hours in the evening (Sears & Sears, 2001).

(iv) Bedding close to baby; this practice is convenient for breastfeeding and the mother-infant attachment, and preventative of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) and separation anxiety (Sears, 1982; Sears & Sears, 2001). However, other research suggests that this is not necessary and may negatively affect optimal formation of sleeping patterns (Benhamou, 2000).

(v) Belief in the language value of your baby’s cry; the cry is the child’s predominant method of self-expression. The parent must not only respond to the child’s cry, but attend to the child’s signals early to prevent the cry

(vi) Beware of baby trainers; Sears believed that training an infant to sleep will cause the child to become apathetic, and will not help the child to sleep but rather will encourage the child to simply resign. It is common for many to advise new parents to allow a newborn to “cry it out”. This advice according to Sears & Sears (2001),
is based on the incorrect assumption that children cry in order to manipulate rather than communicate.

(vii) Balance; This Baby B encourages parents to remember their own needs, and care for themselves as well as care for their child. This is achieved by appropriately responding to your child, knowing when to say yes or no, and being able to say yes to yourself.

The theory at the heart of this parenting approach is that which was introduced by Bowlby, and later built on by Ainsworth. Attachment theory can be defined as ‘a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space’ (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). The theory is largely concerned with the bond between the child and its mother, and how this can be disturbed and threatened by bereavement, separation, etc. In Bowlby’s paper The Nature of the Child’s Tie to His Mother (1958), some physical characteristics of attachment behaviour are introduced. They include basic instinctive responses such as smiling, sucking, clinging, following and crying. In 1950, Mary Ainsworth worked under the supervision of Bowlby, and introduced the idea of the attachment figure being the ‘secure base’ from which a child will explore the environment. Ainsworth was also responsible for the notion of maternal sensitivity to the cues of children. She is renowned for building on Bowlby’s theory with the creation of the ‘Strange Situation’ (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Hall, 1978). The ‘Strange Situation’ was an experiment created with the intention of exposing children to a strange -but not too frightening- situation. The procedure involves a mother and child at play in an observation room. A strange woman enters the room soon after, and tries to play with the child, and at this point the mother leaves the room. Soon after, the mother returns to the room, this followed shortly after by the
departure of both adults. The child is left alone, until moments later, when the stranger returns to the room, soon followed by the mother. After conducting this experiment, Ainsworth found the results showed as expected; the child would explore the toys and the room in a more active manner while the mother was in the room, rather than whilst left alone with the stranger, or even while the stranger was present in the room (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

A recent study examined the role of attachment theory-based and social learning theory-based parenting in the contribution to the security of children’s attachment narratives and social acceptance amongst peers. The study was conducted in four primary schools in London, the participants being the mothers (referred to as primary caregivers) of 151 children from the schools. Observational methods were used by means of video-recording the mother and child together in the home. Three tasks were used: free-play with a set of toys that had been designated; structured-play throughout which the mother and child worked together to create a lego structure; followed by a tidy-up task. The study found that the quality of parent-child interaction during interaction tasks provided a meaningful insight into the quality of the children’s attachment narratives.

There are many relationships which will form throughout the life span of a person. The most important relationship that will form, is that between a mother and child.

‘Our personal identity - the very center of our humanness - is achieved through the early bonds of child and parent. Conscience itself, the most civilizing of all achievements in human evolution, is not part of constitutional endowment, but the endowment of parental love and education” (Frailberg, 1959).’
The parent-child relationship provides a template on which all future relationships of a child will be based. Therefore, the quality of this initial relationship with the parent is exceptionally important, as this will contribute to the quality of relationships that will later follow. Gearity (2005) says that the mother and child together, have two basic goals, which will provide the base for healthy relationships later on in life: (i) to development a baseline sense of trust in the world, so that the child knows when it needs something, the mother will be there, and (ii) to permit the regulation of emotions – the child should be allowed to express feelings, along with the physiological patterning that is underlying (Gearity, 2005). Once these goals are met, the child is likely to experience a favourable attachment relationship with the caregiver. As well as this, the child will feel confident enough to wander the surrounding environment, and have trust that the caregiver will be present, as a secure base from which the child can explore:

‘Familial security in the early stages is of a dependent type and forms a basis from which the individual can work out gradually, forming new skills and interests in other fields. Where familial security is lacking, the individual is handicapped by the lack of what might be called a secure base from which to work.’ (Salter, 1940).

The more secure a child’s attachment is to the caregiver, the simpler the child will find it to be independent of the caregiver, and begin to develop healthy relationships with other people. Though toddlers with secure attachment can behave similarly to toddlers with alternative attachment styles with regard to disobeying requests of the caregiver/parent, they are likely to cooperate more with the mother, and behave more affectionately towards her also (Londerville and Main, 1981; Matas et al., 1978).
Rationale

There is currently a limited amount of research that has been carried out on Attachment Parenting as an approach. Attachment Parenting however, also referred to as instinctive or intuitive parenting, is simply recycling the parenting practices which appear to have an evolutionary origin in the past. The amount of qualitative research carried out on Attachment Parenting is even less so, which elucidated a gap in the research that ought to be occupied.

Research Aims

A typical criticism of the Attachment Parenting approach is that it makes children clingy. Another, is that it calls on too much attention and effort, making it an exhausting and unrealistic approach to adopt. Due to Attachment theory being a key component of Attachment Parenting, the researcher wished to focus on the lived parenting experience of mothers, and attempt to understand how parenting practices may contribute to the attachment style of an individual, with the help of an in-depth analysis.
Methodology

Participants

The type of participants required for this research were mothers over the age of eighteen with at least one child who is over the age of six months. The sample was recruited in the general population. Upon recruiting for participants, the researcher relayed that the study would consist of one to one interviews with mothers of toddlers and infants over the age of six months. The reason for choosing mothers only, was that the Attachment Parenting approach, while it can of course be adopted by the father, is typically associated with mothers. This is presumably because of the practices which contribute to Attachment Parenting, such as breastfeeding and co-sleeping. Mothers and their children appear to have a very interesting relationship, and are very physically communicative with one another. Being physically close to the child is an Attachment Parenting tool offered to strengthen the bond between mother and baby.

The reason for choosing this age for the participants’ children is that it is unethical for a study to involve a child less than six months of age, and the years of being a toddler are very important years for cognitive development, emotional development and social development. In order to get an understanding of the parenting experiences of mothers, and the relationship between mother and child, the researcher believed that it would be ideal to focus on experiences occurring in the most important environment for mother and child – the home.

The number of participants required for this study was four. This is the minimum number of participants that would be required. Due to the participants recruited for being all female, there was no need present for a sample any larger than what was recruited for. The method used to recruit participants was snowball sampling. This method of sampling is used
to access knowledge and information from extended contacts of individuals with whom the researcher had previously been acquainted. Two participants were approached in the University setting with the information of the study and opportunity to take part, and after agreeing to do so, were asked to refer potential contacts if comfortable doing so. Acquaintances of the researcher were also informed of the study and asked to be referred to with potential candidates.

**Research Design**

The study used a qualitative research design, taking a phenomenological approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, which were first audio-recorded, transcribed, and then analysed.

The reason a phenomenological approach was taken, is that parenting is a very meaningful phenomenon, and can be thought of as best portrayed through the lived experience of the individuals involved.

The type of analysis used was IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) to uncover the information received from the sample. IPA was selected as the form of analysis for this research as it was consistent with the aims of the research in the way that it seeks to understand how individuals interpret, and giving meaning to lived experiences.

It was important for this research not only to hear about the experiences of the participants, but also to study what meaning those experiences hold. This approach consists of a ‘double hermeneutic’, meaning that the researcher is attempting to make sense of how
the participants make sense of the experiences explored (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al. 2009).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis also has an idiographic nature, which means it is concerned with discovering something about the lived experiences of each of the participants involved.

Materials

The materials that were used in this research are as follows: Computer for preparing forms, information sheet, consent form, interview schedule, recording device, pen, and paper.

Measures

In qualitative research the variables are concerned with description. The independent variable in this study is Attachment Parenting. The researcher is seeking a description of parenting experiences and practices, in an attempt to understand the meaning participants give to lived experiences. This is the variable which is being studied in order to understand its influence on the dependent variable. The dependent variable is secure attachment. Participants will give opinions and interpretations of how a child can develop a secure attachment.

The type of interview selected for the study was the one to one semi-structured interview, which would consist of approximately seven or eight main questions on the interview schedule. The semi-structured interview was chosen, as this type of interview is consistent with qualitative research, and allows for the participant to make the interview as detailed and informative as desired. The types of questions that were required in order to remain consistent with the style of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, were questions which would enable the researcher to explore the lived experiences of the participants. It was
also desirable to include an interpretative question. Upon review, the researcher chose to include seven questions in the interview schedule. Six of the seven questions would be concerned with the lived parenting experiences of the participants, and a final question would be concerning attachment style of the child/children. The interview questions put forward to the participants involved, would allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the meaning that participants give to parenting experiences, and to make sense of how the participants make sense of the experiences.

**Procedure**

The procedure with all four candidates involved arranging a meeting area in which the semi-structured interviews could be conducted. All participants were interviewed on separate occasions. Upon meeting in the agreed location, the researcher and participant made light conversation in order to make the environment feel more comfortable, and allow for the participant to become at ease. On each occasion, the researcher provided the participant with the information sheet containing the details of the study, allowing the participant the opportunity to become more familiar with the research and ask the researcher any questions before the interview started. Once the participant had read the information sheet and signed the consent form, the researcher started the recording device and proceeded to conduct the interview as per the interview schedule (Appendix 4). Once all questions had been asked and answered, the researcher thanked the participant for taking part.

