

[Kandidatnummer: 6245]
[Mira Aurora Marlow]

MSOMAS Masteroppgave i sosialfag
The Epistemological Standpoint and Motherhood in
Norwegian Society

Av: Mira Aurora Marlow

Veileder: Professor Kari Søndena



DET SAMFUNNSVITENSKAPELIGE FAKULTET
Institutt for sosialfag

Antall ord i oppgavebesvarelsen: 37 570

Masteroppgave – Sosialfag
Institutt for sosialfag - juni 2015

Acknowledgements

Writing this masters dissertation has been challenging. It has been exciting but also exhausting. Many people have helped me with this and they do deserve a big thank you!

First I want to thank all of the informants from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and the Crisis Centre in Stavanger for participating and sharing their views and experiences of motherhood. Without your contribution I would not have been able to conclude this paper. Thank you to all who joined in the pilot interviews as well. It truly helped me to modify the questions and gave me ideas about how to execute the interviews.

Thank you, my dissertation adviser, Professor Kari Søndena for guiding me through this project and keeping my head above the surface when I was feeling overwhelmed. You trusted me and gave me hope when I needed it most.

I am thankful for the colleagues, especially Sylvi, from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger who helped me with the statistics and all the questions that arose during the writing process.

Thank you, staff from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger, who helped me to find informants.

I would also like to thank all of my friends, especially Silla who proof read my theory chapter. Thank you, my study colleagues and family members who helped me to reflect on my ideas and gave me feedback.

The biggest thank you goes to my beloved, amazing husband Dave who helped me with all the technical issues, proof reading, tables and figures. I am especially thankful to you for looking after our twin daughters while I was busy with the paper and keeping us fed. Thank you, Helena and Lilja for the love and making my life as your mother unbelievable and an amazing journey. I love you.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	2
<i>Summary</i>	5
1 Introduction	7
1.1 Background	10
1.2 Research Focus and Overall Aim.....	14
2 Feminist Standpoint Theory	17
2.1 The framework of Feminist Standpoint theory	17
2.2 Standpoint Feminism and Empirical Feminism.....	18
2.2.1 Critique.....	19
2.3 Power, ethics & Standpoint Theory	20
3 Methods & Analyse	22
3.1 Research Strategy	22
3.1.1 Qualitative research	22
3.1.2 Individual semi-structured interviews	23
3.2 Preparation work for the Interviews	25
3.2.1 Preconception	25
3.2.2 Interview guide	26
3.2.3 Recruiting Participants	27
3.3 Interview process	28
3.4 Framework for data analysis	30
3.5 Limitations, potential problems and ethics of the research	30
3.5.1 Validity and reliability	32
3.5.2 Ethical aspects of the research.....	36
4 Interpretation of the Empirical Research	38
4.1 The epistemological standpoints	40
4.1.1 Being a mother.....	40
4.2 Definition of being a 'good enough mother'	44
4.2.1 Mothers at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger	46
4.2.2 Mothers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger	48
4.3 A summary of the definition of being a 'good enough mother'	51
4.4 Evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children.....	53
4.5 Objectivity versus subjectivity.....	56
4.5.1 Picture One	57

4.5.2	Picture Two.....	59
	‘The goal is to be objective’	61
	‘We use ourselves as a tool. Our own gut feeling are important’	62
	‘Evaluation is based on my background, who I am and what I have learned as well’	64
4.6	A summary of objectivity versus subjectivity in the evaluation process	65
5	<i>Discussion</i>	66
5.1	The impossibility of Kvello’s ‘good enough motherhood’	66
5.2	Race and ethnicity & being a ‘good enough mother’	68
5.3	Social and economic class & being a ‘good enough mother’	71
5.4	Domestic violence & being a ‘good enough mother’	73
5.5	Age & being a ‘good enough mother’	75
5.6	Social & biological motherhood & being a ‘good enough mother’	77
5.7	Lone motherhood & being a ‘good enough mother’	78
5.8	Power & evaluation	79
5.9	Epistemological standpoint.....	80
5.9.1	Informants and their objectivism	81
6	<i>Conclusion</i>	85
6.1	Research Objectives.....	85
6.1.1	Research Objective 1: Ideas behind the concept of a ‘good enough mother’	85
6.1.2	Research Objective 2: Models and frameworks for the concept of a ‘good enough mother’	86
6.1.3	Research Objective 3: Views and practices for judgement	88
6.1.4	Research Objective 4: Being a ‘good enough mother’ and Feminist Standpoint Theory	90
6.1.5	Research Objective 5: Universalism in a ‘good enough motherhood’	92
6.2	Recommendations for Future Research	93
6.3	Self-Reflection	94
7	<i>Bibliography</i>	97
	<i>APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW GUIDE</i>	101
	<i>APPENDIX TWO: INFORMANT LETTER</i>	102
	<i>APPENDIX THREE: NSD NOTIFICATION</i>	103
	<i>APPENDIX FOUR: PARTICIPATION CONCENT FORM</i>	105

Summary

The overall theme of this master's dissertation is the social constructivism of the concept of 'good enough motherhood' and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society. My aim was to explore social workers' views of 'good enough motherhood' and whether their personal and professional history affects their evaluation of service users' abilities to take care of their children. A further focus of this paper is to evaluate whether social workers believe that their judgement is objective or subjective.

The theoretical framework of this study is Feminist Standpoint Theory that stresses that knowledge is socially constructed, where cultural and racial aspects are visible and important. Furthermore, it aims to expose the marginalised people's knowledge of their own life and claims that they have an important view of the power structure in their own society. Indeed, the epistemological standpoints of service users and social workers matters.

Feminist Standpoint Theory challenges the traditional objective research method, where the researcher needs to distance oneself from the study in order to get valid results and aim for value neutral observation and results. According to standpoint feminism, such a value and cultural neutral research does not exist, because the researcher's values and reasons behind the decision to execute a particular study will always influence it to a certain level. Indeed, one cannot step outside one's epistemological standpoint that is marked with one's race and ethnicity, social and economic class and one's historical and geographical location.

This dissertation was written with reference to a wide range of literature and with empirical research that was executed via individual semi-structured interviews with two social workers from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and two social workers from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger in Norway. The requirement for informants was to be a qualified and employed social worker and have experience of evaluating mother's caring abilities from their work. The interview material was analysed with the help of thematic analysis, which is used to identify patterns of themes, but also highlights how the informants differ from each other.

In the chapter 'Interpretation of the Empirical Research' I am outlining the informants' views of the concept of being a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian Society and how they interpret objectivity in the evaluation process. The informants' epistemological standpoints

with reference to the concept of being a 'good enough mother' are discussed. The social workers' views in this study for 'good enough motherhood' were based on their subjective knowledge of motherhood and their professional knowledge of the concept. They all stated that they use both personal and professional knowledge in the evaluation process. What was considered to be objective for social workers from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger was different to the social workers from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. Norwegian developmental psychologist Øyvind Kvello's guidelines and checklists were used as an objective tool in the evaluation process and report writing at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger. In the Crisis Centre in Stavanger objectivity was attained through discussions with other colleagues about observed situations between a mother and her children. A subjective tool that all informants used was their instincts of the relationship between mother and children.

In the chapter 'Discussion' I am criticising the use of Kvello's checklists in the evaluation process and challenging the universal approach to motherhood in the light of Feminist Standpoint Theory, highlighting the importance of the epistemological standpoints of service users and social workers. I am questioning whether certain risk groups should actually be classified as such because of age, race, social and economic status. The chapter is highlighting how certain mothers' views of mothering are marginalised and others, especially white middle-class Norwegians' are supposed to have the right kind of knowledge of motherhood. Further this chapter discusses the supposed objectivity in the evaluation process and whether it is really achievable.

1 Introduction

'A good mother is someone who knows herself well enough. Although not so that she wraps herself around the children. [It is] someone who has an understanding that the whole life is a journey, and who acknowledges the value of humanity and realises that morality in general is an active process. A good motherhood is not about the genes --- the biological relationship is not that important. This might be because I don't personally have a memory of my own biological mother or the relationship with her' (Johanna).

The quote is from my pilot interview notes of a Finnish social worker Johanna¹. The personal standpoint of a social worker is inseparable from her professional standpoint. Her views about motherhood, and what it is to be a 'good enough mother' are based on her society's family politics, the social worker's childhood, relationship with her mother and own personal experiences of motherhood. These are the building blocks for what the social worker refers to when considering if a mother is 'good enough' for her children. Still it is the social worker who is asked to make an objective judgement based on her experience of similar situations and her education. I claim that such objectivity is difficult, if not impossible to achieve. One of the problems of judging if one is a 'good enough mother' for one's children is the measurements that are used and who is using the power to make that judgement. Sonya Michel (2011) in her study *Moving targets: towards a framework for studying family policies and welfare states* argues that '(...) we should always understand the term 'family' as contingent, and we should always ask who or what is defining it, and for what purpose' (p. 119). In the same way it is important to focus on *what* is behind the definition of being a 'good enough mother' and moreover, *who* is behind the decision.

Family politics in each country creates the norms and frames of what is acceptable to be a family and a mother. Michel asks '[w]hat is family policy? The term itself presupposes that there is something that we can identify as 'family'. Yet, as historians have shown, what constitutes a family changes over time' (2011, p. 119). It can be argued that what defines motherhood also changes over time. Michel's paper discusses how family politics can discourage or encourage the growth of certain ethnic, class or religious groups. Furthermore, she claims that nationally and transnationally family and welfare politics have '(...) lent force to demands for resources and rationalizes state control of children and families (Michell,

¹ Name changed to protect her identity

2011, p. 127). It is evident that the family politics in Norway shapes today's concept of motherhood and who is viewed as a 'good enough mother'. Further questions arise: what are the reasonable regulations of motherhood in law and family politics and are they meant to be a normative control, a way to secure the traditional ways of mothering?

The idea of being a mother or what is considered to be a family is socially constructed. Until recently only a biological motherhood was accepted and two heterosexual parents with one or more children were recognised as a family. As time passed, the views of being a mother changed along with the opportunities to become one: '(...) transnational adoptions and surrogacy have enabled millions of older women, often single, and seemingly infertile couples to bear and/ or raise children. While some of these practises are rapidly becoming normalized, others have led to profound ethical dilemmas' (Michell and Thompson in Michell, 2011, p. 136). John Vegar Hugaas' (2011) research is focused on '(...) what constitutes parenthood and which duties and obligations belong to parents qua parent, against the backdrop of modern society and the possibilities of assisted reproduction' (p. 89). He stresses that biotechnology among the liberation of homosexuals' rights and reforming gender roles have transformed our era (Hugaas, 2011, p. 90). Hugaas discusses the definition of parenthood in social, biological and legal aspects. He states that the Norwegian law regulates parenthood because it aims to take the child's best interest into account. The use of a surrogate mother or donated egg is currently banned in Norway but one can be a birthmother, co-mother, step-mother, adoptive mother or a foster mother. According to Norwegian law, it does not matter where the genetic material comes from, as the birth mother is the legal mother to the child. Co-motherhood and fatherhood is determined with reference to motherhood (Hugaas, 2011, p. 102). In this way the normative control plays a big role in family politics in Norway. It clearly states, that a child's birthmother should be the legal mother and claims that this serves the child's best interest.

Discussions about the importance of social parenthood versus biological parenthood are wide spread. In each society the laws which regulate parenthood are dependent on cultural, political, social and economic aspects (NOU 2009:5, 2009a, p. 29). Aslak Syse (2009) discusses the differences between genetic parenthood and social parenthood. He states that the question of who is a child's genetic or biological parent is a medical one and who is the social parent is a psychological one. Consideration of 'the best for the child' plays an

important role when regulating the laws and rights pertaining to parenting. Syse states that it aims to give an answer to who has the right to the genetic material that is a child (NOU 2009:5, 2009a, p. 30). Syse argues further that in the Norwegian policies the biological parenthood is valued over the social one at the cost of the child's best interest. It can be argued that social factors are more important than the genetic material that the child has inherited. It is questionable as to whose rights the biological principle serves. Can it be said that the mother has the right to her child? Morally it is uncertain if anyone has the right to any human being. We do not have the right to own anyone. Having a child is a privilege, not a right. Syse points out another question: does it actually matter how one becomes a parent in the perspective of what is best for the child? Moreover, does it matter how one became a parent and does it have an impact on how well the adult is parenting the child? This, he highlights, as an empirical question is researched very little and only among adoptive parents (NOU 2009:5, 2009a, p. 32).

As the idea of being a mother and what constitutes to be a family are socially constructed, so is the concept of being a 'good enough mother'. It varies in each culture and in each era, for example '[c]hildren whose families were deemed incapable of caring [for] them included those diagnosed with disabilities or 'mental defects' and members of certain racial and ethnic minorities, such as Native Americans and Australian aborigines' (Mitchell and Jacobs in Michell, 2011, p. 128). It might even vary from mother to mother and in each generation within families. The concept is different in every society. Vehusheia Gunhild's (2004) dissertation² is focused on the legal construction of the concept of 'a good mother'. It analyses the Norwegian motherhood by using the concept of equality and the concept of the child's best interests³. She states that construction of motherhood is characterised by conflicts and contradictions, both personally and also through the law. The child's needs, society's demands, the analyses from various professions and the mother's individual desire for fulfillment. Vehusheia asks: Whose perception is dominant (Vehusheia, 2004, p. 1)?

² 'Den juridiske konstruksjon av den gode mor: -en analyse av morsrollen ved bruk av begrepet om likestilling og begrepet om barnets beste'

³ 'In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration' (Article 3 number 1 in Unicef, 1989).

Family politics creates the norms of motherhood in Norway. It regulates who has the right to become a mother and who is viewed as a 'good enough mother' within the society.

Biological motherhood is valued over social motherhood, even though it is arguable that this does not always serve the child's best interest. This paper aims to clarify the subjectivity of the social workers decision making and show how pure objectivity in an evaluation situation is impossible and perhaps unnecessary to achieve. Furthermore, the goal is to evaluate how the social workers' epistemological⁴ standpoint impacts their definition of being a 'good enough mother'. If the requirements to be defined as both a mother and a 'good enough mother' vary over time and between different cultures, is there room for universal truth?

1.1 Background

'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman' claims Simone de Beauvoir, a twentieth-century French existentialist, in her book *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 293). The same way that one is not born, but rather becomes a mother. This point to the socially constructed phenomena of what it is to be a woman and a mother. Beauvoir states that one's social existence is always dependent on how others define the one's existence. In the same fate, how one defines motherhood is dependent on one's society's reference frames of motherhood:

'No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilisation as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an *Other*' (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 293).