The audio recording of each interview was played several times upon beginning the analysis procedure. Replaying the audio recordings of each interview allowed for any notes to be taken and observations to be made. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. The initial
staged of IPA required the researcher to explore the transcript of each case and make exploratory notes (Appendices 5, 7, 9 & 11). Once this had been completed, the researcher explored the transcript again, and this time made note of emerging themes from the participant responses (Appendices 5, 7, 9 & 11). When this had been completed, the researcher proceeded to study the emerging themes in the transcript, and began to group or cluster the themes together based on similarities of concepts. This required studying the emerging themes and looking for patterns which would enable the researcher to put a structure to the information, which would be helpful in elucidating ideas which were beginning to come together. The clusters of themes were given a label which would describe the conceptual nature of the themes in each of the clusters (Appendices 6, 8, 10 & 12).

After this stage, the researcher created a table of themes (Appendix 13). This table conveys the structure of major themes, as well as subthemes, with a quote provided next to each of the themes, which is followed by a line number which can be referred to in the transcript.

This procedure was carried out with the responses of each of the participants. After this, a narrative extract was created for the complete study (Appendix). During this process, the themes of each participant were reviewed, to make sure that the meanings were checked, and that the quotes selected were capable of highlighting the themes present.
Results

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the four semi-structure interviews saw the emergence of three major themes. These are as follows:

(i) Happiness
(ii) Responsibility
(iii) Attachment

The exploration of the above three major themes and their constituent subthemes, form the baseline for this chapter in which each theme will be illustrated by extracts of the text, which was transcribed verbatim.

The researcher recognises that these themes represent one of many possible accounts of the participants’ experiences. The themes do not capture every aspect of the participants’ experiences, and were selected because of the relevancy shared with the research questions. The themes uncovered are a subjective interpretation of the responses provided by the interview participants, and may not be the themes upon which other researchers would have decided to focus. These themes are common to the accounts of experience of all four of the participants.

In the creation of the final table of themes representing the accounts of all four cases, minor alterations in punctuation were made, simply to improve the readability of the verbatim extract. As much of the original hesitations etc. were left in where possible. Dotted lines present at the beginning and/or end of text from the extract are there to show that the participant was talking before or after the extract. All names and information which could potentially identify a participant have been removed.
Table of themes discovered across all cases

Major theme 1 – Happiness

Mother’s happiness

Participant 1: I suppose first and foremost, you kind of appreciate how lucky you are to be a parent 10/11

Participant 4: I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing and see that she’s okay and happy 1547/1548

Happiness of child important

Participant 2: you just see this little person and thankfully she’s so happy all the time 589/590

Participant 3: Parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home 1075/1076

Major theme 2 - Responsibility

Mother carries the responsibility

Participant 2: I had like, maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a run, or go to the shop, and I couldn’t, you know? 577-581
Participant 3: I think, it's very easy for a man and a dad to live their own lives and get up and go, but there’s something about a mother and a child. The mother gives up their world for the child. 1236-1239

Providing for and responding to the child’s needs

Participant 1: ...Just kind of being there when they need you, and trying to teach them things as well like  145/146

Participant 2: ...Responding to her and providing and making sure that she’s comfortable and she’s happy...  664-666

Participant 3: ...they have everything they need provided for them...  1076/1077

Child’s responsivity towards the mother

Participant 1: They’re responsive to me, em... Ruby while she’s only nearly seven months now, she recognises when I come into the room... She would light up  90-92, 94

Participant 4: I always go to Lucy when she’s crying or looking for me, I don’t leave her cry on her own. I always pick her up when she wants to be picked up. And I think that’s important. Just being responsive to your child and being present is good for the relationship
When she sees me in the morning she's all smiles, and when she goes to her nan's when I'm working she's grand and is always happy to see me when I come back from work.

1563-1567, 1556-1558

Major theme 3 – Attachment

Physical closeness/special bond

Participant 1: ... I suppose being there, the mother being there for the child when they're actually looking for something, or when they need something. So, again, getting to know the different cries and what cry means what. And... The mother responding promptly to that

251-155

Participant 2: You know, from my own experience say, to date now, when I'd go to the crèche to pick her up in the evenings, like she recognises me... she puts her arms out to be lifted

745-748

Participant 3: So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously because he was my first child I was happy… So, he’ll always know that I’m here. Like, even when he’s twenty, he’ll always know he can come home to Mom, if he needs anything. And I think it all stems from the Attachment Parenting

1046-1048, 1188-1191
Participant 4: I think it’s the physical closeness that’s important. It’s a comfort to Lucy and to me as well being close to her. She knows that I’m there for her when she needs me and that I’ll respond to her if she’s crying... 1535-1538

Development of secure attachment

Participant 1: I suppose being there, the mother being there for the child when they’re actually looking for something, or when they need something 251-253

Participant 3: ... when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then...

They need the attachment style of parenting anyway... In my opinion 1130-1132, 1169 -1170

Participant 2: We’re clapping our hands and telling her that she’s a good girl... 758/759

Participant 4: Well I think being physically there for them and going to your baby as soon as they cry is important. They cry for a reason. But giving them independence is important too, like leaving them run around, playing, and sleeping by themselves teaches them to be secure 1551-1555

___________________________________________________________________________
(1) Happiness: This major theme encompasses all kinds of happiness from different sources in parenting, and is illustrative of happiness felt by the mother, the child, and simply the prospect of parenting.

Parenting can mean something different from one individual to another: ‘parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home’ (participant 3). Initially, many new parents may not have the time to stop and think for a moment, and realise how fortunate the experience is, particularly when one considers that many people are incapable of bearing children: ‘I suppose first and foremost, you kind of appreciate how lucky you are to be a parent’ (participant 1).

(1.1) Mother’s happiness: it is important to remember that if a person is physically capable of having children, that person is extremely fortunate. Mothers feel lucky to have children, and become happy when they see the child happy.

Some of the participants who were involved in the study recalled the happiness felt when the first child came along: ‘So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously, because he was my first child I was happy’ (participant 3)

(1.2) Happiness of the child is important: the participant responses illustrated that one of the most important duties to fulfil while parenting, is to make sure that the child is happy.
Mothers experience great feelings of joy when they see the child happy. When a woman becomes a mother, the child’s happiness holds so much worth: ‘you just see this little person and thankfully she’s so happy all the time’ (participant 2). The parenting experience can be intimidating and stressful, but the sight of a happy child can melt away the aftertaste of the more difficult times: ‘I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing, and see that she’s okay and happy’ (participant 4).

(2) Responsibility: this is a very important aspect of parenting, and is an experience that each of the participants have every single day. What is interesting about this, is that while each mother mentioned the magnitude of responsibility involved, each also relayed to the researcher, through a combination of verbal and expressive communication, that being capable of being responsible for a child delivers feelings of pride and joy. Of course, when an individual becomes a parent, there is a responsibility that comes with the experience. Becoming a mother means becoming a primary caregiver for another person, which involves responding promptly to the needs of the child, as well as being responsible for the nurture, comfort and happiness of the child.

(2.1) Mother carries the responsibility: the participants involved the study explained that the responsibility falls largely on the mother, which can happen particularly in the initial few weeks of becoming a parent. It appears to mothers that fathers have more freedom, and don’t make as many sacrifices for the child. Mothers often feel the weight of the responsibility, and can experience emotions that may be difficult to rest easy with: ‘I had like, maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a
run, or go to the shop, and I couldn’t, you know?’ (participant 2). However, each participant experiences happiness when the child is responsive, and allows the richness of the experience to overrule undesirable emotions.

(2.2) Providing for and responding to the child’s needs: the mother knows that necessity in parenting is being able to provide for the child in every sense. This includes making sure they child is nurtured, fed, cared for, and comfortable. Furthermore, there is a responsibility to respond promptly to the cries of the child.

(2.3) Child’s responsivity towards the mother: the participants illustrated it is exciting and comforting to see that the child is being responsive, and looks to the mother for physical closeness. Parenting is not only about having responsibilities. It is also about creating meaningful relationships and sharing special bonds. For the participants involved, the connection between mother and child is a precious gift. Each day, the mother sees the child developing, and is aware that the child begins to recognise, and delight in the mother’s presence: ‘I think it’s the physical closeness that’s important. It’s a comfort to Lucy and to me as well being close to her.’

(3) Attachment: the physical contact between a mother and child is extremely important for both. Being physically close to the child relays to them that all needs will be met, and that the child will have the mother available when needed. The mother gets the well-deserved reward of knowing that the relationship with the child will not be experienced the same way by another person, particularly regarding Attachment Parenting practices, such as breastfeeding: ‘If I could have done it longer I would have loved to. But I think that’s really meaningful, because that’s something literally only a mother can have with their child’ (participant 3).

(3.1) Physical closeness/special bond: The Mother-Infant relationship is the foundation on which relationships later in life are built. Each of the participants expressed
confidence in the child’s ability to explore the surrounding environment, while being aware that the mother is present for when the child returns. The mothers contribute this to the physical closeness shared with the child. The relationship is exceptionally important, as it contributes to the type of attachment style which will develop in a child.

(3.2) Development of secure attachment: Attachment Parenting practices were adopted by some of the participants from the study, at one or more times during the experience of parenting. Co-sleeping for one of the participants in particular was an important contribution to helping the child become more independent. Praising a child upon completing a task and encouraging a child to explore the surrounding environment is important for establishing a secure attachment, which will allow the child to be confident, curious, and the needs of the child to be satisfied. For some mothers, the Attachment Parenting approach is extremely important, particularly as the practices involved are meaningful ways by which the mother can encourage the child to become more independent: ‘… when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then... They need the attachment style of parenting anyway... In my opinion’ (participant 3). If the quality of this relationship is favourable from a young age, and the needs of a child are met appropriately, the child can develop a secure attachment style, and be both close to the mother, and comfortable alone: ‘Well I think being physically there for them and going to your baby as soon as they cry is important. They cry for a reason. But giving them independence is important too, like leaving them run around, playing, and sleeping by themselves teaches to be secure.’
Discussion

Overview

The aim of the present study was to gain an understanding of on the lived parenting experience of mothers, and attempt to understand how parenting practices may contribute to the secure attachment of an individual, with the help of an in-depth analysis. This was carried out by analysing one to one semi-structured interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). There have been few studies carried out on Attachment Parenting and secure attachment, particularly of a qualitative nature, which left a gap in the research. Taking a phenomenological approach to the study has provided a meaningful insight into how mothers conceptualise parenting. Several of the same themes emerged across all four of the interview transcripts.