The reason why I chose this theme and to research the epistemological standpoint lies in my academic background in Philosophy and Gender Studies. Throughout my studies I have been fascinated by how we gather knowledge and how the different concepts shape the worlds we live in. Feminist Standpoint Theory has always been the one that makes most sense for me. According to it, we cannot have an objective, cultural and gender neutral knowledge because such a neutral knowledge does not exist. Simone de Beauvoir states that 'in the absence of a God there is no such a thing as an objective true value. Humans are creators and givers of meaning, and all values are ultimately human creations, the products of human

⁴ Epistemology is the philosophical theory of knowledge. It is considering 'what counts as knowledge' and 'what it is we can claim to know' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 8).

choices. Things, events, identities, --- none of these have objective meaning or value' (Butterfield, 2010, p. 67).

My own personal struggle of becoming a mother and the insecurity associated with the experience is the reason for my chosen theme of motherhood and the definition of being a 'good enough mother'. Prior to my planned C-section I had read considerable amounts of literature on taking care of children, especially of twins and premature babies. Our twin daughters came into the world eight weeks premature. Yet to my big surprise, I was not prepared for the reality of motherhood with tiny babies who were attached to life support machines at Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The challenges that arose from breastfeeding to exhaustion made me doubt my abilities to be a mother. I felt like a failure. Not only had I failed to be a perfect mother, I was sure that my children would turn out to be abnormal because of it. At that moment for me, there did not exist a middle ground. One was either a perfect and iconic Mother of God or a complete failure. I asked for help from the maternity clinic for my multiple problems and told the nurse my concerns about being a good mother. She told me that mothers should not aim for perfection but to realise that being 'good enough' is fine. Of course, I was not alone with my insecurities. Many first time mothers feel unconfident and seek help from parenting books: '[k]nowing that I was approaching motherhood with very few practical skills and even less actual experience, I did what I knew best. I read everything' (Henry, 2010, p. 18). Although, most mothers probably felt exactly as I did, that no book can give you a bullet proof manual on how to parent your children. That led me to wonder, if one cannot find answers from books on how to mother 'the right way', what does the concept of being a 'good enough mother' hold? Is the definition so narrow that it excludes certain mothers or so wide that it allows questionable ways of mothering?

Nordic women are considered to be the most equal with men in the world. Vehusheia discusses in her dissertation how gender is seen to affect childcare. She asks: is the framework for what we define as 'an egalitarian woman' so narrow that large groups of women do not fit within it, even if they actually consider themselves as equal to men? Are the demands that we make for mothers reasonable, or are they actually discriminating them? Indeed, Vehusheia states that the way we define equality in a care situation affects the child, the adults and the community around them (Vehusheia, 2004, p. 6). Vehusheia further claims that certain concepts of equality and the child's best interests are often

misinterpreted or misused to promote other interests, and that they too often are assumed to be identical, which is not always the case (ibid).

Our family is multinational, where I am from Finland, my husband is from the UK and our daughters have been born in Norway where we are living. The views of what is acceptable parenting are quite different in the UK than those in the Nordic countries. Indeed, one can say that the standard of motherhood is very high in Norway, where mothers are expected to be nurturing, calm and not to use physical punishment towards children. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom smacking children is not unusual or considered a cruel punishment by many⁵. Smacking a child is not illegal for parents in the United Kingdom as long as it constitutes 'reasonable' punishment. 'Unreasonable' punishment is defined as a smack that leaves a mark on the child, or the use of an implement to hit the child (CPS, 2014; NSPCC, 2012). My husband and I strongly oppose the use of physical punishment towards children, whereas some of his relatives view smacking as necessary to teach the children the difference between right and wrong. I can imagine how many mothers that come from different culture are struggling to understand or failing to live up to the Norwegian standards of mothering. It can be stated that today's Norwegian society is multicultural, where about 483 200 inhabitants are of foreign origin from total 5 109 000 (Statistics Norway, 2014). Multiculturalism, states Purnima Sundar and Mylan Ly, is 'a philosophy that acknowledges and values diversity in society and describes the various tangible (that is, economic) and intangible (for example social) benefits that result from different ethnic, cultural racial and religious groups living together' (Swigonski in Gray & Webb, 2012, p. 248).

Natalia Moen (2009) highlights in her dissertation⁶ the reality of foreign women and mothers in Norwegian society. She differentiates the cultures to the patriarchal and the equalitarian, where the patriarchal is seen as the traditional and the equalitarian as the modern. Moen generalises the views but at the same time reminds us that these concepts are different in each culture and have different reference frames (Moen, 2009, p. 47). Her informants state that in Russia the housewife is the ideal and mothers only work if it is necessary. This ideal

⁵ The NSPCC's 2011 research into child abuse and neglect in the UK found that 41.6% of the parents or guardians included in the survey had physically punished or smacked the child or young person in the past year. This may be an underestimate (Radford et al., 2011).

⁶ 'Hjemme blant fremmede og fremmede hjemme: intervjuer med russiske kvinner i Norge i lys av diskursteoretisk perspektiv'

was common in the 1950's in Norway (Gullestad in Moen, 2009). The problem for the housewife ideal is that the women are dependent economically on their husbands. In Norway equality between genders is one of the main political goals. Gender equality is seen as a positive Norwegian value that Russian women need to adopt in their relationships. However, Moen states that her study subjects are viewing the Norwegian gender roles in the light of the Russian 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'hegemonic femininity' (Moen, 2009, p. 51). According to them, Norwegian husbands are 'less-masculine' and Norwegian wives 'less-feminine' (ibid). Furthermore, one of Moen's informants, Maria, claims that in Russia there is two kind of women: mothers and women who work (Moen, 2009, p. 54). In today's Norwegian society, mothers use more time at paid work than they did in the 1970's. The development in preschool care and positive attitude towards small children's out of home care has helped mothers to work. Also family politics have had an impact by advocating the equality between genders and the working mother is nowadays seen a positive phenomenon rather than a negative one (Statistics Norway, 2013b).

In the UK lone mothers that live on benefit are portrayed as bad mothers: '(...) the number of single mothers grows ever higher. So, what has gone wrong? Quite simply, when it comes to having children, Knowsley⁷ exists in a moral vacuum. Tragically, it doesn't even occur to (...) [some] women (...) that what they are doing might be wrong' (Clarke in Gillies, 2007, p. 1). Gillies (2007) claims, that lone mothers in the UK '(...) are portrayed as irresponsible, immature, immoral and a potential threat to the security and stability of society as a whole' (p. 1). However, she reminds us that '[w]hile this type of mother is accused of bad parenting, it is her status as poor and marginalised that sees her located at the centre of society's ills' (ibid). Furthermore, whereas preschool childcare is heavily substituted by the government in Norway to secure the possibility for lone mothers to continue to work, prevent poverty among them and increase equality among citizens, the UK has chosen not to. Furthermore, '[i]t was only from 1970s onwards that the Scandinavian countries --- in tandem with the surge in female employment --- came to prioritize family services. In North America and the UK, governments chose instead, to encourage the market alternative, in part via tax deductions' (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 80). This leads to the growing problem, where many

⁷ Knowsley Village is in England, Merseyside and '(...) has the highest proportion of children born outside of marriage in Britain' (Platell, 2010).

mothers that are uneducated and/ or from lower social classes choose rather to live on benefits and look after their own children than work, as they cannot afford a high standard out of home childcare:

‘Failure to reconcile motherhood and careers will, for citizens, provoke a trade-off between having children, on one hand, and pursuing employment, autonomy and increasing household income, on the other hand. At the societal level this translates into one of two sub-optimal scenarios: a childless ‘low fertility equilibrium’ or a ‘low income --- low employment equilibrium’ (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 81).

It is not unusual in the UK that mothers from lower social classes are uneducated and unemployed, which are the main issues in dealing with child poverty. This is also the biggest group in the UK who are having children, whereas in Nordic countries women with University degrees have the highest rate of childbirth (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 83).

Indeed,

‘[c]areers are not inevitably incompatible with motherhood, as the Nordic countries show. In any case, policy that seeks to boost fertility by including women to withdraw from the labour market would be massively counter productive (...) [P]overty is hugely problematic for child outcomes, while mothers’ employment is not. And considering that child poverty is reduced sharply when mothers work, maternal employment must be considered a plus (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 83).

Equality between citizens is one of the main goals in Norwegian family politics and providing government substituted high standard pre-school care has enabled mothers to work. This has led to high employment rate among mothers and thus reduced child poverty in Norway. According to Feminist Standpoint Theory, concepts are socially constructed and objectivity is an illusion. Our concepts are dependent on our standpoint and hence, value neutral knowledge does not exist. The aim of this study is to explore ideas behind the concept of being a ‘good enough mother’ within Norwegian society. The goal is to generate a discussion around the perceived requirement for objectivity in social work.

1.2 Research Focus and Overall Aim

The concept of being a ‘good enough mother’ within Norwegian society needs clarification. This research focuses on an investigation of how social workers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and in the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger measure what is required to be a ‘good enough mother’. It aims to find out whether the social workers’ own personal and

professional history affect in their judgement of who is a 'good enough mother' and whether social workers believe that their judgement is objective or subjective.

Øyvind Kvello has written several books for social worker students and professionals who will work or are working in the Child Welfare Service in Norway. He states that most of the parents take good care of their children and the majority of those who have problems with taking care of their children can become good enough parents with help (Kvello, 2010, p. 11). Every profession that has the need to critically evaluate what constitutes being a good (enough) mother has its standpoint and to some extent might claim that such a universal concept exists. For many it is not merely just '(...) matters of personal preference or individual parenting style' (Warner in Lintott, 2010, p. x). If an (iconic) universal concept of what is a 'good enough mother' exists, it would possibly reveal if it is excluding certain mothers --- mothers with a history of been neglected themselves for example. According to Milner, children who have experienced physical maltreatment have two to three times higher risk to maltreat their children than those ones who have not been maltreated physically themselves (Kvello, 2010, p. 43). Are the mothers that do not fit into the category of being 'good enough' the ones that are not 'us'? Would the social worker justify her decision in the way that fits into her own model of mothering as a 'bad mother'? Moreover, '[b]y defining for us the kinds of mothers we're not, they make it easier for us to stomach what we are' (Waldman in Lintott, 2010, pp. xi-xii).

The overall aim of this research is to discuss the Norwegian model of mothering and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' within the society. In order to achieve these aims it was necessary to identify the ideas that the definition of being a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society lies on and to explore social workers' opinions and practises that are relevant for making judgements of service users' abilities of mothering. Furthermore, it was necessary to critically evaluate the models and frameworks that were available for social workers when making such a judgement. The confusion between objective professional knowledge and perceived subjective personal knowledge needs clarification. Furthermore, it urges discussions about the concept of being a 'good enough mother' in the context of Feminist Standpoint Theory and asses if such a Universal view of being a 'good enough mother' exists.

Specifically, within the context of being a 'good enough mother' in Norwegian society, the research objectives of this study are to:

1. *Identify* the ideas behind the concept of what it means to be a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society.
2. *Evaluate* critically the models and frameworks relevant to supporting the social workers' judgements of who is a 'good enough mother'.
3. *Explore* social workers' views and practices related to making such judgements.
4. *Discuss* the concept of a being 'good enough mother' within the references of Feminist Standpoint Theory.
5. *Assess* critically if a Universal view of what constitutes being a 'good enough mother' exists.

The first two objectives are focused on the background information from literature research that leads to the empirical research and aims to clarify the ideas and concepts available for social workers within Norwegian Society. Objectives three, four and five are mainly focused on the empirical research and the interpretations of the outcome of it. It is necessary to point out that all five research objectives are linked to each other and should not be treated in a separated matter.

The next chapter outlines Feminist Standpoint Theory and discusses its relevance to ethics and power.

2 Feminist Standpoint Theory

This dissertation aims to clarify the concept of being a ‘good enough mother’ within Norwegian society and assesses if a universal view of being a ‘good enough mother’ exists. In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework which underpins this dissertation. I will detail the link between theory and the empirical research carried out for this dissertation in Chapter 5. Hence, this chapter gives an overview of the theory chosen.

First I will outline the basic tenets of the Feminist Standpoint Theory. I will then briefly present the key concepts of empirical feminism and juxtapose these with those of standpoint feminism in order to show why standpoint feminism is the theoretical framework best suited to support the arguments in this dissertation. In order to provide a robust and comprehensive assessment of standpoint feminism's suitability, I will also discuss the critique of this theory. In the end of this chapter I will briefly review concepts of power, ethics and Feminist Standpoint Theory in relation to this study.

2.1 The framework of Feminist Standpoint theory

Feminist Standpoint Theory is based on ‘the Marxist standpoint of the proletariat’ which concerns itself with class differences (Harding in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p. 64). Marxist feminism sees ‘class (...) as the ultimate determination of oppression’ where women are seen as the less valued, the second class (quote Orm in Gray & Webb, 2012, p. 88). Whereas Marxist feminism focuses on women as second class citizens, standpoint feminism highlights the differences among women in all classes, ethnic and racial groups. Furthermore, Feminist Standpoint Theory was a response to the critique of feminism being written by white middle-class academics who were dismissing the voices of oppressed groups among women while hailing the universal sisterhood. Black feminists for example claimed that white feminists had forgotten the importance of race⁸ in societal power struggles, for example:

‘Historically, in the United States, the policies and procedures of the U.S. legal system, labor markets, schools, the housing industry, banking, insurance, the news media, and other social

⁸ Race is associated with biology (the heritage with one is born) and ethnicity is associated with culture (one’s learned behaviours from the culture). Race is generally used in Feminist studies to refer inequalities between people that have for example different visible physical features (skin colour for example) because of their biological heritage.

institutions as interdependent entities have worked to disadvantage African-American women' (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 277).

Feminist Standpoint Theory supports the view of the qualitative researcher, where the 'view from nowhere' is not possible. Every one of us has an epistemological standpoint, from where we draw our knowledge of the world that surrounds us. 'Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is driven by two main questions: 'What is knowledge?' and 'What can we know?' If we think we can know something, as nearly everyone does, then a third main question arises: 'How do we know what we do know?'" (Grego in Gray & Webb, 2012, p. 241). Feminist Standpoint Theory stresses that knowledge is socially constructed, where cultural and racial aspects are visible and important. Furthermore, it aims to expose the marginalised people's knowledge of their own life and claims they have an important view of the power structures in their own society:

'Standpoint theory'⁹ builds on the assertion that the less powerful members of society experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression (...) to survive they must have knowledge, awareness and sensitivity of both the dominant group's view of society and their own --- the potential for 'double vision' or consciousness and thus the potential for a more complete view of social reality' (Swigonski in Gray & Webb, 2012, p. 248).

Feminist Standpoint Theory challenges the dominating view of knowing, and that the evidence that is relevant to research has to be collected from a distant manner.