The following areas were explored in a one to one semi-structured interview with each participant:

- What parenting means
- The experience as a mother
- A description the relationship the mother has with child
- Parenting practices which the mother felt were and are meaningful to the relationship
- What exactly about these practices makes them so meaningful
- Experience is with Attachment Parenting
- What the mother thinks is necessary for a child to develop a secure attachment
Throughout the study, it was discovered that some of the participants mentioned important components of parenting such as: providing for the child; meeting basic needs; answering the cries of the child (not leaving the child cry alone), and expressed a lack of interest and belief in the Attachment Parenting approach. For some mothers, Attachment Parenting is an extreme approach, which is costly with time and effort. One participant felt that the approach is unrealistic, and means the mother has to carry the child everywhere with her, and is unable to get anything accomplished: ‘Like it’s not realistic like, you get nothing done’ (participant 1). Another participant of the study expressed great appreciation for the approach, explaining that one of the Attachment Parenting practices, co-sleeping, contributed to the independence of her child: ‘…when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then…’.

Attachment Parenting was not practiced by all participants, however, each mother expressed similar feelings toward parenting: the bond between the mother and child is unique, being physically close and responsive to the child is important for the development of a secure attachment, and being a good mother means providing for your child and giving the child space to explore the environment independently. The participant responses echo the ideas available in existing research: the goals of the mother and child together are to create a baseline of trust, so that the child can explore the world from a secure base (mother), and to allow emotional regulation for the child. Once these goals are reached, and mother and child have regular physical contact as well as the child’s needs being met, the relationship will establish a secure attachment, and will set the foundation for many more healthy relationships later in life: ‘…I think if a child has that I think it will strengthen their relationships that they form when they’re older as well’ (participant 3).
Weaknesses

(i) There was nothing in place for circumstances wherein participants may provide shorter answers than expected, or may say very little. Upon reflection, a method should have been put in place for such circumstances, in order to try to keep the participant speaking.

Strengths

(i) The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis provided an extremely detailed understanding of participant accounts. It allowed the researcher the make sense of how the participants make sense of lived experiences, and allowed for an extremely authentic an enriched study.

(ii) The finalised questions prepared for the study are quite investigative, and encouraged more in-depth and a more meaningful response than expected from the participants.

Implications for future research

A major implication for future research is Attachment Fathering. Due to breastfeeding being such an important contributory practice to the Mother-Infant bond, it is a general presumption of sorts that Attachment Parenting is a solely maternal approach to parenting. Therefore, the opportunity for fathers to be actively participating in Attachment Parenting seems to be somewhat hidden from view. However, fathers can breastfeed too, as the practice of ‘nursing means comforting, not only breastfeeding’ (Sears & Sears, 2001, p.147). Researchers may
also explore the Father’s feelings about the Mother-Infant Attachment, which as a topic, represents a large gap in the research.

**Conclusion**

The primary aim of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived parenting experience of mothers, and attempt to understand how parenting practices may contribute to the attachment style of an individual. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis allowed for a detailed investigation into participant experiences. The areas explored in the research were: what parenting means, the experience of being a mother, description of the mother-infant relationship, parenting practices, why they were meaningful, experience with Attachment Parenting, and what is necessary for a child to develop a secure attachment.

The analysis resulted in the emergence of three major themes: Happiness, which encompassed happiness of both the mother and child; Responsibility, which included meeting the needs of the child, as well responsivity of both the mother and child; and Attachment, which illustrated the importance of physical closeness of mother and child, the special bond present, and how to encourage the development of secure attachment.

The results illustrate that for a child to be more likely development a secure attachment, the basic needs of the child should be met. In essence, this means a child needs to be fed and cared for. Being responsive to the child is extremely important to the mothers involved in the study – a child should not be left cry alone or for too long without the mother answering the call. When mothering, a woman becomes familiar with the different cries of her child. She knows whether the child is simply babbling, moaning, or crying for a need to be satisfied. This allows mothers to become synchronised with the child and its needs, and means that the mother can respond promptly to the call of her baby. By the experiences and accounts of the participants that took part in this research, being responsive to your child,
meeting the basic needs of the baby, understanding and answering the cries, and being physically close with a child, encourages the child to explore the environment confidently, and allows for a secure attachment to develop.
References


Appendix 1.

**Attachment Parenting and Secure Attachment: An Exploration of the Mother’s Experiences and Relationship with the Child.**

My name is Terri McCarthy and I am a Psychology student at Dublin Business School conducting research in the Department of Psychology that explores Attachment Parenting. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination.

I am interested in speaking with mothers who have toddlers over the age of six months. You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves attending an interview with me to discuss your experiences of Attachment Parenting. This phenomenon is concerned with parents being physically close to their child as much as possible (baby-wearing, co-sleeping, etc.) as well as being responsive to the cry of their child. It is sometimes referred to as “Instinctive Parenting”.

The interview will be semi-structured and will allow for you to say as much as you feel comfortable doing so. If any of the questions do raise difficult feelings for you, contact information for support services are included on the final page. **Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part.**

Participation is anonymous and confidential. Therefore responses cannot be attributed to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the data has been collected. The data will be securely stored and data from the interview will be transferred from the paper record to electronic format and stored on a password protected computer.
It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview you are consenting to participate in the study.

Contact Details

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Terri McCarthy, xxxxxx@mydbs.ie. My supervisor can be contacted at xxxxx@dbs.ie.
Appendix 2.

Consent Form

Attachment Parenting and Secure Attachment: An Exploration of the Mother’s Experiences and Relationship with the Child.

I have read and understood the attached Information Leaflet regarding this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with the researcher and I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without this affecting my training.

I agree to take part in the study.

Participant’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________

Participant’s Name in print: ______________________
Appendix 3.

Debriefing Sheet

Thank you very much for making this study possible. The aim of this research was to focus on the lived parenting experience of mothers, and attempt to understand how parenting practices may contribute to the attachment style of an individual, with the help of an in-depth analysis.

I was interested in:

- What parenting means to you
- Your experience as a mother
- How you describe the relationship you have with your child
- Parenting practices which you feel were and are meaningful to the relationship you have with your child
- What exactly about these practices you think makes them so meaningful
- What your experience is with Attachment Parenting
- What you think is necessary for a child to develop a secure attachment style

Existing research suggests that the quality of interaction between parent and child can contribute to the attachment style and attachment narratives of children. When the quality of the Mother-Infant relationship is good and the child is permitted to trust his environment, and be emotionally expressive, a secure attachment can develop, and set a foundation for relationships that will follow this, later in life.

Support Services

If you have been affected by any of the questions or issues raised in this study, please contact one or more of the support services listed below who may be able to provide help and support. Thank you.

www.onefamily.ie – Parenting helpline.
Phone: 1890 662 212
Email: support@onefamily.ie

www.ispcc.ie
Phone: (01) 676 7960
Email: ispcc@ispcc.ie

www.samaritans.org
Phone: (01) 872 7700
I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. I am going to begin, and ask you a few questions now, is that okay? (Not necessary to be read for word for word).

1. What does “Parenting” mean to you?
2. Can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?
3. Describe the relationship you have with your child.
4. From your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful to this relationship?
5. What exactly about these practices do you think makes them meaningful?
6. What is your experience with Attachment Parenting?
7. What do you think is necessary for a child to develop a secure attachment style?
Appreciation and acknowledgment – lucky to be parents.

Happiness at the physical ability to have children.

Parenting as a stressful experience.

Difficult to balance parenting with working/studying.

The good times have more of an impact than the difficult times.

Prioritisation – children come before everything else.
fit in in the evening times, you just kind of fit in. Em… I kind of try to make the most of my days off-

I: Yeah.

P: -I'll do as much with them as I can...

I: Yeah.

P: …When I can. Em, and I suppose it’s about empowering the children as well... To kind of, enjoy your time with them, but, em, at the same time try and make them a little bit independent-

I: Mm

P: - as well.

I: Mm-hm.

P: And get them okay with the days when you’re not there, ‘cause when you’re in work like, my kids are in crèche to three days a week. So, I kind of, going to have to get them used to being -me not being there the whole time as well...

And them to know that it’s okay when I’m not there as well-

I: Mm.

P: -I will come home.

I: Yeah.

P: Mm

I: And how do, how do you find it coping with the balance, you know? Like you said, working and studying part-time, and then coming home and parenting as well, is that tough? Or have you, do you have a routine or ways to cope with that?

P: It’s-

I: Or do you find that you, kind of – you’ve found a balance?

P: Yeah, I found it really tough, especially the last couple of weeks. So, what I do is, like, I work nine to five, I pick my kids up, and I kind of forget about everything else when I have my kids. So, I spend the -as much time as I can with them, especially in the evening times. And I have Monday off work, so I don’t do anything else only with my kids, I do very little housework as well the place is upside down-

I: (Laughs)
Mother does her own work in the evening time when the children are sleeping – possibly has very little time to herself/with her partner.

Parents need to remind themselves that children come first.

‘Really good’ relationship with children – children are responsive to mom – this appears to give the relationship quality to mother – youngest child (7 months) recognises mother.

Excitement – physically expressed by baby.

Older child (3 years of age) asks for mother when she’s not present.

Fun experience.
I: And how do they respond let’s say, if-let’s say when you go to work, or if you go out even to the shops or something, how do they respond when you come back? You know, if you’ve gone away and they’re missing you, or if they’re kicking up a fuss when you’re not there because they’re wondering where you are or missing you-

P: Yeah.

I: What are they like when you come back?

P: So, my older chap he’s three now, so whenever I’m away, whenever I’d see him I’d say “HI!” And he’ll come in and he’ll give me a big hug and a kiss. And say, this morning for example when I was leaving him in crèche, he was really upset and he was crying and he didn’t want me to go, so when I see him now tomorrow I’ll say “Oh I was really sad yesterday because you were sad when you went into school” and he’ll say “I’m not sad now mammy” and I’ll say “Why were you sad?” and he’ll say “I miss you, I want you”. And then I’d kind of explain to him when you’re really sad like that, that makes me sad, and he’s like “Oh I’m not sad now”. So em...

I: That’s nice.

P: …Yeah, he’s at an age now where we can talk about it, and we will rationalise it and he’ll understand it a bit more-

I: Yeah.

P: -em, and Ruby she’s only seven months, so she’s not really too... She’s like em, doesn’t really realise when she’s going to crèche so she’s grand...

I: Yeah.

P: But when I come home she will... You know, be happy to see me as well yeah...

I: Yeah. That’s good... Em, from your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful for this relationship?

P: Hmm... I suppose, being there when they want you so, so when they’re crying obviously don’t leave them crying for long periods of time... Recognising the difference between different cries... So, what’s urgent and what’s just a little bit of a moan... Em, the same thing when they’re sick. Or when

EXPLORATORY NOTES

3-year-old is affectionate when mother returns after period of separation. Verbalises that he misses mother while she’s not here

Mother tells child that she felt sad because he was sad when she went away – child comforts mother ‘I’m not sad now mammy’.

Mother knows that her child can understand.

Confident in child’s abilities.

Mother feels the baby doesn’t realise when she’s being separated from mother.

Being present, recognition of the different types of cries children have and what they mean, responding appropriately and at the right time.

Respond to children’s needs. Teach them, and explain things to them.
Mother ‘knows’ the difference between cries.

Answering/responding to child’s needs is meaningful.

Easier as child grows – needs are verbalised.

Baby has no means of verbal communication – but mother is still able to know what baby needs. Being responsive to needs of the child makes the child aware that mother is there.

Aware of AP – does not agree with the approach.
Does not like the co-sleeping practice. Some co-sleeping practiced with first child.

Feels that co-sleeping contributes to SIDS/cot death.

Parents need good quality sleep – cannot have this with the child in the bed.

Feels children need a balance between self-soothing and being responded to – independence should be encouraged.

Agrees with some aspects of AP.

Easier to teach independence to a child from a younger age.
Does not co-sleep with younger child. Learned from experience with the first child that this was neither ideal for mother nor child.

Sees that younger child sleeps better alone.

Feels that AP means mother takes the children everywhere with her.

Unrealistic approach. Unable to do anything. Children enjoy the movement in a buggy.

Not good for – cannot have space.

Present and responsive parents, and knowing the meaning of different cries of the child contributes to the development of a secure attachment style.
I: Yeah. Brilliant.
P: Yeah.
I: Do you have anything else you’d like to add?
P: Em, no I don’t think so.
I: No problem, that’s brilliant-
P: Sorry (laughs).
I: Thanks a million for taking part in the research.
P: No worries, you’re welcome.
I: Thank you.
Appendix 6. 07 March 2017-Participant 1  
(I: Interviewer, P: Participant)

265 I: I’d first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Em, I’m interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. So, I’m going to just ask you a few questions, and you can say as little or as much as you like-

270 P: Mm.

271 I: Is that okay?

272 P: Yeah.

273 I: The first question is what does parenting mean to you?

274 P: Em... I suppose first and foremost, you kind of appreciate how lucky you are to be a parent. I suppose, I have friends that haven’t been able to have children-

277 I: Mm.

278 P: - and that went through a lot to try and have children, so I suppose it’s just important that people realise how lucky they are to actually have kids.

281 I: Mm-hm.

282 P: Em... It can be stressful at times. It’s tough going-

283 I: Yeah.

284 P: It’s not easy, but it’s definitely worth every minute of it.

285 I: Yeah.

286 P: It’s nice, it’s great (laughs).

287 I: Brilliant, thank you. Em, second question is, can you tell me about your experience if being a mother?

289 P: Yeah, it’s – it’s hard because, em... Juggling full-time work, part-time college, and a mother of two very young babies... It’s difficult, difficult to juggle everything-
Helping children to become independent. Teaching child to cope with separation.
Mother has little time for herself/partner.

Child responding to mother contributes to quality of relationship.

Excitement – physically expressed by baby.

Child verbalises as they grow older.

Fun experience.
I: Yeah.

P: -and we play loads, we have really fun together.

I: And how do they respond let’s say, if–let’s say when you go to work, or if you go out even to the shops or something, how do they respond when you come back? You know, if you’ve gone away and they’re missing you, or if they’re kicking up a fuss when you’re not there because they’re wondering where you are or missing you-

P: Yeah.

I: What are they like when you come back?

P: So, my older chap he’s three now, so whenever I’m away, whenever I’d see him I’d say “HI!” And he’ll come in and he’ll give me a big hug and a kiss. And say, this morning for example when I was leaving him in crèche, he was really upset and he was crying and he didn’t want me to go, so when I see him now tomorrow I’ll say “Oh I was really sad yesterday because you were sad when you went into school” and he’ll say “I’m not sad now mammy” and I’ll say “Why were you sad?” and he’ll say “I miss you, I want you”. And then I’d kind of explain to him when you’re really sad like that, that makes me sad, and he’s like “Oh I’m not sad now”. So em...

I: That’s nice.

P: …Yeah, he’s at an age now where we can talk about it, and we will rationalise it and he’ll understand it a bit more-

I: Yeah.

P: -em, and Ruby she’s only seven months, so she’s not really too... She’s like em, doesn’t really realise when she’s going to crèche so she’s grand...

I: Yeah.

P: But when I come home she will... You know, be happy to see me as well yeah...

I: Yeah. That’s good... Em, from your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful for this relationship?

P: Hmm... I suppose, being there when they want you so, so when they’re crying obviously don’t leave them crying for long periods of time... Recognising the difference between different cries... So, what’s urgent and what’s just a little bit of a moan... Em, the same thing when they’re sick. Or when

EMERGING THEMES

Child happy to see mother after separation.

Child learns to comfort/understands.

Mother confident in child’s abilities.

Young baby unaware of separation from mother.

Presence, response, and recognition of cries are important.

Respond to children’s needs.

Teach and explains things to child.
they’re like, sleeping is a huge thing. So recognising, like, what each cry means.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: Em, and just kind of being there when they need you, and trying to teach them things as well like, if they’re trying to play with toys and they can’t put a train track together or do a jigsaw-

I: Yeah.

P: -help them and explain to them how to do it, rather than just doing it as well, so just being there for them.

I: Yeah. So, you feel it’s important to listen to the type of cry that they have and to respond to them at certain times when you know it’s for a particular need - so you know that if they’re crying, you can anticipate what their need is and respond as quickly as you need to, let’s say?

P: Yeah, yeah. So, there’s some cries say, bedtime when they’re going to sleep, or like during the day if they’re having a nap like, just it’s a little moan but you know that if they moan for like, two minutes that they’ll just doze off to sleep then but’s its grand.

I: Yeah.

P: But you know the difference between that moan and a cry of… they’re hungry or they’re not going to go to sleep now, their pain, you know, you get to know they difference.

I: Yeah. Perfect. Em, what exactly about these practices do you think makes them meaningful?

P: I think because you’re answering what they want, like. Especially with the older fella like he’s able to tell you what’s wrong with him now. So, like if he says “I want to go to the toilet” or whatever, you go and you do exactly what he’s asking you.

I: Yeah.

P: Whereas the younger girl like, she can’t obviously talk now, and she hasn’t – she’s not- she hasn’t got much communication. But I think respond to her needs, and what you think she wants. It’s obviously going to teach her like, that mammy’s there and mammy will be there when I want-

I: Yeah.
Co-slept with first child not second.

Co-sleeping contributes to SIDS/cot death.

Parents need good quality sleep.

Element of self-soothing.

Encourage independence.

Agrees with some aspects of AP.

Easier to teach independence to a child from a younger age.
would you think that kind of impacts your relationship with your partner as well?

P: Yeah, I think it could, but as well like, the child, like. It’s going to take the child longer, like down the line it’s going to be harder for a child, whereas if the child starts off with a good relationship with the parents, but it has that bit of independence…

I: Yeah.

P: Like it’s easier for the child down the line?

I: Yeah.

P: So like, my youngest child for example, like I think she’s been in the bed with me once or twice when she’s sick. But I never would have had her in the bed in the start…

I: Yeah.

P: Em, but she’s been obviously beside us in the room and whatever like, and we’re there we jump to her needs. I think as well she sleeps better when she’s on her own as well.

Personally, that’s my own personal… Em, yeah, and like so you need to have the child with you absolutely everywhere you go for Attachment Parenting, and you don’t use a buggy, you’re carrying the child everywhere-

I: Yeah.

P: -Like it’s not realistic like, you get nothing done, and as well like sometimes the child just likes the motion of being in a buggy as well and going for a walk. Whereas I think with Attachment Parenting, and it’s not good for the mother to like, I think that the mother needs a bit of space as well, and to be able to have an hour away to herself to be able to hand the baby over for half an hour even. I think that’s important for the mother’s mental health as well.

I: Of course, yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: Em, what do you think is necessary for a child to have a secure attachment style or just to feel secure?

P: Em, I suppose being there, the mother being there for the child when they’re actually looking for something, or when they need something. So, again, getting to know the different cries and what cry means what. And… The mother responding promptly to that.
I: Yeah. Brilliant.
P: Yeah.
I: Do you have anything else you’d like to add?
P: Em, no I don’t think so.
I: No problem, that’s brilliant-
P: Sorry (laughs).
I: Thanks a million for taking part in the research.
P: No worries, you’re welcome.
I: Thank you.
**Appendix 7.**

Participant number 1.