Furthermore, it claims that research and the researcher cannot be value neutral: '[t]he purportedly culturally-neutral conceptual frameworks of research disciplines, including standards for objectivity and good method, [are] not in fact culturally neutral' (Harding in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p. 66). The researcher's values and reasons behind the decision to execute a particular study will always influence it to a certain extent, even though they may not be visible.

2.2 Standpoint Feminism and Empirical Feminism

Today standpoint feminism and empirical feminism¹⁰ have a great deal in common. The two approaches disagree about:

- 1) the kind of diversity within scientific communities that is epistemically beneficial and
- 2) the role that ethical and political values can play (Intemann, 2010, p. 778).

⁹ Standpoint Theory and Feminist Standpoint Theory are the same approach.

¹⁰ Feminist Empiricism states that '(...) scientific knowledge is contextual and socially situated (Longino 1990; Nelson 1990; Anderson 1995).

Some researchers have suggested that empirical feminism is '(...) a view of how scientific claims are justified, [and] standpoint feminism is best interpreted as a methodological claim about how to study scientific phenomena (particularly in social sciences) that is compatible with feminist empiricism' (Campbell 1994; Crasnow 2006 in Intemann, 2010, p. 779).

Standpoint feminism's two main theses are:

1. The Situated-Knowledge Thesis: Social location systematically influences our experiences, shaping and limiting what we know, such that knowledge is achieved from a particular standpoint.
2. The Thesis of Epistemic Advantage: Some standpoints, specifically the standpoints of marginalized or oppressed groups, are epistemically advantaged (at least in some contexts) (Wylie in Intemann, 2010, p. 783).

2.2.1 Critique

Critique of Standpoint Feminism states, that the Situated-Knowledge reinforces gender stereotypes by claiming that women have more diverse ways of knowing than men. Also that it falsely assumes that '(...) all women or oppressed groups have some sort of universal shared experiences or interests in virtue of being oppressed' (Bar On 1993; Hekman 1997; Haack 1998 in Intemann, 2010, p. 783). Many standpoint feminists have pointed out that this is not what the theses claim. They aim to highlight that the reality and concepts are socially constructed. That every mother has individual concepts of motherhood and what constitutes being a good enough mother. Her epistemological standpoint --- where she is located historically, geographically, ethnically and racially have shaped her throughout her life forming the concepts of what it is to be a mother in her society. We learn from our surrounding world how to mother --- what is the acceptable way in our family and society that surrounds us. The situated-knowledge thesis does not claim that women 'know' differently from men, but that each one of us gets our knowledge from a certain epistemological standpoint. Also the thesis does not say that all women are sharing the universal sisterhood of being oppressed. Actually, quite the opposite. It is highlighting that all women have an individual standpoint that shapes their world and concepts. Moreover, that they do *not* share the same interest or experience in virtue of being oppressed.

The critique to the epistemic advantage thesis is that according to it '(...) women always have an automatic epistemic privilege in virtue of being oppressed' (Hekman; Haack; Pinnic et al.

in Intemann, 2010, p. 783). Furthermore, '(...) some have interpreted standpoint feminists as claiming that membership in an oppressed group is sufficient for having a less distorted view of the world and that this epistemic advantage would be present in any epistemological context' (Intemann, 2010, p. 783). However, the claims that women automatically have an epistemic privilege in virtue of being oppressed are questionable. Such a 'privilege' does not follow any group automatically:

'(...) individuals are not unidimensional, so it might prove confusing to determine which dimensions are at play in certain situations (Friedman 1995). A woman may be privileged in some situations and marginalized in others; the relationship between subjectivity and position is never straightforward' (Mathison, 1997, p. 158).

The second claim cannot be true as there is evidence that sometimes '(...) members of oppressed groups have a less accurate view of the world either because they have internalized their own oppression or have lacked the educational resources useful for achieving certain kinds of knowledge' (Intemann, 2010, p. 784). Also it is difficult to think of how '(...) oppressed groups would have an epistemic advantage in every epistemological context, as there are some areas of knowledge (for example, theoretical physics) where the experiences one has in virtue of one's social position appear to be irrelevant to the content of the theories or evidence at stake' (Intemann, 2010, p. 784).

Standpoint theory does not merely state that 'people who have different experiences will know about different things' (Kukla; Rolin in Intemann, 2010, p. 784). Wylie Alison (2003) has '(...) acknowledged that for standpoint theory to be viable it must not presuppose an essentialist definition of the social categories by which standpoints are characterized, and it must not maintain that standpoints of the oppressed are automatically epistemically advantaged' (Intemann, 2010, p. 784).

2.3 Power, ethics & Standpoint Theory

The ethical problem lies in the power that is used to judge who is a good enough mother. Ethics can be divided in two main categories, '(...) ethics as synonymous with moral philosophy and ethics as moral norms or standards' (Banks, 2006, p. 4). I will use ethics as in the latter sense, where I consider the moral norms of social workers at the Crisis Centre and the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and the impact these have when judging motherhood. Moreover, ethics in this sense can be seen as a 'code of ethics', where 'a set of

principles, standards, rules of conduct or sometimes character traits require for ethical practice' (Banks, 2006, pp. 5, 6).

The social workers' epistemological standpoints are based among their geographic and historical location and on their class, race and ethnicity. Class, race and ethnicity are also important markers in society's power structure. They play a remarkable role when discussing the power imbalance between social workers and service users at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. This paper is focused on how the race, ethnicity, economic and social class impacts to power misbalance between social workers and service users. I use 'class' in this paper not only referring to the economic and the social class, but also referring to the class of mothers who are failing to be good enough as separated from the class of ideal mothers. I will explain how the service users can be seen to belong to the marginalised class of 'failed mothers' as 'Others' and the 'ideal mothers' in the class of 'Us'. I will discuss this in depth in Chapter 5.

A further focus of this study is to consider the objectivity and subjectivity of social workers in an evaluation process considering mothers' abilities to take care of their children. What is countable as relevant knowledge of motherhood according to these social workers? Is their subjectivity reinforced as a relevant source of knowledge or muted as irrelevant and untrustworthy?

In the following chapter I will give an account of the methods and framework of the data analysis from the empirical research performed for this study.

3 Methods & Analyse

There are many ways one can execute qualitative research. The outputs of the study are the results of the choices that one has made throughout the project. This chapter will review my chosen methods, which are the techniques and procedures I have used to collect and analyse my data. Methodology instead '(...) takes account of the social context, philosophical assumptions, ethical principles and political issues associated with doing social research' (Neuman in D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, pp. 61-62).

I will guide the reader through my process of empirical research. First I will clarify my research strategy. After that I will explain the preparation process for data collection and discuss the reasons behind the methods chosen. I will then walk the reader through the interview process and describe the framework for my data analysis. In the end of this chapter I will discuss the possible limitations and problems associated with my research project, including validity and reliability of my methods as well as analysing process and the ethical aspects of this research.

3.1 Research Strategy

3.1.1 Qualitative research

I chose to use qualitative research methods which support my theoretical perspective that considers the epistemological aspect of knowing and what counts as knowledge. The question of whether a student is a qualitative or a quantitative researcher is important. According to D'Cruz and Jones, one cannot be both: 'you are either a quantitative or qualitative researcher. You cannot use both approaches because the assumptions about reality and ways of knowing (as methods) differ so significantly' (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 61). The main reason for this lies in the fact that the quantitative researcher's position in the study concerning the subject is distant, whereas the qualitative researcher's relationship with the subject of the study is close. Moreover, if you are also a positivist (or a realist) the counter argument states, that 'the reality is objective and independent of the observer and so can be measured and predicted' (Orlowski and Baroudi in Biggam, 2008, p. 137). Considering whether the positivist objective reality exists independently, we face the

ontological¹¹ question of existence. The relativist rejects the positivist claim and states that '[o]ur understandings and experiences are relative to our specific cultural and social frames of reference, being open to a range of interpretations' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 9). The quantitative (realist) researcher claims that objectivity, achieved through separation from the subject is essential to achieve academically valid results. However, the qualitative feminist researcher rejects this and claims instead that subjectivity of the researcher and the researched is unavoidable. To get the real reasons behind the quantitative data, the researcher needs to take into account both her own and the subjects' personal information and feelings. Stepping back and keeping a distance means that important parts of the story are missing: 'The greater the distance between direct experience and its interpretation, then the more likely resulting knowledge is to be inaccurate, unreliable and distorted' (Beresford, 2003, p. 22). We are subjective beings with our subjective knowledge and history. That is our epistemological standpoint and the real data that must also be academically valid.

The method that a researcher chooses to collect her data depends on the type of information she is gathering. If my aim was to find generalizable information or material that can be replicated, I would probably choose quantitative methods (Blaikie, 2000, pp. 247-253). As my aim was to find answers for *how* the social workers 'know' what it is to be a 'good enough mother' and *what* do they know about it within the Norwegian society, qualitative methods were more appropriate. Furthermore, qualitative methods '(...) include an exploration of values, processes, experiences, language and meaning, among other things. There is focus on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) (...)' (Denzin and Lincoln in D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 63). The interview method was chosen because my goal was to understand the participants' interpretations of the concept of being a 'good enough mother' within their domain: 'Loosely structured interviews (...) can take us into the meanings through which people construct their personal and interpersonal worlds(...)' (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 90).

3.1.2 *Individual semi-structured interviews*

The epistemological questions in this study are:

¹¹ 'The claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality' (Blaikie, 1993).

- (i) What do the social workers know about 'good enough motherhood' in Norwegian society
- (ii) How do they know what they do know about 'good enough motherhood' in Norwegian society

The answers to these questions can be that the concepts around 'good enough motherhood' are either universal or that they are socially constructed. Constructivism is a philosophical paradigm that is based on a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. A relativist ontological view is that the existence, reality or the nature of being is relative to the subject. For a relativist, the truth about the world is socially constructed. In constructivism, the true sense of knowledge (epistemology) is internally constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Furthermore, social constructivism holds that the world or some phenomena in the world, are products of collective reality (Nortvedt & Grimen, 2004, p. 141). We do not live in a world that is culturally neutral. Our concepts and values are not based on universal 'truth'. Empirical research with an interview method was best suited to investigate the social workers' concepts and perspectives. My aim was to gain an insight into their world, how they describe and interpret it. The objectives of the interviews were to find out how the social workers define the concept of being a 'good enough mother' and what is behind their evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children.

The most common way of thinking of interviews are that there is an interviewer and an interviewee. The former asks the questions, the latter answers them and the relationship between them is neutral. However, I am rejecting the objective neutrality of the quantitative researcher and claim that instead of neutrality, the aim is an interaction between the two. For me '(...) interviews are interactive processes between researcher and informant(s) where the researcher and participant are positioned within particular ways of knowing' (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 112). In order to maintain the quality of the research it was important to ensure that those interviewed were not impacted by my views and were free to express their own. As flexibility is one of the key aspects in qualitative interview methods, I chose to use a semi-structured interview technique:

'(...) 'semi-structured' interviews are more formal, have a clear start and finish time (...) However, while there is some structure, the interaction relies on a non-directive, conversational style because the topics covered are a guide and not a set of questions asked

in exactly the same way for every participant' (Patton, Payne and Payne in D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 113).

The interview guide with probing questions allowed me to be flexible with the interview questions but at the same time, it gave me a structure to the interviews and allowed me to focus on the research objectives. Interview guide '(...) outlines the main topics the researcher would like to cover, but is flexible regarding the phrasing of questions and the order in which they are asked, and allows the participant to lead the interaction in unanticipated directions' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 35).

In the beginning, I planned to use questionnaires, group interviews and individual interviews. However, after discussions with my dissertation supervisor and after considering all the options together and separately I decided to only perform the individual interviews. One of the main reasons was because of time constraints, but also because my aim was to have a personal approach. Individual interviews allowed me to investigate the phenomenon of motherhood more personally for each participant.

3.2 Preparation work for the Interviews

3.2.1 Preconception

It is important to be aware of one's own preconception of the qualitative study topic being researched. Moreover, what is my standpoint? What do I *know* about the concept of being a 'good enough mother'? As stated earlier, I am a Finnish mother with twin daughters. I have knowledge of 'motherhood' and 'being a mother'. I have worked with social workers but technically I am not a *sosionom*. I am both, an insider and an outsider in this group: '[t]hrough an 'insider-outsider continuum' (Boulton, 2000: 89-91), knowledge may shift between participants, and the outsider has to learn and negotiate with insiders. Sometimes the researcher may be insider or outsider, and sometime both insider and outsider at different times in the research process' (Morgenshtern and Novotna in D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 105). I do not have the power to judge mothers' abilities to take care of their children. So, what do I know about the concept? I know that it varies in every culture, from mother to mother and in each era. I recognise the diversity of motherhood among other mothers that I know. Being a foreign mother separates me from the informants. My references towards good motherhood are based on my childhood in Finland and what I have learned from Finnish culture, my family and from my adult life in the UK and in Norway. My own

motherhood has also shaped the meaning of what it takes to be a good mother. My relationship with my mother has not always been an easy one. Nevertheless, I love and respect her the way she is. However, my aim was not to seek support for my own views of what constitutes being a good mother but to gain more information and insight for the views of professionals within Norwegian Society.

3.2.2 Interview guide

One of the most important parts of the preparation for the four interviews with the social workers at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and the Crisis Centre in Stavanger was to create the interview guide¹². The structure was designed to help me with the analysing process. Prior to writing the Interview guide, I identified some ideas behind the concept of what it means to be a 'good enough' mother in Norwegian society during my literature research. I focused on the concepts that had been researched and what were they focused on. The literature research and the three pilot interviews with social workers from Norway and from Finland helped me to critically evaluate the models and frameworks relevant to supporting the social workers' judgements of who is a 'good enough mother'. I wanted to ask questions related to Feminist Standpoint Theory and at the same time I aimed to gather data material that would be suitable for thematic analysis.

Discussions with family members and other mothers also helped me with the thematic formulation of the interviews and to gain knowledge around the topic. We talked about the possibility of a universal concept of being a 'good enough mother', the challenges that today's mothers have and how the concept has changed in our life time. I thought about the differences in mothering between me, my mother, my mother-in-law, sisters and sister-in-laws. What were the instances when we agreed and when we disagreed? What practices in their mothering were in conflict with my mothering?

Within the questions I used two pictures where the first one was a distant shot of a mother with a naked baby. The second picture was a close up, a zoomed in picture of the first one giving more detail of the surroundings and facial expressions (see Picture One and Picture Two at 4.1.1). The reason behind using this visual method was to explore how the social workers may evaluate situations from a distance versus when they are in the evaluation

¹² See Appendix One for Interview Guide

situation themselves. Moreover, are they using their subjectivity as a tool while evaluating certain situations, maintaining objectivity and taking a distant approach, or combination of these two approaches? I also asked the participants to imagine a situation where they have been in an evaluating position with a service user and explain the feelings that were provoked. The reason behind this exercise was to gain an understanding of the emotional experience of the participants in the evaluation process and how they justified their decision to themselves.