Initial clustering of emerging themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Responsivity</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Unfavourable emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Appreciation – lucky to be parents</td>
<td>Prioritisation – children come first</td>
<td>Child responding to bother contributes to quality of relationship</td>
<td>Disagrees with AP approach</td>
<td>Parenting as stressful experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excitement – physically expressed by baby</td>
<td>Helping children to become independent</td>
<td>Child verbalises as they grow older</td>
<td>Co-slept with first child – not second</td>
<td>Co-sleeping contributes to SIDS/cot death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fun experience</td>
<td>Teaching child to cope with separation</td>
<td>Child happy to see mother after separation</td>
<td>Co-sleeping not ideal for mother or child</td>
<td>Element of self-soothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presence, response and recognition of cries are important</td>
<td>Young baby unaware of separation form mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agrees with some aspects of AP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to children’s needs</td>
<td>Mother ‘knows’ the difference between cries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-sleeping not ideal for mother or child</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach and explain things to child</td>
<td>Answering/responding to child’s needs is meaningful</td>
<td></td>
<td>AP – mother takes child everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage independence</td>
<td>Easier as child grows – needs are verbalised</td>
<td></td>
<td>Present and responsive parents, and knowing the meaning of different cries of child contributes to the development of a secure attachment style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A responsibility to care for and nurture. Motherhood as a brilliant, yet demanding and tiring experience. Parenting seen as beginning once a child is born.

Joy upon being allowed to deliver the child by caesarean section. First few days of parenting as intimidating. Mother feels the responsibility falls on her most often. Resentment towards spouse in the initial few weeks after the child was born. Appreciation for the child’s happiness – this makes the mother happy. Seeing the child happy allows the mother to forget the difficult times. Busy.
I: Yeah.

P: Em... I was delighted when they said I could have a section. Em... And then, you know, the initial stages are quite, eh... The initial few days I've found, were quite difficult because it's quite daunting like, you know? You're responsible for this other person and while I'm lucky that my husband is there, and he's very hands-on, I do think that it does largely fall on the mother like...

I: Yeah.

P: You know, at the end of the day, and... So, there's that exhaustion there, and then there's you know, the excitement and whatever and I do remember there was, I had like maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a run, or go to the shop, and I couldn't, you know? It's not that I physically couldn't but, you know, you just feel that, you know, you don't have that freedom to do that. Em... What was the question? How do I find parenting is it?

I: Your experience of being a mother.

P: Oh, yeah, my experience of eh, of being a mother. Em... Ah lookit, it's, it is lovely I have to say it is lovely and I suppose what I take most... Eh... Enjoyment out of is, you know, you just see this little person and thankfully she's so happy all the time... Most of the time-(interviewer laughs) – and that's infectious, you know –

I: Yeah.

P: -and it's fun, and yes, you know, you have the sleepless nights, and it's true like, the giving birth, you actually forget about it, it is true. It sounds ridiculous but you do -(interviewer laughs) -and then, you know, the sleepless nights and whatever, you kind of forget about those too like, you just get on with it like.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: But it's, over all, I would say as a parent I would say, the experience is that it's super busy.

I: Mm.
Mother enjoys the relationship. The child is clingy at the moment. Feels the child understands the Mother is her primary caregiver. Awareness. Does not carry the child with her always — mother comforts her, then leaves when she needs to do something. Mother can see her child developing and learning from week to week. Not getting a sense of reward from this in the typical way.
Child responds pleasantly when mother returns to her after a period of separation.

Being responsive to the child, providing for the child, and making sure they are happy is meaningful for the relationship.

These practices give the child a sense of security and being cared for, as well as meet the child’s needs.
Interacting (talking to) with the child is important.

Teaching and involving the child is important.

Parenting as a adventure.

Considers the child as having a healthy attachment.
Mother speaks of attachment with her parents – healthy – appears to think the child’s attachment style is a reflection of the mother’s own attachment style.

Feels a child’s reaction to separation impacts the attachment style which will develop.

Child reaches out to mother when she returns, after being separated from her.

For a child to develop a secure attachment style, the child’s cries should be answered. The child should be loved, have a routine, and have interaction with people.
A ‘good environment’ contributes to the development of secure attachment. Basic needs should be met and responded to for a secure attachment to develop. Encouraging the child is important for secure attachment to develop.
Responsibility.

Motherhood as a brilliant but tiring experience.

Parenting begins at birth.

Appendix 9. 07 March 2017 - Participant number 2

(I: Interviewer, P: Participant)

I: I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.
P: No problem.
I: I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. So, I’m just going to ask you a few questions. The first question is what does parenting mean to you?
P: Em… you… to me parenting means that I am responsible –
I: Mhmm.
P: -for the care, the nurturing, em... the care in all senses for, em, my child.
I: Mhmm. So, responsibility is key?
P: Yeah.
I: Perfect. So, the next question is, can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?
P: Em... Yes, well that could take a long time (participant laughs). Em… I have been a mother for one year now. And my daughter just turned one on Sunday.
I: Congratulations!
P: Em... I – I could go on forever to be honest. Em…It ...Is.. brilliant. It’s also quite demanding. It’s exhausting-
I: Mm.
P: … Em… It… It really is a mixed bag of all the emotions that you could possibly think of… (interviewer laughs)
I: Mmhmm. Initially, yes, em, you know, when you’re expecting – I know you’re not exactly a parent at that stage but – when you’re expecting there is obviously the excitement and all of that, you know, when you’re preparing for the baby to arrive.
Eh, then, in the final few days or weeks of that it’s just like
Oh come on will this ever be over (interviewer laughs) then, it’s em... Am I answering the right question, yeah?

I: Yeah.

P: -then it’s, you know, the baby arrives and yeah, you’re glad it arrives. Em... Personally I had a section, I was just... Delighted that I had a section, which I know many other people would not think that way, you know?

I: Yeah.

P: Em... I was delighted when they said I could have a section. Em... And then, you know, the initial stages are quite, eh... The initial few days I’ve found, were quite difficult because it’s quite daunting like, you know? You’re responsible for this other person and while I’m lucky that my husband is there, and he’s very hands-on, I do think that it does largely fall on the mother like...

I: Yeah.

P: You know, at the end of the day, and... So, there’s that exhaustion there, and then there’s you know, the excitement and whatever and I do remember there was, I had like maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a run, or go to the shop, and I couldn’t, you know? It’s not that I physically couldn’t but, you know, you just feel that, you know, you don’t have that freedom to do that. Em... What was the question? How do I find parenting is it?

I: Your experience of being a mother.

P: Ah lookit, it’s, it is lovely I have to say it is lovely and I suppose what I take most... Eh... Enjoyment out of is, you know, you just see this little person and thankfully she’s so happy all the time... Most of the time- (interviewer laughs) – and that’s infectious, you know –

I: Yeah.

P: -and it’s fun, and yes, you know, you have the sleepless nights, and it’s true like, the giving birth, you actually forget about it, it is true. It sounds ridiculous but you do - (interviewer laughs) -and then, you know, the sleepless nights and whatever, you kind of forget about those too like, you just get on with it like.

I: Yeah, yeah.
P: But it’s, over all, I would say as a parent I would say, the experience is that it’s super busy.

I: Mm.

P: Like, em, I think you just, you don’t – whether you’re breastfeeding or not breastfeeding or whatever- it’s just busy. It’s actually non-stop. From six o’clock… from whatever, seven o’clock in the morning right through ‘til ten o’clock at night, and that’s when you’re working or not working. That would be my overall thought on it. It’s – it’s just really busy. Yeah.

I: Eh, the next question is describe the relationship you have with your daughter?

P: Em… I would say… my relationship… Em… I think probably… At the minute I would say it’s quite fun really at this stage. She is getting a little bit clingy which I think for me… Which I think is kind of common at this stage.

I: Yeah.

P: Now she’s… I suppose she knows that maybe I’m her… One of her primary caretakers… If that’s the… Or caregivers… So, she can be a little bit clingy at times. Em, I suppose I don’t know if I’m doing the right thing but, I kind of just go react to… Maybe give her a wee hug but then you have to walk out the door, you know, if you have to go somewhere or you have to do something.

I: Yeah.

P: Em… I can’t say she’s overly demanding in fairness… Em… But she’s def-, it’s definitely a fun relationship. I would say… If that’s-if that describes what you’re looking for...

I: Yeah, Yeah.

P: Em… And it’s… I suppose especially- maybe all parents are the same – but I suppose probably because the fact that I have the interest in Psychology and in development and whatever, like, every day at this stage now… Every week, there’s something new –

I: Yeah.

P: -you can just see it and so, yeah, it’s, it’s really interesting. It’s really interesting to see her learning all those little things. I can’t say I would use the word rewarding in anyway – not that it’s not rewarding but – I don’t feel that it’s like oh there tick that box she started to walk or… I don’t find it rewarding in that sense. But it’s just – I suppose it’s just exciting. Yeah.
I: Yeah. And you mentioned a moment ago, when for example, when you have to do something or you have to leave the room for a second –

P: Yeah.

I: -how does she respond when you come back?

P: Em, I suppose... When I come back into the room – I know where you’re going with that – em... I think she’d probably put her arms out for me to come to her, yeah.

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: Okay. From your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful towards this relationship?

P: Em...Well I suppose... The most basic one I suppose would be that she knows that I am there for her, you know, as in answering her calls.

I: Responding to...

P: Yeah, responding to her I suppose that’s the main… I would say that’s the most basic technique that’s involved or... Practiced.

I: Yeah.

P: Em... And aside from that then... Providing for her, you know? And you know, she’s... If that… Like responding to her and providing and making sure that she’s comfortable and she’s happy and.