Since this was my first experience of performing interviews in this manner, I chose to have all the interview questions written down in proper sentence form, instead of having a list of themes. This ensured that I would not ask leading questions and impact the participants' answers and opinions. Which is often a danger when an interviewer uses a list of topics and the interview style is too conversational (Willig in King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 38). I knew that having all the questions written in proper sentence form, could negatively affect my connection with the participants and the flexibility of the interview. Perhaps informants would not bring up interesting matters: '[i]f you have a comprehensive interview guide, there will be a danger that you do not allow sufficient opportunity for the participants to bring up perspectives that may be unanticipated but actually of real interest to your research.' However, '[i]f you go for a minimalistic interview guide, you may fail to address important issues, should the participant lead you into lengthy digressions from your research focus' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 36). I aimed for the middle ground, and had all the questions written down to be able to cover all the themes that were important to my research, but kept the questions open to interpretation and easy to skip the questions that were already covered by earlier responses. I also modified the questions during the interview to be more suitable for each participant and to let the discussion flow. I had probing questions for each main question in case I did not get enough material for each theme, or to deepen the answer if needed.

3.2.3 Recruiting Participants

I started recruiting participants after I had narrowed the data collection methods to individual semi-structured interviews. According to D'Cruz and Jones,

'[o]ne of the key decisions in research design is: 'from who (or what) to collect data?' Sampling is relevant to all varieties of research design, though arguably the more

participatory they are the less appropriate the term itself becomes' (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 94).

Non-probability sampling is a technique that does not aim to generalise the research outcomes and seeks informants that have "quotas' of certain characteristics' or 'who have an identified area of expertise' for example (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, pp. 94-95). Furthermore in '(...) qualitative descriptive studies, we would be concerned with generating new ideas and understandings. The basis of sampling therefore becomes 'theoretical' rather than 'statistical'" (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004, p. 95). My recruiting method was a mixture of convenience/ availability and quota sampling. The quota or the common character requirement was that all of the participants needed to be social workers and had experiences of evaluating mothers' caring abilities at their work. It was convenient for me to seek informants among my colleagues at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger as I knew the majority of the employees. With the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger it was not that easy to gain connections. After several phone calls to their central board and other numbers available on their web page I managed to find a contact person at the Child Welfare Service. From this point the recruitment process with the Crisis Centre and the Child Welfare Service was similar. I sent an e-mail to my contacts at the institutions, where I explained the study that I was performing. When I had all the informants, I sent an information letter¹³ to all of them concerning the study. It was important that they knew in advance what the research was about and that the interviews were going to be filmed. After I received the green light to go further with my research from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)¹⁴ it was time to start the interview process.

3.3 Interview process

All interviews were executed between 3rd and 5th December 2014. I was flexible with the locations and let the participants to choose the places for their interviews, as long as they were quiet areas and no one could distract us. They were all held in the offices of the participants, apart from one that was implemented at the participant's home. In the beginning of each interview I introduced myself and explained the aim of the research. Prior to each interview all the informants read through an informant letter and received a

¹³ See Appendix Two for Informant Letter

¹⁴ See Appendix Three for NSD notification

participation consent form¹⁵ to sign. They were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the process and that all the recorded material would be destroyed after the study. I filmed all the interviews, to record the social workers' expressions to help me to better understand the verbal and non-verbal communications. As a non-native Norwegian researcher student who implemented the interviews in Norwegian, this was an important aspect of my research. It helped me to analyse the gathered material more deeply by viewing the interview recordings several times. All participants were assured that no one other than myself were able to see the recorded material.

Although all of the informants had received the information letter about the study in advance, I learned that none of them had actually realised that I was going to film the interviews. All of the participants gave their consent but some of them were very nervous in the beginning and concerned about the outcome. However, all of the social workers seemed to relax and quickly forgot about the recording camera. I took notes in case the recording would fail, which did happen with the first interview. My written notes were understandable and covered the topics well. Because of the failed audio during the first interview, I performed the transcript from the notes right in the end of the interview day, when the event was still fresh in my mind. My notes enabled me to write a throughout transcription, although it would have been better to get all of the interviews recorded well enough.

The interviews were approximately one hour long and were held in Norwegian. I chose to use the social workers' native language, as it was more comfortable for them and I do speak and understand Norwegian. If there were phrases that I did not understand, I asked for clarification. In my opinion, because the participants were able to speak their own language, the material was empirically richer, with them using their own expressions and dialects.

I tried to make the interviews as relaxed as possible, and encourage the informants to answer to the questions as extensively as they wanted. However, most of them were worried that they were not giving 'the right answers' or felt 'tested'. It might be because I was inexperienced or maybe the interview questions were too formatted and theoretical instead of practical to answer from the social workers' point of view. However, I felt that all of the informants gave a good insight to their world and felt free to talk about the issues that

¹⁵ See Appendix Four for Participation Consent Form

concerned them. The informants gave very personal data and spoke openly about their life experience and professional challenges.

3.4 Framework for data analysis

When the interviews were completed, I started the analysing process and wrote the full verbatim transcription of all of the interviews in Norwegian. To analyse the transcripts, I chose to use thematic analysis: '[t]hematic analysis is concerned with saying something about the group of participants as a whole. This means looking for patterns of themes across the full data set, highlighting what interviewees have in common as well as how they differ' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 150). Themes on the other hand are '(...) recurrent and distinctive features of participants' account, characterising particular perceptions and/ or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 150). I decided not to translate the transcripts in English, but rather work with the text and interpret it in English instead. Working parallel with two languages was not difficult or time consuming, because I am used to shifting between languages in my everyday life, because my family is multilingual. After reading the text of each of the interviews several times, I started to highlight the interesting part of the text and made notes in English. I coded the notes from the text to descriptive codes: '[t]he emphasis is on trying to describe what is of interest in your participant's accounts, rather than seeking to interpret its meaning' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 152). I then clustered the descriptive codes into interpretative codes, that are meant to '(...) define codes that go beyond describing relevant features of participants' accounts and focus more on your interpretation of their meaning' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 154). Then I clustered the interpretative codes into main themes. How to define themes is not a simple task. Defining them involves '(...) making choices about what to include, what to discard and how to interpret participants words' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 149). I ended this process by placing the defined themes in tables, which will help me in the writing process of the analysing chapter.

3.5 Limitations, potential problems and ethics of the research

There are certain limitations and issues when using a small population in a study, especially when interviewing colleagues from a former workplace. I am facing the question of how representative the findings are in the larger scale. However, this research is aimed at gaining

an understanding of the definition of being a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society and does not aim to represent the majority of the voices of social workers. Neither does the theoretical perspective of the study support the need for generalisation. Indeed, the aim of the study was to highlight the subjectivity of the definition of a 'good enough mother' among social workers in question. Furthermore, interpretivism in qualitative approaches is focused '(...) around how the social world is experienced and understood' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 11). It can be argued that using colleagues in one's research cannot deliver objectivity or neutrality in an environment where one is working, or has worked. However neither objectivity, or neutrality was a goal in my study, I was rather aware that I needed to identify what I was taking for granted as 'ordinary, routines, every day things' and treat such data critically (Boulton, 2000, pp. 90-91). The questions were thoroughly tested in my pilot research to avoid bias and focused on the individual experiences of social workers.

As I am not a native Norwegian speaker, it can be argued that my understanding of the language may have impacted either the interviews themselves, or the analysing process. The pilot interviews were all held in Norwegian, apart from one, and this helped me to gain confidence with the interviews. I have lived in Norway for seven years and worked in Norwegian. I did struggle with some of the transcriptions, but this was mainly due to the dialect rather than my lack of language skills. However, it is unavoidable that when one works with two languages, something is always lost in translation. Specific phrases cannot be translated without losing their original complete meaning. I did try, however, to get through the core meaning.

I am certain that because of all of this I have learned more Norwegian and gained an understanding of various dialects as well. If I was uncertain of some phrase or expression, I asked the interviewee to clarify it. I hope this adds robustness and depth to the analysing process and outweighs the challenges associated with language. The reason behind the decision to write the dissertation in English was that I have studied for my Bachelor's degree at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Since it takes time to learn academic language well, and I wanted to hand in a good quality paper, I asked to write the dissertation in English and was granted the permission.

3.5.1 *Validity and reliability*

The validity of research '(...) relates to how you gather and analyse your empirical data, i.e. the strategies and techniques that you use (...) (Biggam, 2008, p. 145). It is important that the strategies and techniques are tested and accepted in the research community. They also need to be appropriate to the research in question and implemented properly. The qualitative empirical research with individual semi-structured interviews was well suited to my aims to explore the social workers' views around the definition of being a 'good enough mother. These methods are well known, used and accepted in social research communities. The thematic analysing technique fitted well with the data collected from the interviews, as it considered the content of what the participants said. The analysing process was aimed to understand '(...) the participants' lived experience from their own position --- to step inside their shoes, as it were' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 142).

In relation to the reliability of my work, I have documented all the steps of my research. The whole Methods and Analysing chapter can be seen as a way to show the reliability of the study. The interview guide can be found in the appendix. I have also included the pictures that were used during the interviews (see 4.5.1. and 4.5.2). I have given the details of the interview site and the time of the interviews (3.2.4. Interview Process) and information of the research population (3.2.3 Recruiting Participants) earlier in this chapter. I have explained in details the decisions that I have made throughout of the process, what I have thought and what I have done. However, it is evident that the translated parts of the interview material are not untouched. As stated earlier, it is unavoidable that something will be lost or changed in the translation process. I focused on trying to keep the text as close to the original transcription text as possible.

My inexperience of performing research can also be argued to cause a lack of reliability. I have done my best to achieve the standards of good research by attending classes teaching the research methods and being in close contact with my experienced researcher dissertation supervisor.

Reflexivity is an important part of the research process when aiming for accountability. It encourages the researcher to be critical for her pre-knowledge and how she is performing her study. Moreover, epistemological '[r]eflexivity in qualitative researcher specifically

invites us to look 'inwards' and 'outwards', exploring the intersecting relationships between existing knowledge, our experience, research roles and the world around us' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 125). Reflexivity demands us to be open to other people's experiences, different ways of knowing, to the other cultures, interpretations and concepts.

Epistemological reflexivity involves revealing and considering the impact of '(...) how theoretical assumptions about the world can impact on the research' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 128). Other type of reflexivity that is perhaps more familiar in social research is personal reflexivity¹⁶: '(...) [it] involves giving consideration to the ways in which our beliefs, interest and experiences might have impacted upon the research' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 128). As stated earlier, I did know some of the participants from my previous work place at the Crisis Centre, and I have acknowledged that this perhaps has affected the interview and analysing process. To minimise the impact, I asked the following critical questions of myself in advance about my knowledge that I have gained through the work: what am I taking for granted or as a given when I am meeting mothers at the Crisis Centre? Am I generalising their experiences as battered women, or meeting them as individuals with their children? Am I questioning their abilities to be 'good enough mothers' because they have exposed their children to domestic violence or rather am I open to the option that they can master mothering in the presence of the obstacles in their lives? Furthermore, do I believe that these mothers can be 'good enough mothers' when the threat of violence no longer exists in their lives? Pilot interviews helped me to gain an understanding of my pre-knowledge as well as forming the interview guide to consider critical epistemological issues at evaluating the mothers' abilities for taking care of their children. I was aware of my own presence at the interviews and how I might impact the informants. I tried to speak as little as possible and explain the questions if needed in only few words. However, it was evident that some of my questions were not that successfully formed and I needed to further explain, for example what I meant in the question: 'on what do you base your judgement of one's capability of taking care of one's children?' In another instance the question 'do you think the evaluation of mothers' abilities of taking care of their children is subjective or objective?' caused confusion of what the objectivity here means. Moreover, interviewee thought that I was asking if she is professional when she is making such a judgement or unprofessional. In way,

¹⁶ (Willig (2001) in King & Horrocks, 2010)

I feel that I gave too much information of my own interpretation of objectivity and this might have affected her answer. Overall I left the interviewee to interpret the questions and did not comment on any of their answers nor did I add any of my comments or reveal my thoughts about their answers. Although, one of the interviewees insisted that she did not 'know' neither that there was a need to 'know' the service user in order to evaluate her ability to take care of her children. As I was surprised at her answer, I wanted to know more about her relationship with the service users. She then clarified that it all comes to the definition what do we mean with the concept 'to know'. Indeed, this highlights the differences between our concepts. For me the 'knowing' of a service user means that I have enough information to make such an evaluation, for her 'knowing' was perhaps deeper or that she felt that in the context of time she did not have the possibility to 'know' the service user, but that the impression was enough to make such a judgement of her mothering abilities.

Aiming for Reflexivity, in the end of the interview all participants had an opportunity to ask questions from me and add information that they thought was relevant but were not asked. Both participants from the Child Welfare Service asked why I chose this area to study. I told some details about my childhood and the struggle of becoming a mother myself as well as my fascination for standpoint theory. After that I felt that we connected as mothers, even though both of them had good relationships with their own mothers. Both of the informants recognised the same insecurity in the beginning of their motherhood. With the informants from the Crisis Centre I felt that because they already knew that I was a mother beforehand and that I was their colleague, the atmosphere at the interviews was more relaxed. Perhaps it was because I had already done two interviews beforehand and recognised my shortcomings, or because we knew each other. Neither of them had any following questions to me.

As stated, I do not claim objectivity as a researcher, as '[q]ualitative research in general does not claim to be objective; all research is carried out from a particular 'standpoint'' (Banister et al., in King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 126). Neither do I believe in that achieving academically valid and reliable results one needs to be a neutral observer in interview sessions. Furthermore, '[t]he detached depersonalised and 'uncontaminated' account of research that is often presented is arguably a very powerful and well-rehearsed 'illusion'' (Mair in King &

Horrocks, 2010, p. 127). Indeed, all studies are done by people with different inspirations, plans and goals. For me to be neutral and objective means losing all the subjective tools that researcher have to use. The interviewer needs to interact with the interviewee, sense and explore the most important part of the described experience, rather than asking unemotional neutral questions. This does not mean that the interviewer should impact the opinions or description of the experiences of the interviewee. More so that aiming for neutrality and claiming such objectivity a researcher is not reflecting on her own impact to the study. Such a study is doomed to give an incomplete picture, one dimensional true-claim with a sterile academic approach without a human touch: '[u]sing reflexivity, we are able to critically assess and acknowledge the manner in which the research may have been transformed' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 127). This became evident when my colleague from the Crisis Centre explained a case that had a strong impact on her. She revealed confidential details that she perhaps would not have exposed if we would not have been colleagues. She asked me if she could trust that I would not write confidential details in my dissertation. After that we discussed why she had chosen that case among so many other ones that involved such things as attempted murder and a mother choosing to move back to a violent spouse. In this way I would not have been able to discuss the case with her in such a deep manner and she probably would not have shared that with me if we would not been colleagues. Acknowledging this is important, as the information was transformed to be deeper and richer. If I would have pretended to be a neutral observer, I could not have been able to use my subjective knowledge to gain an important insight.

Reflexivity does not end at the interview process. One needs to be aware of it throughout the whole process, especially when writing up the analysis of the interviews. I have acknowledged that when interviewing the participants, I have entered into a relationship with them. I have asked intimate questions of their relationships with their mothers, about their motherhood and their professional relationship with service users. In a way I have gained trust from them and they have shared with me their stories, which sometimes involved painful details. Even though I am doing my best to show respect to them, in a way I am feeling unfaithful to them when revealing their histories to readers. King and Horrocks are describing the analysis writing in qualitative interview research as '(...) the act of representing people (...) [as] a very personal and moral activity' (2010, p. 138). I have thought

carefully what to reveal, asked questions of necessity to the study to represent some details, which might be interesting for the readers because they involve juicy aspects or even pain.

As the author I have the responsibility to ensure that what I am writing is relevant:

‘The voice of the participant is almost always filtered through the account of the researcher who authors the write up. (...) As part of our reflexive practice we should consider what impact this audience has on the representations we intentionally produce. Have we emphasised certain areas at the expense of others? If so, was there a rationale for this and how might other relevant findings be included?’ (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 138).

Another factor that I need to take into account is the value of my writing work to its readers and in the research community. Overall the Standpoint Theory is usable in many contexts, whenever the research is concerning the marginalised groups, power relations and what knowledge is countable. This study of the concept of being a ‘good enough mother’ can be turned to the concept of good parenthood or good fatherhood or even what is ‘good enough’ for children. In the same way, motherhood is always interrelated to other people, and without children, there would not be mothers or fathers. In the future the concept will be different, even the definition of what it is to be a mother. If this study would be performed in another country, the answers and the concepts would be different. If someone else would have done this research, the focus would be different; maybe other things would be more central. Here the voices of the social workers are central, although, it is me who is representing them.

3.5.2 Ethical aspects of the research

Reflexivity is a key aspect in maintaining an ethical research. The way how the participants’ voices are represented demands a moral evaluation. According to Biggam (2008) ‘[r]esearch ethics refers to the application of a moral code of conduct when human participants are the focus of empirical research’ (p. 247). Qualitative and feminist standpoint both underlines the importance of taking into account possible multiple realities. This research is not searching for the universal truth, nor is the goal to point out the right way of mothering or create a comprehensive guide on how to judge one’s ability to parent. Instead my aim is to reflect on how certain knowledge is produced, how a certain view has power over another and how it shapes our realities.

‘Embracing qualitative methods, with their more contextually located and constructionist roots, prompts careful deliberation around knowledge production that is inclusive of

inherently complex ethical relationships and responsibilities. We have ethical responsibilities not only to those who participate, but also to those for whom the knowledge is produced' (King & Horrocks, 2010, pp. 104, 105).

The impact of the research on the study subjects and any possible harm needs to be evaluated prior to each study. The concern of rights, dignity and safety need to be taken into account (Banks, 2006; Biggam, 2008; D'Cruz & Jones, 2004; King & Horrocks, 2010). Carla Willig (2001) has outlined *the basic ethical considerations* required when doing research:

1. *Informed consent*: The researcher should ensure that participants are fully informed about the research procedure and give their consent to participate in the research *before* data collection takes place
2. *No deception*. (...)
3. *Right to withdraw*. (...)
4. *Debriefing*: The researcher should ensure that after data collection, participants are informed about the full aims of the research. (...)
5. *Confidentiality*. (...) (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 108).

All of these ethical considerations were met through my research. Moreover, one reason to choose the individual interview instead of group interviews was to secure anonymity among participants in my research because of the small quantity of informants. Even though some personal information was collected, I have considered carefully what is necessary to use in my final thesis. I use fictitious names when quoting them. This way I will ensure that their identity will be kept secret and no harm physically, psychologically or socially are caused. One problem that can be caused if informants are recognised from my dissertation is that they may be treated unfairly at their work place because of their views. If a previous client could recognise one of the informants it could cause a re-evaluation of the case if the client believes that the social worker's personal opinion of motherhood has negatively affected the outcome of the case. I have done my best to secure the anonymity of my informants and discuss the possibility of these problems openly with them.

4 *Interpretation of the Empirical Research*

This chapter will consider my interpretation of the empirical research described in Chapter 3 Research Methods. I chose to name the chapter Interpretation of the Empirical Research instead of Findings or Results of the Empirical Research, because the theoretical perspective of Feminist Standpoint Theory better supports the former, that no knowledge is a universal truth but an individual interpretation of the truth, based on the researcher's standpoint. Hence, this is my account of the interpretation and my subjective view of what the collected data describes. This chapter is *not* aimed to represent a universal truth or generalizable analysis either. The attempt of this study has been to interpret and produce an analytical account of the informants' lives as mothers and social workers. Moreover, as Val Gillies (2007) states:

'Any attempt to give research participants a 'voice', either by translating their views or by speaking out on their behalf, reflects the researcher's interpretation, which is inevitably grounded in their own subjective and material reality. The 'knowledge' I have produced (...) derives in part, from my own culture, history, location and investment as a researcher' (p. 15).

The research concentrates on individual semi-structured interviews with two social workers from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and two social workers from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger to explore their views of the concept of being a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian Society. A further focus of the study is the objectivity of the evaluation process. The informants' views are not general views of all social workers who work at the Child Welfare Service and the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. Furthermore, '(...) no opinion, belief or other construction of events and persons, (...) should be taken as a representation of "reality" but rather treated as a motivated construction or version to be subject to critical feminist analytical inquiry' (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 200). Neither are the views universal to all women or all mothers. Instead they are the social workers' individual interpretations of the concept of what it is to be a 'good enough mother' within the society that they are living in, and their personal understanding of objectivity in their work. Their knowledge of this is based on their individual standpoints as Norwegian mothers, women and social workers.

To place the study in context, it is useful to give an account of the institutions where the interviews were executed. The Crisis Centre is funded by Stavanger Municipality and the

Child Welfare Service in Stavanger is subsidised by Rogaland county (Krisesentersekretariatet, 2015; Regjeringen.no, 2000). The Crisis Centre offers shelter for women, men and children, who have been victims of violence (physical or psychological) and/ or are in life threatening or dangerous situations connected to violence. The service users can be victims of domestic violence, human trafficking or forced marriage to give a few examples (Stavanger Kommune, 2015). The Child Welfare Service provides services for children and parents to ensure that children will get the best possible upbringing. Parents can seek advice and help on how to confront a teenager's drug or alcohol abuse or how to better deal with children's challenging behaviour for example. When a child's welfare is questioned, the Child Welfare Service investigates the incident and takes an action according to the severity of it. The follow up can be anything between providing help to the family (finding appropriate economical support, offering courses for better parenting and crisis control for example) to placing the child into foster care. The judgement of the action has to be based on the child's best interest principle (Bufeta, 2013).

The interview guide can be found in Appendix One.

The structure of this chapter is as follows:

- 1st main theme: the epistemological standpoints
 - Sub theme: 'being a mother' --- informants' reflections of their own motherhood.
- 2nd main theme: the definition of the concept being a 'good enough mother' --- exploring the informants concepts for good motherhood
 - Sub theme: mothers at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger
 - Sub theme: mothers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger
 - Summary of the definition of being a 'good enough mother'
- 3rd main theme: evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children
 - Sub theme: objectivity versus subjectivity
 - Summary of objectivity versus subjectivity in an evaluation process.

4.1 The epistemological standpoints

The table below shows the informants’ summarised epistemological standpoints historically, as mothers and as social workers. All of them were mothers themselves and three of them had grandchildren as well. The diversity of motherhood among the four informants was significant.

Informant	Personal Background	Parenthood	Professional Background
Anne	Grief over infertility. Motherhood as a choice. Good relationship with own mother. Good values from home. Mother was a role model.	Adopted foster child and adopted child from abroad. Grandchildren.	Long experience as a social worker at Child Welfare service in Stavanger.
Bea	Good relationship with own mother. Experience of being a young mother and ‘older’ mother. Good values and solution skills from home.	Biological children. Grandchildren.	Long experience as a social worker at Child Welfare Service and in residential children’s homes in Stavanger.
Carol	Grief over deceased children. Doubt for becoming a mother. Had problematic relationship with her mother.	Biological children plus two deceased infant children.	A few years experience as a social worker at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger.
Diana	Was a young mother. A foster mother to her grandchild. Had a problematic relationship with her mother. Grandmother was a mother figure.	Biological children. Foster child (grandchild). Grandchildren.	Long experience as a social worker. Works at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger.

Table One: The epistemological standpoints.

All of the informants have been anonymised with fictitious names. Neither their positions at their workplace, or their ages have been presented. I am referring to these social workers as Anne, Bea, Carol and Diana. Translated quotes from Norwegian to English are in *italic* and emphasised words have been underlined.

4.1.1 Being a mother

To gain knowledge of social workers’ views of good motherhood, it was necessary to define the social workers’ understanding of their own motherhood and what it meant to them to be a mother. Motherhood is in many ways a source of worry. With children the world is suddenly full of danger and the fear losing the most precious ones you have is heavy. Anne

sees being a mother a source of worry and impregnated with responsibilities: *'There is plenty of worry, but (...) I would not want to live without children'* (Anne). Anne has extensive experience as a social worker at the Child Welfare Service, she has learned good family values from home and had a warm relationship with her mother, who was a lone working mother: *'My parents were divorced and that was not usual in the 60s. She [my mother] had two jobs and our home was not like other people's homes. It couldn't, because others had a father who worked and a stay at home mother'* (Anne). Anne describes how in the 60s homes were traditionally following the male breadwinner model and how her home was different from the norm. In a way she places herself in the marginalised position, where her lone mother had two work places and the majority of children had a mother who stayed at home. Anne learned from her working class lone mother to prioritise time with the children over housework and she is embracing the emotional bond with her children. Anne did not take motherhood for granted: *'It was painful for me not to be able to have my own biological children before we adopted our two girls. Motherhood was not a sure thing for me. It was conscious decision for us, for my husband and me to have children'* (Anne).

Bea, who has worked at the Child Welfare Service and institutions as a social worker for many years, describes her childhood as an alternative one: *'(...) I had a mother who was an artist, and so we had a bit different upbringing than many others [had]* (Bea laughs). *That she had to do everything in such a diverse way* (Bea smiles and laughs a bit). At one stage Bea found this embarrassing and describes that at that time she just wanted to have a normal family instead of being so much different to others: *'(...) when I was a teenager I thought it was embarrassing to have friends over, because we had (...) everything so different. So at one stage I dreamt to live in a home where there was a couch for three, a couch for two and two wall lamps, like all the others had, but not us'* (Bea laughs). In this way, she situates herself in the position of 'the other', a teenager who does not belong to that era's ideal mainstream family with the right furniture, and the 'right' kind of mother. As Beauvoir states,

'[t]he family is not a closed community: notwithstanding its separateness, it establishes relations with other social units; the home is not only an 'interior' in which the couple is confined; it is also the expression of its living standard, its wealth, its tastes: it must be exhibited for others to see' (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 585).

Bea states that the relationship with her mother was warm and she has learned good values and solution skills from home:

'(...) I have got plenty of good values from home (...) [and] both creativity and solution skills [as well], because she [my mother] always found solutions to things. That is what my children always said as well, that if they had something that they wondered, they would go to grandmother because she fixes everything' (Bea laughs).

This way Bea signifies that she has accepted that her mother was 'different' than other mothers and in a way because of that she learned valuable skills from her. Bea highlights the impact her childhood had on her own mothering abilities. She states that when she became a mother for the second time, she was quite a bit older than at the first time and was more aware of how important it was to be present with her children:

'(...) I was much older when I got my youngest one, so I was more aware in a completely different way. [Pause] I remember that I thought very much. [Pause] so the older I have become, the more knowledge I've got (...) [of] how important it is for the children to be present (...)' (Bea).

This indicates that for Bea the qualities of good motherhood which are learned become enriched when a mother matures. Overall for Bea, motherhood has been remarkable: *'[f]or me to be a mother has been something very big. It is to give love, care and follow them to grow up (...). To support them. My children are now adults, but it is still great to be a mother when they call if they need something or wonder something'* (Bea). Bea thinks that motherhood gives nuances and wisdom to work: *'(...) you feel a completely different way when you are a mother, frustration, worry and not least the love and care. All of these feelings are what it is to be a mother'* (Bea).

Carol agrees with Bea that motherhood is a source of wisdom and gives nuances and references to her work as a social worker:

'(...) I think that when you are a mother, (...) you really feel things, the fear to lose them. (...) Without being a mother you cannot feel that vulnerability. And I believe that when you are a mother and when you are doing that evaluation [of a mother's abilities of taking care of her children], I think that you situate your own children [there] (...) what would you have done if they were your own children that had experienced that' (Carol).

Carol indicates how she is using her subjective knowledge from motherhood as a tool at her work. She has worked for few years as a social worker at the Crisis Centre. Her mother left her when she was still a small child and later on committed suicide. Carol says that she has

never been bitter towards her, even though she wished that when she was expecting her oldest son, their relationship could be restored:

'(...) [I] have never been bitter that she took her life because I knew that she had quite a tough life (Carol breaths in deeply). I actually wished that she could forget the pain and that we could go further when she would have become a grandmother [pause] but she couldn't. But she was a great woman' (Carol states sadly).

Motherhood did not come easy for her. She lost her two first children and there was a doubt she would be able to have more: *'I almost believed that I would not be allowed to be a mother, so it was huge for me to get three healthy children afterwards (...)' (Carol)*. Carol sees the importance in teaching values, support independency and to create a safe childhood for her children: *'[i]t has been important for me to teach empathy, to appreciate what we have and that they are kind and good towards others' (Carol)*. Before her divorce Carol thought the most important thing was to keep the family together, and felt that she failed when she did not manage to do so:

'The thing that has been difficult is that I could not keep [our] family together. In a way, beforehand I thought that it was most important [pause] that kids grow up in an A4 family¹⁷. I thought I would never be divorced, and then I did. But then I learned that it was not the most important thing for the kids. What was the most important was that I was there for them and that they felt loved. [Pause] So it is comforting that [even though] they have not grown up in an A4 family but with me alone, I have managed to keep it safe. And that has been important' (Carol).