I: Yeah.

P: All of those things really.

I: “Perfect. The next question is, what exactly about those practices that you mentioned, do you think makes them so meaningful?”.

P: Em...well I suppose they give her the sense of security and the sense of being cared for and... Being... I don’t know if she can comprehend being loved but... You know, that she… She knows that...

I: Yeah.

P: ...That there’s someone there to answer her every need.

I: Yeah.

P: “Em... Am... And... just tell me the question again?
I: What exactly about those practices do you think makes them so meaningful?

P: Em. I would say they’re – That’s the – They’re the basic... You’re responding to her basic human needs like.

I: Yeah.

P: Em... The nurturing... The care... Feeding. Like her basic requirements at this stage –

I: Yeah.

P: - and I suppose then on top of that I might add sort of the stimulation as well, you know, that’s... I’d say that’s probably pretty important for her too... You know?”

I: Yeah.

P: That she’s not just left sitting in a room like with a teddy or... You know –

I: Yeah.

P: -what I mean?

I: So, by stimulation do you mean the interaction?

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: Yeah.

P: Like we’re... you know, I always be talking to her.. Am... And so, would everyone who’s around her like in fairness. Eh... Constantly talking to her... You know...

I: Yeah.

P: ...Naming things... Telling her what I’m doing now at this stage...

I: Yeah.

P: Em... And... Eh... Just playing with her as well... You know, asking her to help me in the morning whether it’s like to open the blinds or whatever and... Yeah, I don’t know. I think it – hopefully it all helps.

I: Yeah... Yeah.

P: I don’t really know (while laughing)... Much... it’s a bit of a blind eh, adventure.

I: Yeah, yeah. So, the next question is – (stranger enters the room, sees it’s being used and leaves) -eh, what is your experience with Attachment Parenting?

P: Eh... As in what’s my knowledge of it or?
Child’s attachment style is a reflection of the mother’s own attachment style.

Child’s reaction to separation impacts the attachment style which will develop.

Child reacts pleasantly to mother when she returns after separation.

Interaction, response to child’s needs, love and routine contribute to development of secure attachment style.
EMERGING THEMES

A ‘good environment’ contributes to the development of secure attachment.

Basic needs should be met and responded to for a secure attachment to develop.

Encouraging the child is important for secure attachment to develop.
1053  P: -if that’s okay?
1054  I: “Yeah, brilliant-
1055  P: Yeah.
1056  I: -so I just want to thank you again for, taking part in my research.
1057  P: (Laughs) No problem.

Appendix 10.

Participant number 2.

Initial clustering of emerging themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Meaningful Experience</th>
<th>Responsivity</th>
<th>Undesirable emotions</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Motherhood as a brilliant but tiring experience</th>
<th>Parenting as an adventure</th>
<th>Mother feels child understands the Mother is her primary caregiver</th>
<th>First few days of parenting intimidating</th>
<th>Considers the child as having a healthy attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting begins at birth</td>
<td>Joy upon delivery</td>
<td>Responding to and providing for the child is meaningful for the relationship</td>
<td>Child responds pleasantly when mother returns after separation</td>
<td>Resentment towards spouse</td>
<td>Child’s attachment style is reflection of mother’s own attachment style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility is mainly on the mother</td>
<td>Appreciation for the child’s happiness</td>
<td>Interacting with the child is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child’s reaction to separation impacts the attachment style which will develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>Good outweighs the bad</td>
<td>Teaching and involving the child is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction, response to child’s needs, love, routine, and good environment contribute to development of secure attachment style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is clingy</td>
<td>Mother enjoys the relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic needs should be met, and child encouraged for secure attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting child used to separation</td>
<td>Mother can see her child developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing a sense of security to child</td>
<td>Basic needs should be met and responded to for secure attachment to development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 11. 10 March 2017 – Participant number 3
(I: Interviewer P: Participant)

I: I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. The first question I’m going to ask you is what does parenting mean to you?

P: Eh, parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home, and they have everything they need provided for them, and that they never look for anything.

I: Okay. Can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?

P: Em, I have two kids. My oldest is going to be four this year and my youngest just turned one. So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously because he was my first child I was happy.

I: Mm-hm.

P: It did put a strain on my relationship a little bit. But that was just the stress of becoming a parent and adapting to a new lifestyle.

I: Yeah.

P: Then when I had my second baby, I got post-natal depression.

I: Okay.

P: So obviously, it was way harder.

I: Yeah.

P: But since then, I got over that like, I feel like I’m closer to my kids as a whole now since then.

I: Okay. Thank you. The next question is can you describe the relationship you have with your child or children.

P: Very very close. Extremely close, we do everything together.

I: Okay.

P: Well, to a certain degree obviously. The oldest one goes off to school in the mornings, the both of them don’t go to school. But, really really close with them.

I: Okay. From your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful to this relationship?

EXPLORATORY NOTES

Parents’ responsibility to make child happy and give them what they need. Children should not have to ask for something?

May be slight pressure to feel happiness upon birth of child.

Presence of first child saw a strain on romantic relationship.

Post-natal depression after the birth of second child.

Emphasis on how close mother and children are.
P: I breastfed both my kids for six weeks. Em, I had to stop them both because... Different reasons. But I felt that created a really strong bond with both of the kids for me.

I: Okay.

P: Em, I co-slept with my first child as well. So, that’s probably why we’re joint at the hip as well. Em, but yeah, the breastfeeding definitely created that bond.

I: Yeah. Okay, thank you. So, what exactly about these practices do you think makes them so meaningful?

P: It’s the closeness, especially with the breastfeeding. Like, nobody else will ever have that connection.

I: Okay.

P: Like, not even their dad can have that connection with them. It’s a really special thing that you’re able to do.

I: Yeah.

P: Provide food for the baby like. If I could have done it longer I would have loved to. But I think that’s really meaningful, because that’s something literally only a mother can have with their child.

I: Okay, yeah.

P: So, really strong bond. And then I really like the co-sleeping too. Even though I didn’t do it with the second. But that was more because we couldn’t get our bed back (laughs) after the first one.

I: (laughs)

P: But, like, with the second one, I still do bring her in in the morning, and I think in the morning when I have the two kids in the bed, there’s something really special about that like.

I: Yeah.

P: That twenty minutes where it’s just you and them, and your little chat about the day, and your cuddles. You know?

I: Yeah.

P: There’s something really nice about that.

I: And how did you find it was once you stopped co-sleeping with your first child? Was it difficult when that happened?

P: Yeah. So, they reason I stopped co-sleeping, and this might sound a bit cruel, is because I got pregnant-
I: Okay

P: -again. So, knew there was going to be another baby in the room as well.

I: Yeah.

P: So, we tried the whole time I was pregnant. It didn’t really work until it got to the point where, I couldn’t even have anyone in the bed with me, I was so big and uncomfortable.

I: Okay.

P: But like, we finally managed to get him in but it was really hard, he hated that. And like, we could go off during the day, and he’d be fine with other people. But at night time it was me he wanted, it wasn’t even his dad.

I: Yeah.

P: So, I found it really hard, and he found it really hard. But I knew in my own heart as well, it was time to cut that cord, you know?

I: Yeah.

P: He needed more independence at that stage.

I: Yeah.

P: And I knew that would be one way to help it.

I: Yeah.

P: Because like, when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then-

I: Okay.

P: -so it was like that bit of an independence then.

I: Yeah, Yeah.

P: Brought him on a bit more.

I: Okay. What is your experience with Attachment Parenting?

P: I love it.

I: Okay.

P: I don’t... I don’t... I mightn’t be like, extreme with my Attachment Parenting style. But I definitely do some of the things.

I: Okay.
Belief in the cry of the child – the child’s cry serves a purpose.

Mother may have felt it was important to say she doesn’t judge anyone.

Emphasis on how important Attachment Parenting is. Important to the mother for the creation of bonds with children.

AP provides stability and closeness.

‘In my opinion’. Possibly self-conscious about what she is saying. Possible fear of judgment.

Bond with mother more important, or more meaningful than bond with father.

Confidence in son’s ability to explore
Let' the child become more independent. Mother misses when the child needed her, so takes ownership of the change. Closeness is still there between mother and child – mother feels this is because of experience with AP. Confidence in the child’s ability to rely on the mother in the future – and in the longevity of the closeness.

Feelings that father does not makes as many sacrifices for children.

Mother-infant bond has a uniqueness.

Bond should be secured and supported when the child is young to make sure it’s still there as the child grows.

Metaphor to describe the strength of the bond – ‘the string that connects everyone’.
I: Yeah.

P: In my head, anyway.

I: Okay. Em, so you think, em, you think that the bond when the child is young is important because-

P: So important.

I: Okay.

P: Yeah.

I: And you think it’s important for their future, for their relationships in their future?

P: In their future, I think if the child gets the sense of security when they’re a baby...

I: Mm-hm.

P ... That they’ll know that security is there for life.

I: Yeah.

P: And, I think if a child has that I think it will strengthen their relationships that they form when they’re older as well.

I: Okay.

P: If their relationship with their parents is a good healthy one like.

I: Okay.

P: But it definitely all stems from the minute that child is born.

I: Okay.

P: They know things. This is going to make me sound crazy now, but when a baby’s in your stomach they know things.

I: Yeah.

P: They do.

I: Yeah.

P: They do. And my mam used to always say it.

I: (giggles)

P: Are you laughing at me now? (laughs). No, my mam used to always say it. When I was pregnant with my second baby. And I used to be like, “Ugh, what if I don’t love this baby as much as my first one?” and my mam would be like “That baby can hear everything, you tell that baby you love it.”

I: Aw, that’s lovely.
P: I know. It makes us sound nuts but.

I: (laughs)

P: It’s true (laughs).

I: So, is there anything else that you’d like to add, or anything else that you feel you’d like to say?