Here Carol explains how her divorce changed her prioritization. That even though she did not manage to follow the ideal family structure with two parents but became a lone mother, she learned that the most important thing was to create a safe childhood, be present and make sure her children felt loved. Moreover, that becoming a lone mother did not mean that she was failing to be a good mother.

For Diana motherhood is to protect and create a safe childhood. She has a long experience working as a social worker and now she works at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. Motherhood is filled with responsibilities and she sees it as important to support the children so that they will grow to be independent adults:

'(...) it is important to separate (...) the relationship that it is not symbiotic. Because I think that it is not that fortunate for a child to be too dependent on the mother. There

¹⁷ A4 family here means a nuclear family

has to be a balance, so that [a mother] can create safety, but as well let them explore and make mistakes' (Diana).

For Diana being a good mother means to be able to let the children fail and help them to get back on their feet again. Because Diana's mother was suffering from mental illness it was her grandmother who she turned to with her problems and questions. Diana became a mother when she was young and later on in her life she fostered her grandson. She tells that when she was a young mother she had not thought that much about how to mother. Now Diana says that she has more theory and experience based knowledge about what it is to be a 'good enough mother' than she had when she was a young mother herself. Her double role as a grandmother and a foster mother she describes as being inseparable:

'Most of the time I think that he is my boy. But at the same time I do know that I am his grandmother. He is not going to call me mummy, because he does have some contact with his parents and he knows that I am his grandmother, and that is how it has always been. But even though he calls me a grandmother, I see the mothering function is there, thus, it is just a word (...)' (Diana).

Diana knows that she is not a mother to her grandson, even though she is fulfilling the role. In this way the social motherhood is weighted over the biological one and over the grandmother status as well. *'It is just a word'* indicates that she knows the real meaning and value of being her grandchild's foster mother. She is for him a solid and safe mother figure, who takes him as he is and gives unconditional love. *'He is my boy'* describes Diana's deep feelings towards her grandson, as deep as it would be with any good mother.

4.2 Definition of being a 'good enough mother'

'The interaction between a mother and her children is important. The children need to be prioritised, that their needs are prioritised. Enjoyment is important. (...) Rather warmth than structure in family, I think. To be a mother is to be with the children' (Anne). Val Gillies (2007) states that '[b]eing a mother (...) is constructed in terms of commitment, devotion and dedication, and is closely associated with moral worth' (p. 141). In the same way Anne highlights that a good mother is committed to her children, interacts and enjoys being with them. Moreover, she loves and is present for her children. For Anne a good mother is someone who shares the attributes with Anne's own mother; she has a warm relationship with her children and does things together with them.

A 'good enough mother' is one that prioritises the children's needs over her own, states Bea. For her a mother needs to see her children. Bea agrees that her own personal experiences of motherhood affect her definition of what is to be a 'good enough mother'.

'(...) it was obvious [for me] to go to my mother when I was an insecure fresh mother, right? And the [family] network that I had there (makes a circle with her hands) [I] got guidance and help and that is what we are missing here in the Child Welfare Service. Here are many [service users] who have had a difficult upbringing themselves, and do not have the [family] network of supporting people around them like I have had, and many others have had. Right? You do take things further with you (pushes hands onwards). Children who have been maltreated themselves, when they become mothers themselves, they do not have good references' (Bea).

For Bea network and support from a family is important for mothers. She highlights that this is what many service users at the Child Welfare Centre are missing. At the same time she differentiates herself from the mothers who are service users. 'Them' who have had a difficult childhood and are lacking the supporting network and 'herself as the one who have had these ideals: a mother to turn for guidance and a network to get help from when she needed it. Bea argues that mothers' childhood experiences affect her caring abilities: mothers who have been maltreated in their childhood do not have good resources. Many research is supporting Bea's view that maltreatment goes over generations (Kvello, 2010, p. 43). According to Milner et al (2010) children who have had physically abusive parents have two to three times bigger risk to abuse their own children (in Kvello, 2010, p. 43). This, claims Kvello, is dependent on how strong the trauma is in the person and the bigger the trauma is, the more increased is the risk to physically abuse their own children (Kvello, 2010, p. 43). However, Bea does not think that all children who have been maltreated will be doomed to fail in their life. One example of putting the bad experiences from one's childhood into good use are 'barnevernsproffene'. They have been children in the Child Welfare Service system and are now helping the social workers to meet the children and their families better. They have turned their painful history into useful experience aimed at getting the system better for families. Bea says that *'[a]ny experience is good, as long as one uses it right'* (Bea). In this way she gives room for people to success in their life, perhaps in motherhood as well, if they have worked with the issues from their childhood.

'I believe that the way I have grown up has had an impact [to the definition of what it is to be 'good enough mother'], because I have always thought that my children should

have what I never had. I have always thought that I want to always be a loving mother and that my children never have to doubt that I love them' (Carol).

Carol is aware that her own experiences of motherhood have impacted her definition being a 'good enough mother'. She states that a good mother's children would not doubt of her love towards them. Carol's problematic relationship with her mother has taught her 'how not to be' as a mother and she emphasises that she wishes to give her children what she was lacking as a child. Further Carol states that a good mother is one who has the right set of values, sets boundaries, and has a close relationship with her children.

'(...) [A good mother] raises [her children] in the way that when they are adults they'll manage to live as independent individuals' (Diana). A good mother for Diana is one who is interested in the wellbeing of her children and supports their independency. She allows them to fail, but stands by them and helps them up when needed. A good mother makes sure that the child knows that she is good as she is and that both negative and positive feelings that she feels are valid:

'It is important that the child feels that she is good as she is. That there are things that they can do and things that they are good at. [Pause] So, I think also that it is important to validate the feelings for children. Both the negative and the positive feelings. That it is ok to have all kinds of feelings and that you can have those feelings and not try to mute them, so that they feel that they have to be so and so and not feel this and that, that would be wrong' (Diana).

For Diana teaching emotional skills is important. This is perhaps coming from what she has learned to be important from her role as a foster mother, as her foster son has some challenges connected to his first two 'turbulent' years with his biological parents. She states that all children are good as they are and all of them are good at something. A mothers' duty is to encourage their children to find their path and to help them to master their emotions. Good and bad.

4.2.1 Mothers at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger

Anne states that there is too much focus on mothers' skills at the Child Welfare Service: *'That the [service user's] house is tidy for example. A good mother is there for her children. Enjoyment and love has to be there' (Anne).* According to this view it can be said that it is more important that there is a good connection between the child and the mother than a clean house. It can be argued that many mothers involved with the Child Welfare Service

are the ones that are on the edge of what is considered to be a 'good enough mother', or failing to be 'good enough'. Sometimes the observing process reveals attempts to cover up larger problems than was expected: *'Often the family creates facades and works a lot to keep them up. That the house is tidy and [service users] lies for example about their own substance abuse. If they could have been more open about it, they could have had help earlier'* (Anne). Anne criticises that among some service users there is plenty of energy used to cover up problems, whereas the same amount of energy could have been used to seek help. Perhaps it is the fear of losing their children that justifies the facades for them, however, for Anne it is the children who are paying the price, and that cannot be accepted.

Anne and Bea states that mothers at the Child Welfare Service have often had terrible childhoods and adults in their life that have failed them. Both have sympathy over the mothers at the Child Welfare Service:

'[i]t is very sad. Often I would like to give the parents the care as well. Often they have grown up with very nasty and bad parents. They have not had a good childhood or [a good] adult in their lives. It [assessing the mothers' abilities taking care of her children] is an extremely emotional situation (...) It is a painful situation for the mothers as well and not only for the children. I feel the same feelings as the mother does. I think it is important to feel. And to comfort mothers and children' (Anne).

Anne situates herself in the mothers' position when she has to make difficult decisions to place children into foster care. She uses her personal knowledge from motherhood, and senses the pain that mothers feel when they are losing their children. Anne acknowledges that feelings are important in her work to be able to be sensitive and comfort mothers and children.

Bea specifies that the focus at the Child Welfare Service is on children and their needs and not on mothers. In that way, it is not necessary to get to know the mother. Furthermore, in the short period of time that they have to do the investigation it is not possible to get to know the mother:

'I don't know the service user, because I have only the investigation. (...) So it is difficult [to know](...) it is clear that if we would have more time for investigation, to have more home visits, for more discussions, then you would get to know the service user better. (...) I don't know them, but I do get an impression of them' (Bea).

Here it is evident that the rights of the children and parents rights are often in conflict at the Child Welfare Service. From the parents' perspective they are children that they have brought up and given their genetic material to create them. From the Child Welfare Service's perspective and according to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are not owned by their parents and when parents fail to provide good enough care, the Child Welfare Service has the right to intervene (Kvello, 2010, pp. 23-24). Anne points out that inside the Child Welfare Service, there have been recommendations to divide the institution in two to be able to help families better: *'[t]he one part would take care of providing the help and support to families and the other part would focus on the custody care. It could be more useful for families to get help early. I think it could help to reduce custody take overs'* (Anne). Anne notes how important it would be for the families at the Child Welfare Service to get the right kind of help in the early stages when they first start to struggle and states that out of home placements would be reduced.

4.2.2 Mothers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger

In 2013, 66 mothers with their children stayed at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and referrals were sent from 20 children to the Child Welfare Services¹⁸. The informants from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger states that often the care is reduced when a mother is in a crisis. They are seen to be in a grey zone and because of traumatic experience they are not working optimally as mothers: *'Maybe [you] could think that, here [at the Crisis Centre], they need help but not that it is so serious that we need to take contact with the Child Welfare Service (...) that they are in the grey zone of what it is [to be] good enough'* (Diana). Upon arrival at the Crisis Centre a woman can be so traumatised because of the abuse that she has suffered and does not see the children's needs and cannot cope to be a mother at that moment:

'I think that when a mother comes with children to the Crisis Centre, (...) in the beginning [she] (...) is here, you can observe that there is not enough attention paid towards the children, or that (...) [she] doesn't fulfil the children's needs. But I am a bit sceptical to make big conclusions in the beginning, because many who come here are in crisis (...) and it is not that they are like that normally, but [more] that they have to have a right not to function completely optimally when they come to the Crisis Centre' (Diana).

¹⁸ Statistic from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger.

Diana highlights the importance of separating how the mothers perform when they are in crises from how they perform when they are back to their normal selves. It would not be wise to judge their abilities to take care of their children when they are traumatized from the abuse. It is important to give the mothers time to recover and get back to their feet again. Indeed, they have the right to not be functioning well in the middle of crisis.

Abused women often live in their own world, where their reality of being abused has become normality. They have lived so long in the situation and have adopted a belief that the violence is their own fault, that if they would learn to behave correctly, they could avoid the abuse. In a way they normalise the abnormal: *'(...) our service users don't react to what is abnormal because they have been so long in the abnormal [situation] in the way that that it has become normal. Right' (Carol)?* In the same way they can make questionable decisions where they choose to be with their abuser over ensuring their own and their children's wellbeing. Sometimes it is difficult to understand their decisions, states Carol. If a service user with children moves back to the abuser from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger, the Child Welfare Service will be contacted, because they have an obligation to report¹⁹ as this is considered a dangerous and harmful situation for children. Violence between parents is traumatising for children, and symptoms of trauma can be already be found in children that are under one year old (Bogat 2006 in Kvello, 2010, p. 284). It has been pointed out that children who live with a mother that has a violent partner have an increased risk of being abused physically, mentally and sexually (Dixon and Browne 2003; Osofsky 2003 in Kvello, 2010, p. 289).

Carol and Diana highlight the importance of humbleness and respect towards service users. They both have empathy towards them and their children: *'[y]ou rather want that it will go well for both, for mother and children and [you] try to give advice and guidance [to them] (...)' (Diana)*. At the Crisis Centre it is important to listen both to, the mother and the child and take their perspectives into account before making assumptions of the care situation: *'I always think that the report (...) [to the Child Welfare Service] will follow [the individual for] rest of her life. (...) Because of that I will always think twice before I write something. And check [the situation]' (Carol)*. Carol acknowledges the powerful impact that she can have on

¹⁹ Information from the Crisis Centre Stavanger.

the service users and the consequences that a report to the Child Welfare Service has to mothers' and children's lives.

Diana says that it is not always easy to get to know the service user and her situation well enough because of possible language barriers and the limited time that they stay at the Crisis Centre. Many women who arrive to the Crisis Centre are not native Norwegians:

'(...) something that you have to think about all the time is the cultural diversity, and not only just by our own standards. But it is clear that you cannot explain everything by culture. There are some things that are in some way absolute in any circumstances. (...) You have to think that you cannot just leave the child without that the child being safe. (...) Unfortunately it happens that they don't see things that are dangerous for the child' (Diana).

Diana acknowledges the cultural differences and is aware that the perception of good motherhood is socially constructed. However, she draws a line by saying that some things are absolute and cannot be tolerated. Here she reflects on what belongs in her concept to be a 'good enough mother' and clearly states that there are limits to what can be explained with cultural differences; safety for children is an '*absolute*' limit for example.

Carol makes similar comments about cultural diversity among the mothers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger:

'At the Crisis Centre we have many service users that are not ethnic Norwegians. And they do have a completely different way of raising their children. So, I think that the child welfare authorities in Norway have a challenge to get enough cultural understanding. Even though it is illegal to hit children in Norway, maybe we should realise that [pause] (...) people see the world from different standpoints. We have different preferences for how to raise children [and] what we think are right and wrong (...)' (Carol).

Carol recognises the challenges that living in a multicultural society brings to social work. Her own standards of motherhood are confronted with non-native Norwegians' standards. Even though hitting children is not acceptable, there must be other things that are diverse from the main stream Norwegian way of bringing up children that can and perhaps must be tolerated. Carol states that people have different standpoints where they view their world with their own morals and values. Furthermore, she recognises the social constructivism in motherhood.

Anne states that sometimes the different ways of bringing up children can cause conflicts between service users:

'Native Norwegians have better day routines. They have fixed times for bedtime and meals and that kind of things. (...) Some non-native Norwegians think that children should run around and burn themselves out in exhaustion to fall asleep. (...) That can be a bit challenging because for us [native Norwegians] it is a bit wrong that a one year old runs around until ten, half past ten at night. For most of us it is not normal. But it is just to go and explain to them. (...) Here at the Crisis Centre we need to have similar routines, and it is better to put the kids in bed earlier. It doesn't mean that the care is worse if the children will go to bed later. It is just a completely different day rhythm, which can be a bit distracting for the rest of the people' (Diana).