P: No. I think I’ve covered everything. If you don’t need any more information I’m happy with what I’ve given.

I: Okay. Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

P: No problem. Thanks a million.
I: I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. The first question I’m going to ask you is what does parenting mean to you?

P: Eh, parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home, and they have everything they need provided for them, and that they never look for anything.

I: Okay. Can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?

P: Em, I have two kids. My oldest is going to be four this year and my youngest just turned once. So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously because he was my first child I was happy.

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P: It did put a strain on my relationship a little bit. But that was just the stress of becoming a parent and adapting to a new lifestyle.

I: Yeah.

P: Then when I had my second baby, I got post-natal depression.

I: Okay.

P: So obviously, it was way harder.

I: Yeah.

P: But since then, I got over that like, I feel like I’m closer to my kids as a whole now since then.

I: Okay. Thank you. The next question is can you describe the relationship you have with your child or children.

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P: Em, I co-slept with my first child as well. So, that’s probably why we’re joint at the hip as well. Em, but yeah, the breastfeeding definitely created that bond.

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P: Like, not even their dad can have that connection with them. It’s a really special thing that you’re able to do.

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P: Provide food for the baby like. If I could have done it longer I would have loved to. But I think that’s really meaningful, because that’s something literally only a mother can have with their child.

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P: So, really strong bond. And then I really like the co-sleeping too. Even though I didn’t do it with the second. But that was more because we couldn’t get our bed back (laughs) after the first one.

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P: But, like, with the second one, I still do bring her in in the morning, and I think in the morning when I have the two kids in the bed, there’s something really special about that like.

I: Yeah.

P: That twenty minutes where it’s just you and them, and your little chat about the day, and your cuddles. You know?

I: Yeah.

P: There’s something really nice about that.

I: And how did you find it was once you stopped co-sleeping with your first child? Was it difficult when that happened?
Child looking for mother, not Father.

Mother-infant bond as a “cord”.

Child became independent when co-sleeping stopped.

Mother provided the child with sense of security.

P: Yeah. So, they reason I stopped co-sleeping, and this might sound a bit cruel, is because I got pregnant-
I: Okay
P: -again. So, knew there was going to be another baby in the room as well.
I: Yeah.
P: So, we tried the whole time I was pregnant. It didn’t really work until it got to the point where, I couldn’t even have anyone in the bed with me, I was so big and uncomfortable.
I: Okay.
P: But like, we finally managed to get him in but it was really hard, he hated that. And like, we could go off during the day, and he’d be fine with other people. But at night time it was me he wanted, it wasn’t even his dad.
I: Yeah.
P: So, I found it really hard, and he found it really hard. But I knew in my own heart as well, it was time to cut that cord, you know?
I: Yeah.
P: He needed more independence at that stage.
I: Yeah.
P: And I knew that would be one way to help it.
I: Yeah.
P: Because like, when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then-
I: Okay.
P: -so it was like that bit of an independence then.
I: Yeah, Yeah.
P: Brought him on a bit more.
I: Okay. What is your experience with Attachment Parenting?
P: I love it.
I: Okay.
P: I don’t... I don’t... I mightn’t be like, extreme with my Attachment Parenting style. But I definitely do some of the things.
Child’s cry serves a purpose.

Attachment Parenting important for the creation of bonds with children.

AP provides stability and closeness.

Bond with mother more important, or more meaningful than bond with father.

Confidence in son’s ability to explore environment.

Mother feels the child is aware she is there.

**EMERGING THEMES**

I: Okay.

P: I don’t understand how anyone couldn’t.

I: Yeah.

P: I know that there’s other styles like, crying it out at nighttime...

I: Yeah.

P: ...to get the baby to sleep. I don’t believe in that, I believe that when a baby wants to sleep they’ll sleep, and if they don’t — tough- you had a baby.

I: Okay.

P: Deal with it. Like, so, that’s where I’d be the cuddly, lying in the bed with them, mom.

I: Yeah.

P: I think I just don’t understand how someone couldn’t be an Attachment Parent. I don’t judge anyone either.

I: Yeah.

P: But for me, it was really important.

I: Okay. So, you feel that it’s important for the relationship between you and your child?

P: Yeah, definitely. It creates a closeness and a bond, and I think the kids see that.

I: Okay.

P: Definitely. They need that stability and that closeness.

I: Yeah. The final question is, what do you think is necessary for a child to have a secure attachment style?

P: They need they attachment style of parenting anyway... In my opinion.

I: Okay.

P: Because they need to know that they’re close to their parents like. Okay, I know I’m the mother now so I’m probably like, not bashing dads, but I think it’s very important with their mother.

I: Mm-hm.

P: That they need that, need that connection.

I: Yeah.

P: So, I think the Attachment Parenting, when they’re young, it creates the stronger bond. So now like, I see it with my
three-year-old, who’s nearly four. He’s off and he’s becoming more independent. But he knows I’m still here.  

I: Mm-hm.  

P: so even though I’m letting him become independent, I let him do it in his own time, and because of the Attachment Parenting that I did, we have a very strong connection.  

I: Yeah.  

P: They get that comfort, and that closeness from that then, that never goes away.  

I: Okay. And why exactly do you think it’s so important, specifically the bond between the child and the mother in particular?  

P: Because, I don’t know, I suppose, like obviously the other carries the child. But, like, I think, and this might sound awful now. Like, my partner is a great dad to our kids, so I’m not knocking him. But I think, it’s very easy for a man and a dad to live their own lives and get up and go, but there’s something about a mother and a child. The mother gives up their world for the child.  

I: Yeah.  

P: And the different connection there, I don’t know what it is, I don’t know why it’s there.  

I: Yeah.  

P: But there’s the different bond between a mother and a child, and I think if you secure that when they’re a baby, it doesn’t break as easily when they grow up.  

I: Okay. Yeah.  

P: But I think, I don’t know what it is about, I can’t even put it into words. But there’s definitely... It’s like, did you ever hear that metaphor; the string that connects everyone?  

I: Yeah.  

P: So, it’s like, the string that connects everyone, and then when a mother has a baby. That string is like, reinforced ten times over.
Security given to a child when young contributes to the quality of future relationships.

Baby is aware of environment in utero.

Participant’s mother is important to her.

Fear of disliking second child.

I: Yeah.

P: In my head, anyway.

I: Okay. Em, so you think, em, you think that the bond when the child is young is important because-

P: So important.

I: Okay.

P: Yeah.

I: And you think it’s important for their future, for their relationships in their future?

P: In their future, I think if the child gets the sense of security when they’re a baby...

I: Mm-hm.

P: ... That they’ll know that security is there for life.

I: Yeah.

P: And, I think if a child has that I think it will strengthen their relationships that they form when they’re older as well.

I: Okay.

P: If their relationship with their parents is a good healthy one like.

I: Okay.

P: But it definitely all stems from the minute that child is born.

I: Okay.

P: They know things. This is going to make me sound crazy now, but when a baby’s in your stomach they know things.

I: Yeah.

P: They do.

I: Yeah.

P: They do. And my mam used to always say it.

I: (giggles)

P: Are you laughing at me now? (laughs). No, my mam used to always say it. When I was pregnant with my second baby. And I used to be like, “Ugh, what if I don’t love this baby as much as my first one?” and my mam would be like “That baby can hear everything, you tell that baby you love it.”

I: Aw, that’s lovely.
P: I know. It makes us sound nuts but.

I: (laughs)

P: It’s true (laughs).

I: So, is there anything else that you’d like to add, or anything else that you feel you’d like to say?

P: No. I think I’ve covered everything. If you don’t need any more information I’m happy with what I’ve given.

I: Okay. Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

P: No problem. Thanks a million.
Appendix 13.

Participant number 3.

Initial clustering of emerging themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother provided the child with sense of security</td>
<td>First child – strain on romantic relationship</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother has more responsibility than father</td>
<td>Close relationship</td>
<td>Post-natal depression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure bond when child is young provides security in the future</td>
<td>Enjoys when both kids are in the bed in the morning</td>
<td>Confidence in son’s ability to explore environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby is aware of environment in utero</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Mother feels the child is aware she is there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child looking for mother, not father</td>
<td>Confidence in the longevity of the closeness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother-Infant bond as a “cord”</td>
<td>Fear of disliking second child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bond with mother more important, or more meaningful than bond with father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother-Infant bond is unique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant’s mother is important to her</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breastfeeding important practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-slept with first child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breastfeeding created strong bond</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical closeness creates strong bonds</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t co-sleep with second child</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child became independent when co-sleeping stopped</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attachment Parenting is important for the creation of bonds with children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AP provides stability and closeness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closeness is still there when child becomes independent due to AP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14. 11 March 2017-Participant 4

(I: Interviewer, P: Participant)

I: I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. So, I’m going to ask you a few questions now, is that okay?

P: Yeah.

I: What does parenting mean to you?

P: In my opinion, it means being responsible for your child and caring for them. You have to make sure that your child has everything they need. I make sure that Lucy is looked after and is happy, fed and cared for. It is, it is important that she knows I was there for her and that’s what parenting is all about, in my opinion.

I: Thank you. Can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?

P: It’s a great experience. It can be so stressful, but it makes me happy to know that I’m able to provide for Lucy. I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing and see that she’s okay and happy. Full of joy, cuddles and laughter.

I: Thank you. Describe the relationship you have with your child.

P: Myself and Lucy are very close. She’s a very happy baby, and always smiling. Even when her new teeth are coming in, she’s so good, she doesn’t kick up a fuss. We have a strong bond. When she sees me in the morning she’s all smiles, and when she goes to her nan’s when I’m working she’s grand and is always happy to see me when I come back from work.

I: Thank you. From your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful to this relationship?

P: I always go to Lucy when she’s crying or looking for me, I don’t leave her cry on her own. I always pick her up when she wants to be picked up. And I think that’s important. Just being responsive to your child’s and being present is good for the relationship.
I: What exactly about these practices do you think makes them so meaningful?

P: I think it’s the physical closeness that’s important. It’s a comfort to Lucy and to me as well being close to her. She knows that I’m there for her when she needs me and that I’ll respond to her is she’s crying. I think for the child it’s nice knowing that the parent is close by.

I: What is your experience with Attachment Parenting?

P: I’m not interested in all the attachment parenting strategies to be honest, but some are just common sense. Lucy has a cot in my bedroom, and she sleeps in that. But sometimes in the morning she comes into my bed. I didn’t breastfeed her, but I fed on demand. And those things allowed Lucy to become more independent. I think that once you respond to your baby’s needs, you are a good mom.

I: Thank you. What do you think is necessary for a child to have a secure attachment style?

P: I think being physically there for them and going to your baby as soon as they cry is important. They cry for a reason. But giving them independence is important too, like leaving them run around, playing, and sleeping by themselves teaches them to be secure.

I: Perfect. Do you have anything else you’d like to add, or is that everything?

P: No, that’s everything.

I: Thanks a million for taking part in this research.

P: No problem-

I: Thank you.

P: - thanks for asking me to be involved.

I: Thank you.
Appendix 15. 11 March 2017-Participant 4

(I: Interviewer, P: Participant)

I: I would first like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am interested to hear about your experience with parenting and parenting practices. So, I’m going to ask you a few questions now, is that okay?

P: Yeah.

I: What does parenting mean to you?

P: In my opinion, it means being responsible for your child and caring for them. You have to make sure that your child has everything they need. I make sure that Lucy is looked after and is happy, fed and cared for. It is, it is important that she knows I was there for her and that’s what parenting is all about, in my opinion.

I: Thank you. Can you tell me about your experience of being a mother?

P: It’s a great experience. It can be so stressful, but it makes me happy to know that I’m able to provide for Lucy. I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing and see that she’s okay and happy. Full of joy, cuddles and laughter.

I: Thank you. Describe the relationship you have with your child.

P: Myself and Lucy are very close. She’s a very happy baby, and always smiling. Even when her new teeth are coming in, she’s so good, she doesn’t kick up a fuss. We have a strong bond. When she sees me in the morning she’s all smiles, and when she goes to her nan’s when I’m working she’s grand and is always happy to see me when I come back from work.

I: Thank you. From your experience, what parenting practices do you think were and are meaningful to this relationship?

P: I always go to Lucy when she’s crying or looking for me, I don’t leave her cry on her own. I always pick her up when she wants to be picked up. And I think that’s important. Just being responsive to your child’s and being present is good for the relationship.

EMERGING THEMES

Happiness of the child is important.

Responsibility.

Providing for child.

Great and stressful experience.

Good outweighs the bad.

Child happy to see mother after separation.

Responding to child’s cry.

Prioritisation – children come before everything else.
Physical closeness - comfort for mother and daughter are important.

Responding to baby’s cry - baby aware that mother is nearby.

No co-sleeping.

Bottle-fed on demand - led to independence.

Responding to baby’s needs.

Teach.

Presence, responsive parent, and allowing child to explore their environment contributes to development of secure attachment style.
Appendix 16.

Participant number 4.

Initial clustering of emerging themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Responsivity</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Happiness of the child most</td>
<td>Responding to child’s cry</td>
<td>Child happy to see mother after separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing for child</td>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritisation – child</td>
<td>Great and stressful experience</td>
<td>Responding to baby’s cry – baby</td>
<td>Physical closeness - comfort for mother and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comes before everything</td>
<td></td>
<td>aware that mother is nearby</td>
<td>daughter are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>Good outweighs the bad</td>
<td>Responding to baby’s needs</td>
<td>No co-sleeping</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bottle-fed on demand – led to independence</td>
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<td>Presence, responsive parent, and allowing child</td>
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<td>to explore their environment contributes to</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>development of secure attachment style</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 17.
Final table of themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major theme 1 – Happiness</th>
<th>Mother’s happiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1: I suppose first and foremost, you kind of appreciate how lucky you are to be a parent 10/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4: I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing and see that she’s okay and happy 1515-1517</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Happiness of child important

| Participant 2: you just see this little person and thankfully she’s so happy all the time 557/558 |  |
| Participant 3: Parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home 1043/1044 |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major theme 2 - Responsibility</th>
<th>Mother carries the responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2: I had like, maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a run, or go to the shop, and I couldn’t, you know? 545-549</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3: I think, it’s very easy for a man and a dad to live their own lives and get up and go, but there’s something about a mother and a child. The mother gives up their world for the child. 1204-1207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Providing for and responding to the child’s needs

| Participant 1: …Just kind of being there when they need you, and trying to teach them things as well like 112/113 |  |
| Participant 2: …Responding to her and providing and making sure that she’s comfortable and she’s happy... 632-634 |  |
| Participant 3: …they have everything they need provided for them... 1044/1045 |  |

### Child’s responsivity towards the mother

| Participant 1: They’re responsive to me, em… Ruby while she’s only nearly seven months now, she recognises when I come into the room ... She would light up 57-59, 61 |  |
| Participant 4: I always go to Lucy when she’s crying or looking for me, I don’t leave her cry on her own. I always pick her up when she wants to be picked up. And I think that’s important. Just being responsive to your child and being present is good for the |  |
relationship ... When she sees me in the morning she’s all smiles, and when she goes to her nan’s when I’m working she’s grand and is always happy to see me when I come back from work.  1531-1535, 1525/1526

Superordinate theme 3 – Attachment
Physical closeness/special bond

Participant 1: ... I suppose being there, the mother being there for the child when they’re actually looking for something, or when they need something. So, again, getting to know the different cries and what cry means what. And... The mother responding promptly to that 218-222

Participant 2: You know, from my own experience say, to date now, when I’d go to the crèche to pick her up in the evenings, like she recognises me... she puts her arms out to be lifted 713-716

Participant 3: So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously because he was my first child I was happy... So, he’ll always know that I’m here. Like, even when he’s twenty, he’ll always know he can come home to Mom, if he needs anything. And I think it all stems from the Attachment Parenting 1049-1051, 1191-1194

Participant 4: I think it’s the physical closeness that’s important. It’s a comfort to Lucy and to me as well being close to her. She knows that I’m there for her when she needs me and that I’ll respond to her if she’s crying...  1538-1541

Development of secure attachment

Participant 1: I suppose being there, the mother being there for the child when they’re actually looking for something, or when they need something 218-220

Participant 3: ... when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then... They need the attachment style of parenting anyway... In my opinion 1133-1135, 1172/1173

Participant 2: We’re clapping our hands and telling her that she’s a good girl...  751-753

Participant 4: Well I think being physically there for them and going to your baby as soon as they cry is important. They cry for a reason. But giving them independence is important too, like leaving them run around, playing, and sleeping by themselves teaches them to be secure  1554-1558
Appendix 18.

Narrative extract

Parenting can mean something different from one individual to another: ‘parenting to me means making sure my children grow up in a happy home’ (participant 3). Initially, many new parents may not have the time to stop and think for a moment, and realise how fortunate the experience is, particularly when one considers that many people are incapable of bearing children: ‘I suppose first and foremost, you kind of appreciate how lucky you are to be a parent’ (participant 1).

Some of the participants who were involved in the study recalled the happiness felt when the first child came along: ‘So, when I had my oldest kid, when he was born everything was great, happy, grand. Obviously, because he was my first child I was happy’ (participant 3). It is clear that when a woman becomes a mother, the child’s happiness holds so much worth: ‘you just see this little person and thankfully she’s so happy all the time’ (participant 2). The parenting experience can be intimidating and stressful, but the sight of a happy child can melt away the aftertaste of the more difficult times: ‘I forget about how hard it is when I see her smiling and playing, and see that she’s okay and happy’ (participant 4).

Of course, when an individual becomes a parent, there is a responsibility that comes with the experience. Becoming a mother means becoming a primary caregiver for another person, which involves responding promptly to the needs of the child, as well as being responsible for the nurture, comfort and happiness of the child. Mothers often feel the weight of the responsibility, and can experience emotions that may be difficult to rest easy with: ‘I had like, maybe one day in the initial few weeks where I absolutely hated my husband because he was able to get up and walk out the door and go for a run, or go to the shop, and I couldn’t, you know?’ (participant 2). However, each participant experiences happiness when the child is responsive, and allows the richness of the experience to overrule undesirable emotions.

Parenting is not only about having responsibilities. It is also about creating meaningful relationships and sharing special bonds. For the participants involved, the connection between mother and child is a precious gift. Each day, the mother sees the child developing, and is aware that the child begins to recognise, and delight in the mother’s presence: ‘I think it’s the physical closeness that’s important. It’s a comfort to Lucy and to me as well being close to her.’ The mother gets the well-deserved reward of knowing that the relationship with the child will not be experienced the same way by another person, particularly regarding Attachment Parenting practices, such as breastfeeding: ‘If I could have done it longer I would have loved to. But I think that’s really meaningful, because that’s something literally only a mother can have with their child.’ The Mother-Infant relationship is exceptionally important, as it contributes to the type of attachment style which will develop in a child. For some mothers, the Attachment Parenting approach is extremely important, particularly as the practices involved are meaningful ways by which the mother can encourage the child to become more independent: ‘… when we finished co-sleeping as well, all of a sudden, the bottle was gone, he stopped wetting his nappies at night. He was fully trained at night time then... They need the attachment style of parenting anyway... In my opinion’ (participant 3). If the quality of this relationship is favourable from a young age, and the needs of a child are met appropriately, the child can develop a secure attachment style, and be both close to the mother, and comfortable alone: ‘Well I think being physically there for them and going to your baby as soon as they cry is important. They cry for a reason. But giving them independence is important too, like leaving them run around, playing, and sleeping by themselves teaches to be secure.’