Here Diana states that ethnic Norwegians have 'better' routines than non- ethnic Norwegians and points out that letting children run around until they are tired enough to fall asleep is not normal for most of the native Norwegian service users and social workers at the Crisis Centre. She acknowledges that this does not mean that the care is worse, but it causes conflicts between service users if the children are up very late. In a way she realises that the lack of routines and letting the children stay up late are not signs of bad mothering, even though it is in conflict with how she has learned to mother, with fixed meal and bed times.

4.3 A summary of the definition of being a 'good enough mother'

For the definition of a being a 'good enough mother' there were some similarities among the informants. Interaction between mother and children and enjoyment to be with the children were opted important. Love was central in good motherhood as well. A good mother for these social workers is one who is there for her children, is able to create a safe childhood and has a close relationship with her offspring. The following table has a summary of the key points that I have identified for each informant which describe their views of what it is to be a mother for them personally, what the concept of a good mother means to them and how they see the service users that are mothers at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger and at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger.

Social Worker	Being a Mother Personally	A Good Mother	Mothers at Child Welfare Service/ Crisis Centre
Anne Child Welfare Service STVG	Worry over children. Childhood has an impact on mothering. Responsibility. Emotional Bond. Prioritising time with children. Being a mother is a positive perception.	Own history impacts on her definition. Prioritise the children. Be present. Have warm and cosy relationship with the children. Does things together with children. Is honest about own shortcomings & seeks help.	Often uncover bigger problems than expected. Keep up the façade. Often had bad parents/ childhood. Empathy towards them. Painful to lose a child.
Bea Child Welfare Service STVG	Worry over children. Childhood has an impact on mothering. Support & Guide. Setting Boundaries. Motherhood as a wisdom Gives nuances and references. Love & Care. As an older mother aware and knowledge of how to be good enough.	Own history impacts on her definition. Prioritises the children. Be present. Creates a safe childhood. Pays attention to the children.	Often uncover bigger problems than expected. Keep up the façade. Often had bad parents/ childhood. Empathy towards them. Does not 'know' them but gets an impression. Difficult to take a child from them. Often failing/ on the edge of being good enough.
Carol Crisis Centre STVG	Support independency. Motherhood as a wisdom Gives nuances & references. Create a safe childhood. Teach values.	Own history impacts on her definition. Be present. Creates a safe childhood. Love. Enjoyment. Values. Boundaries. Close relationship with children. Fulfils the basic needs. Be a good role model.	Care reduced because of crisis. On the 'grey zone' what is to be good enough. Makes questionable decisions. Sometimes difficult to understand. Sometimes failing to be good enough. Empathy towards them. Normalising the abnormal. Respect and humility towards them.
Diana Crisis Centre STVG	Support independency. Responsibility. Create a safe childhood Protect . Enjoyment. Interaction with children. Care. As an older foster mother aware & knowledge of how to be good enough.	Own history impacts on her definition. Prioritises Children. Creates a safe childhood. Interested in the wellbeing of the children. Interacts with the children. Close relationship with children. Supports independency.	Care reduced during periods of crisis. In a 'grey zone' of being a good enough mother. Have the right to not work optimally. Have the right not to be good enough. Empathy towards them. Cultural diversity. Sometimes challenging to get to know.

Table Two: a summary of the definition of being a 'good enough mother'.

4.4 Evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children

The evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children at the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger is based on investigation: *'We have three month investigations which are based on five to six home visits and five to six discussions with the family' (Anne)*. The social workers at the Child Welfare Service use Øyvind Kvello's guidelines during the investigation. Bea says that Kvello helps her to focus on the issue and with report writing. According to Kvello there are three main information sources to find out a child's life situation:

1. Discussions with the child and their guardians.
2. Written information or discussions with professionals who know the child and her life situations. This can be employees from kindergarten, school or health staff. It can also be indirect information from a child's situation from a guardian's GP for example.
3. Observation of an interaction in a family, because the quality of parents caring abilities have a direct connection to the child's development. (Landry in Kvello, 2010, pp. 25-26).

Based on the information collected, a social worker makes an evaluation of a mother's capacity for looking after her children. In contrast to the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger there is no guideline on how to make an observation concerning a mother's abilities of taking care of her children at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. The evaluation is based on the social workers' observations of the interaction between the mothers and their children, the ability to prioritise the children's safety and how well the mother recognises the children's needs. If a social worker recognises something alarming, she discusses with other colleagues to hear if they have experienced something similar:

'It is what you and the other [colleagues] react to. It is often that I might have observed something concerning and raised it with other colleagues but they have observed something completely opposite. But it is ok because then I have raised my concerns but the others have observed much more positive [behaviour], and then I know that I have only observed a bad day or a bad moment (Diana smiles)' (Diana).

Diana highlights the importance of the collective understanding and agreement on the evaluation of the mothers' abilities to take care of their children. She acknowledges that her observation might have been negative because of a bad moment. Indeed, she states further that

'(...) we all have [bad days and bad moments], so we should be careful not to make big conclusions based on a poor foundation. [Pause] I think that if someone had observed

me and my kids, they would have found things that were not that good either (Diana laughs) at some point (Diana).

Diana states that it is suspicious to make conclusions of mothers' abilities to take care of their children when it is based on just one observation made by one observer. She is very aware that everyone has bad parenting moments. No mother is perfect, and to be seen at that moment when she is not her optimal self, is probably not a great time to draw big conclusions on her mothering skills.

Anne and Bea claims that there are often greater issues under the surface than initially expected with service users: *'I haven't ever experienced that an observation would have been totally wrong. Often there are bigger problems than one thought before [the observation]'* (Anne). Bea states that for her home visits can be artificial and continues: *'(...) I think [that] we seldom, make a wrong observation that it is too strict. Rather that we do not get enough information'* (Bea).

These Anne and Bea's statements indicate either that the mothers that are under observation in the Child Welfare Service are struggling significantly and knowingly trying to hide their problems, or that the observations have been done at a time when the moment has not been great for the mothers and the children in question. Bea stated that for her the home visits can be artificial. Diana pointed out that she has sometimes observed a bad moment but other social workers have instead observed more positive moments between the mother and the children. It is important that the observation is not done in a short period of time or only once to make an evaluation of a mother's abilities to take care of her children. It perhaps would be beneficial if the observation would be performed by more than one person. In this the way the interpretation of the mothers and their children would be more robust. This is the way that the observations are performed at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger. However, the Child Welfare Service needs to take into account the resources that they have available. Also, that the burden of observations would not be overwhelming for the families and at the same time secure getting enough information from the situation to draw a conclusion on the caring abilities (Kvello, 2010, pp. 11-12). The Child Welfare Service in Norway uses Kvello's observation check list, which is aimed at fulfilling these demands. When Bea started to use the list, it felt first that she should focus on the negative things during the observation:

'(...) it helps you to focus on the related issue, to ensure that you don't move away from what it is on a referral. So I think that it is very much ok, but it took time to learn it (Bea laughs). In the beginning it was for sure that it is only the negative that they see (Bea laughs). But (pause) we absolutely do not only do that. We do see the strengths and the positive sides in parents as well' (Bea).

For Bea the Kvello's check list provides a security that she is focused on the right issues when collecting relevant data and performing the evaluation. She indicates a worry that the list is focused on the negative attributes but states that they do see the positive in the parents as well. Kvello (2010) discusses the important correlation between risk factors and protective factors when doing an evaluation in a family. More protective factors than risk factors means that a child will cope better in the problematic life situation. Protective factors that are connected to the child could include that she tolerates stress well, has at least one 'good enough' adult (one of the parents, a relative, neighbour, teacher, social worker, foster parent for example) in her life who she trusts or that the child has hobbies and/ or talent in some area in her life. Protective factors connected to parents include that they have good caring abilities, they are involved in the children's life, are well educated and are working or are under education (Kvello, 2010, pp. 169-170). However, Kvello states that the protective factors do not mean that the parents caring abilities will be compensated for, but that these factors can protect the child from developing problems when she is surrounded with risk factors (Kvello, 2010, p. 162).

The observation of mothers' abilities for taking care of their children should be based on the child's best interest principle. However, the Child Welfare Service has been criticised for not involving the children enough, that way too often a social worker works around the child and the focus on discussions is with the adults surrounding the child: teachers and parents for example (Seim, 2007, p. 78). Omre and Schjelderup (2009) claim that the way how children's participation can be strengthened and their powerlessness reduced, is a significant professional challenge within social work. Furthermore, the participation is not strengthened only through the legislation, but also by challenging the child welfare professional knowledge, readiness, attitudes and mind sets (pp. 11-12). Anne and Bea agree with the critique of children's participation. Anne states that,

'[w]e should include children more and inform children and parents of the help available. Children actually reveal more than mothers do. One can learn from children how the

mothers are. It is important to know how children experience their mothers. Is a mother involved in the children's lives? Is she engaged' (Anne)?

At the Crisis Centre, the adult service users are centralised and the children are often not seen or directly spoken with: *'I think that we are not good enough to listen to the children or talk with them. I think that there should be more focus on children at the Crisis Centre' (Carol)*. Carol is concerned about the children's wellbeing after they have left the Crisis Centre. She worries that the unseen and unheard children at the Crisis Centre will end up having bigger problems later on their lives:

'(...) they come first to the Crisis Centre with their mothers and then they end up in the Child Welfare Service system, and in the end they become substance abusers. I have experienced that many times and I think that if we would have been better and seen them at the first stage, maybe we could have avoided them going further [to become children in the Child Welfare Service system or substance abuser] (Carol).

Carol is genuinely worried about the children at the Crisis Centre. She finds it problematic that there is too little focus on children. When they are residents at the Crisis Centre it could be a good moment to positively affect their future, to help them or just to be there for them and really listen to what they have to say. Instead, Carol thinks, the Crisis Centre is letting the children down by ignoring their needs to be seen and heard.

4.5 Objectivity versus subjectivity

This sub chapter focuses on the informants' objectivity and subjectivity in the evaluation process²⁰. At one stage of the interviews the informants were interpreting two pictures and explaining the feelings that the pictures provoked in them. The first picture was a distant shot, aiming to get the informants views from evaluating the situation from a distance. The second picture was a close up of the first picture, aiming to explore the informants' views when they are closer in the evaluation situation. The reason behind using the pictures was to explore how they were using their objective and subjective 'tools' in the evaluation process. After seeing the pictures, the informants were asked on what they based their judgement of one's capability of taking care of one's children and if they thought that the evaluation process of one's ability of taking care of one's children was subjective or objective. Further to explore the objectivity and subjectivity in the evaluation process the informants were

²⁰ In Chapter 1, I discussed the use/importance of objectivity in an evaluation of a mother's abilities to take care of her children and that according to Feminist Standpoint Theory, concepts such as 'good enough motherhood' are socially constructed and objectivity is an illusion (see pp 9, 12 and 17).

asked to close their eyes and recollect the feelings that they had when they have been required to make an evaluation of mother's abilities to take care of their children.

4.5.1 *Picture One*



(Crewdson & Banks, 2008)

All participants said that the Picture One provoked mostly negative feelings. Two of the participants felt that the colours of the picture were cold and because of the portrayed winter season the temperature of the picture was described as cold as well. The overall emotion of the picture was interpreted as sad by two social workers. Two informants noticed the distance between mother and the baby:

'It looks like the child just lies there alone. I think that it looks a bit cold outside, and it looks like the child lies there without clothes and has turned her back towards her mother, so it looks like she doesn't have good contact with the child' (Diana seems to be worried) (Diana).

Other things that the informants commented on the picture were that the child was unwanted and rejected by her mother: *'(...) maybe she will grow up to be a child with a mother who actually doesn't want children. That she [the mother] is dismissive towards the child. So, I think how is this going to go forward' (Carol).* Here it seems to be that Carol uses

her own history of being abandoned by her mother when she was a very young child to interpret the picture. She is more sensitive to the nuances that she has herself experienced.

A positive way to interpret the picture was that the mother seems to be looking at the baby, and might be admiring her: *'It can also be that the mother looks at her baby, (...) [in a way] 'the little cute baby'' (Diana)*. Anne pointed out that the interpretation was subjective:

'(...) it is much to do with the interpretation. [The feeling provoked] is painful. Maybe she tries to look after the child. Maybe the child has cried a lot and has just finally calmed down and [fallen to] sleep. She [mother] rests a bit, breaths in. This is a typical example of how one [can] interpret situations. One can easily add something that it is not actually in the picture, one's own preconception. This provokes mixed feelings in me. Not completely positive or negative either. It can be both. Personally I would choose a positive interpretation that I need to find out more [about the situation] (Anne).

Anne is describing how one needs to be careful with one's own preconception during an evaluation situation. That depending on the interpretation one can see either positive attributes or negative ones. Maybe here is a mother who is exhausted after a long night with a baby who has cried and now when the baby is finally asleep she is gathering her strengths. Motherhood is more than just happy moments with smiling children. It is sometimes painful, exhausting and full of doubt of one's own abilities to take care of the children. Looking at a situation from a distance, one cannot make an assumption of a mother's caring abilities. One needs to zoom in, look at the details and ask more questions. Indeed, one needs to find out more about the mother and her baby.

4.5.2 *Picture Two*



(Crewdson & Banks, 2008)

For Anne Picture Two provoked more worry, but she kept feeling that she did not have enough information to make a judgement:

'Uff yes (Anne breaths in heavily). Yes, it is more worry here. The mother does not see the baby. She keeps the distance. But one still needs to observe the mother and the baby a little bit closer. What has happened here? What is the relationship between these two? Yes. Anyway, one needs more information. (Anne gives the picture back) Is there no more pictures? I was expecting that there is more (Anne laughs). That you have more to this story. Oh well (...)' (Anne).

Anne is asking questions that she probably asks during normal evaluation situation as well. She is interested to know more about how the situation had ended up like this, what is going on between these two human beings. Indeed, it is important to know the standpoint of the mother and ask revealing questions from this picture: how did the mother end up here, alone with the baby, tired and keeping a distance between the baby and herself? What is central? Is the baby central or is the mother with her worries and hopes for the future? What is missing here? Where are the baby's father, the mother's relatives or friends? Why is she left alone to cope with this situation? Or has she escaped home and is now facing the difficult question as so many service users at the Crisis Centre face: should I return to my violent spouse, or should I raise this child alone?

From Picture Two, three informants pointed out that the distance between mother and the child is remarkable. Two informants noted that there was lack of enjoyment in mothering: *'I see again a mother who looks very sad. The child lies down naked, her back towards mother. Faraway. (...) The way how I interpret it is that the mother doesn't know what she would do with this child. She looks sad and miserable'* (Bea). Diana stated that the mother does not see the child, that there is no interaction between the two. She was strongly indicating that for her the mother was failing to be 'good enough': *'Now I see that she is not looking at the baby at all. It looks like she is not looking directly at the baby and that the baby is very far away. So it is just stronger negative [feelings provoked]. Then I feel that the baby lies very near the edge of the bed, so that he can roll off'* (Diana). Diana feels that the relationship between the mother and the baby is not good. She states that the mother is not paying attention to the baby's safety and allows her to lie on the edge of the bed. It is the same way that Diana evaluates the mothers at the Crisis Centre, whether they are prioritising the children's safety and how the relationship between them is.

Carol saw tiredness in the mother, despair and perhaps doubt:

'It seems exactly that she is looking at the baby [in a way] that 'I cannot bare to take you [up]'. Despair perhaps. That is what I see. (Carol looks the picture in silence for 30 seconds) Maybe she has several children and she is tired. (...) Maybe she has had a tough life and has a husband who doesn't care that much, or [who] drinks a lot. That she is in doubt about her life' (Carol).

For Carol the mother is too tired to look after her baby. Maybe the mother's life situation is difficult and she is very alone with little or no support from her husband. Carol asks questions but does not stigmatise the mother as failing to be 'good enough'. Rather she sees that the mother is tired and her life is troublesome. Perhaps this is the way how Carol sees the mothers at the Crisis Centre as well: as mothers who are in crisis and because of that, they are struggling in their motherhood and in life in general.

4.5.2.1 Summary of the Pictures

Social Worker	Picture One: Distant observation	Picture Two: 'Zooming in'
Anne	Can be either Negative/ Positive Distance between mother and the baby Subjective interpretation Need more information about the situation	Negative: more worry, distance between mother and the baby Still need more information about the situation
Bea	Negative: coldness, sadness, emptiness	Negative: distance between mother and baby, lack of enjoyment Positive: new born
Carol	Negative: sadness, unwanted child, worry, rejection	Negative: tiredness, despair, doubt, lack of enjoyment Positive: child is peaceful
Diana	Negative: distance between mother and baby, coldness Positive: admiration, sees the child	Negative: even bigger distance between mother and the baby, do not see the baby, no interaction, failing to be good enough

Table Three: summary of the Pictures.

'The goal is to be objective'

None of the informants claimed that the evaluation of the mothers' caring abilities at their work was purely objective. Objective tools in an evaluation situation at the Child Welfare Service were seen to be social workers' professional knowledge and Kvello's guidelines. At the Crisis Centre objectivity was claimed through professional knowledge and education. Diana explained that the objectivity in the evaluation situation is secured through discussions with colleagues:

'I think that [the evaluation] is mostly objective. But the goal is that it should be objective. And, I think that it is secured in the way that there is not only one person who is making such evaluations. So, I think that if someone (...) discusses with plenty of people, I think that secures [the evaluation] will be objective as much as possible' (Diana).

Diana states that objectivity is a goal in evaluation, however, there is no guidelines used and Diana did not state that the evaluation should be as neutral as possible. She acknowledges that pure objectivity is impossible, but that to minimise the misunderstandings and incorrect conclusions of mothers' caring abilities the collective agreement with colleagues is important.

A certain level of objectivity is necessary to be able to help, Carol claims:

'... It is important to be professional and to be able to help. I saw that many times when I worked in Africa, where I stood in difficult situations. (...) You had perhaps only one

oxygen apparatus and, you had two children who needed oxygen and I knew that the one who would not get it, would die, actually (Carol nods her head). And I think that if I would not have been professional [enough], I would not have managed to do anything to help, [if I had just] tried to avoid to make the decision' (Carol).

Carol acknowledges that sometimes it is necessary to keep a distance to be able to help. One needs to focus on all the possible outcomes of the situation and find the best option available from all the bad options. Even when the outcome is that someone will die. Even though at her work in the Crisis Centre, she is not deciding who will have the right to live, she is facing questions of life and death. Sometimes there is not much to do when a service user decides to move back to an abuser: in 2012, 197 mothers with children who had been residents at the Crisis Centres in Norway, moved back to their abusers (Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, p. 60). Unfortunately often the situation escalates, and the violence will go from bad to worse. Every fourth manslaughter/ murder was committed by a spouse or an ex-spouse between 2000 and 2009²¹ (Ystehede & Kanestrøm, 2012).

'We use ourselves as a tool. Our own gut feeling are important'

The importance of subjectivity in their work was evident for all informants. Anne explained how it is vital to trust her own gut feeling of the situation:

'We use ourselves as a tool. Our own gut feelings are important. There has to be warmth in the family. That is important. If something is wrong, it is cold in the family. There has to be warmth between a mother and a child and not a distance. (...) That was wrong in the picture number two, that there was no warmth between the mother and the child' (Anne).

Anne describes how she uses her subjective feelings as tools when she is evaluating mothers' abilities to take care of her children. She senses coldness between the family members if there are problems. Warmth is important between the mother and the children, that they are close with each other. If a social worker is aiming for a neutral and distant evaluation process, she would not let herself trust these important primary feelings that are, indeed, revealing plenty about the family relations.

The informants own personal history was seen to give references to their work. Especially motherhood was one that all of the informants treated as a good source of wisdom:

²¹ These numbers include killings committed by a husband/ wife, ex-husband/ ex-wife/ living in partner/ ex-living in partner but not killings committed by a boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, girlfriend or ex-girlfriend.

'I think that it is easier to evaluate parents' competence when you are a parent yourself. But of course you can evaluate that without being a mother. But you know in totally another way the feelings of frustration and worrying and not least the love and care. All these feelings that are to be a mother. I do take that with me to work. Even though, I do divide the private [life] and the work. I think that you do a better work when you are mother yourself. Even though it is a bit rude to say as there are many who work here that are not mothers' (Bea laughs) (Bea).

Bea is stating that when one is a mother, one is able better to understand the feelings and situations that belong to motherhood. It is understandable that a person, who does not have that experience, cannot place herself into situations where there are concerns of service users' mothering abilities. That experience is vital, as if a social worker has not experienced the fatigue, insecurities and failures that every mother has to some extent, how can she be able to have sympathy towards service users who are struggling in their mothering? The childless social worker can of course use other sources from her life, as she does have experiences of being a child herself. However, she has to be aware that she is lacking the experience of being a mother herself, and as such cannot base her knowledge of mothering on that and thus can suffer a lack of respect in her decision making among service users and perhaps among other social workers as well. Diana describes how her childless friends were giving her advice on how to handle her teenager:

[t]hey thought that children have some kind of manual, and that you just follow it. (...) It is, yes, a bit dangerous to think that it is that simple. Because I think that you don't know how the situation is before you are facing it, you don't know how you are going to react, because it is different when you are in the situation [yourself]. (...) I think you should be very humble and reflect if you don't have children yourself, when you are evaluating others [who are mothers themselves] (Diana).

Here Diana links her experience of being a mother of a teenager and getting advice from her childless friends on the social work evaluation process. For the childless, mothering can be black and white according what is correct and what is wrong. As Diana pointed out, children do not come with manuals, and each situation is different and unique with each child. The danger is that a young childless social worker makes harsh assumptions when she is lacking the experience as a mother and as a social worker as well: *'I think that the young and inexperienced social workers are much stricter than we who are a bit older and have more experience ourselves (...)' (Bea).*

At the Child Welfare Service Office in Stavanger the diversity between social workers concepts of what is acceptable ways of parenting has been noticed by Bea: *'We do have different levels what we consider serious, right? We are different, right? We have different backgrounds, upbringing, preconception, right?'* (Bea). Bea highlights the impact of the social workers' standpoint in the evaluation and the decision process and how it is unescapable and part of being a social worker.

'Evaluation is based on my background, who I am and what I have learned as well' All informants saw the subjectivity in their work and how it was closely connected to their objective professional being: *'No one can live in a theory based world. One cannot divide personal and professional completely, I think'* (Anne). Carol also states: *'I think that the evaluation is based on my background, who I am and what I have learned as well'* (Carol). This way Anne and Carol agrees that the definition of a 'good enough mother' is based on both, subjective and objective knowledge. Indeed, one does not live in a world that has value neutral concepts that are free from subjectivity and cultural aspects.

Carol pointed out that aiming for pure objectivity at work and reaching towards neutrality, one has a danger to become a cynic and fails to see the individuality in service users. That way one becomes just an emotionless case worker who goes on autopilot:

'We should not become that cynical, that we cannot see the trauma in an individual. That we kind of become just case workers but we don't see the people because we go through so many crises [in our work]. (...) We don't see them (...) I don't want to become that professional that I would not let myself see [them]. You know what I mean? That it is so normal for us that we don't anymore react to what is abnormal, right' (Carol)?

Maybe it is the freshness that Carol still has at her work, that she has not become one who only works without emotions, but is present and uses her subjective tools wisely. She does not want to be one who is so professional that she manages to switch off feelings when she works. However, this does not mean that she is unprofessional. Rather, that in tough situations she can be objective enough to be able to help and inform the Child Welfare Service when a mother is moving back to an abuser or when a child's wellbeing is questioned in other ways. In the same way as when she needed to make decisions of life and death in Africa. A good social worker is one who recognises her own subjectivity and uses that in her work. Not someone who merely goes on autopilot, aims for neutrality,

distances oneself from the mothers who are in crises and in the end forgets why one is there in the first place: to be present for service users and help them individually.

4.6 A summary of objectivity versus subjectivity in the evaluation process

Social Worker	Objectivity in Evaluation	Subjectivity in Evaluation
Anne	Kvello’s check list Professional knowledge	Own ‘gut feeling’ Preconception Personal knowledge of motherhood
Bea	Kvello’s check list Professional knowledge	Preconception Personal knowledge of motherhood Different seriousness levels among social workers
Carol	To be objective enough to be able to help Professional knowledge	Own ‘gut feeling’ Personal knowledge of motherhood Comparison towards own children
Diana	Objectivity as a goal Discussions with colleagues secures objectivity Collective agreement with colleagues Professional knowledge	Preconception Personal knowledge of motherhood Different seriousness levels among social workers Personal opinions of motherhood

Table Four: a summary of objectivity versus subjectivity in the evaluation situation.

In the table above, a professional knowledge is based on education, professional development and professional history. Personal knowledge is based on the social workers’ history, personal development and experiences as mothers, women and children.

5 Discussion

'Even though it is illegal to hit children in Norway, maybe we should realise that [pause] (...) people see the world from different standpoints. We have different preferences for how to raise children [and] what we think are right and wrong (...)' (Carol).

Carol's statement illustrates the core of this paper very well. Even though, as Diana stated earlier: *'[t]here are some things that are in some way absolute in any circumstance'* there must be room for other ways of mothering than the Norwegian tradition. Carol indicates how people's standpoint is crucial of what is for them 'right' and 'wrong' in mothering.

Kvello's guidelines for observation are based on objectivity, where a supposed neutral observer assesses the presence of risk and protective factors in a family while evaluating the interactions between family members. The challenge with this kind of observation is that the 'neutral' observer has her knowledge of what it is to be a 'good enough mother' and the observed has her own. Another problem is that Kvello's concept of a 'good enough mother' can be perceived as ethnocentric, where the mothers that are considered to be 'good enough' are ideal mothers in Norwegian society. This is often unachievable for all mothers with diverse cultural backgrounds, class and civil statuses.

Feminist Standpoint Theory highlights the power structure in society that is marked with race, ethnicity and class positions among citizens. Table One in Chapter four (p. 41) showed the informants background of their epistemological standpoints. However, what it did not discuss, was the social and economic class, or their race/ ethnicity and the impact of those to the concept of being a 'good enough mother'.

In this chapter I will discuss in more depth the use of Kvello's checklists in the evaluation process and argue against the universal approach to motherhood from the view of Feminist Standpoint Theory, highlighting the epistemological standpoints of service users and social workers.

5.1 The impossibility of Kvello's 'good enough motherhood'

Kvello's guidelines of evaluation are based on the claim that some parents have more risk factors than others, thus they belong in the second class of parents that are considered unfit to parent without guidance or cannot take care of their children at all. Examples of risk

factors according to Kvello include parents being uneducated, unemployed, with immigrant background, have low income, have high conflict level, are young parents and/ or have low IQ (Kvello, 2010, pp. 181-197).

Class can be discussed in the marginalisation perspective, where there is polarisation between groups. For example the group of mothers that follow the society's ideal standards of good motherhood and the ones who fail to follow the ideal standards of good motherhood. In this way, the failing mothers would belong to the class of 'others', who by definition are marginalised. Kvello's 'ideal mothers' would belong to the dominant group --- the white middle-class Norwegians. In this way, '[c]lass becomes internalized as an intimate form of subjectivity, experienced as knowledge of always not being 'right'' (Skeggs, 1997, p. 90). Within these two polarised groups, power hierarchies can be found linked to gender (lesbian mothers for example), age and ethnicity, social and economic class. Moreover, '[b]eing a permanent outsider within can never lead to power because the category, by definition, requires marginality' (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 289).

The mothers at the Child Welfare Services, who have not had the 'right' kind of social network and upbringing occupies the class of failing mothers. The ideal mothers on the other hand are the ones that have had the 'right' kind of upbringing and 'right' kind of social network around them:

'(...) [H]ere in the Child Welfare Service, (...) are many [service users] who have had a difficult upbringing themselves, and do not have the [family] network of supporting people around them like I have had, and many others have had. (...) You do take things further with you (pushes hands onwards). Children who have been maltreated themselves, when they become mothers themselves, they do not have good references' (Bea).

However, the attitude that rises from the old studies in child psychology, that the children who have not been nurtured or have had problematic childhood are doomed to fail in their life, is far from being helpful for the children or parents (Furman, 2000). Many studies that are focusing on the Strengths Perspective approach have shown the positive impact that even one good person in a child's life can have and the important protective factors available for them. Protective factors among parents that have been maltreated include awareness that the care that they received was not good enough. Furthermore, that they have processed and recognised how their history has affected for them to become the

person that they are (Kvello, 2010, p. 45). Indeed, children who have had a difficult childhood often do manage to lead a normal happy life and even manage to be successful in it (Benard, 2005; Furman, 2000; Saleebey, 2005).

It can be argued that Kvello's ideal mother is white middle-class Norwegian. This way he is universalising the concept of 'good enough motherhood', though the concept of an ideal mother is not culture and value neutral. Elizabeth Butterfield (2010) states that according to Simone Beauvoir

'(...) there is no such thing as an essence of true womanhood or an "ideal feminine". Similarly, we can conclude that there is no such thing as an essence of the "ideal maternal". If all values are ultimately human creations, then the values and expectations that we traditionally associate with being a mother do not represent an immutable objective truth. The "ideal mother" is revealed to be a social construction, and one that varies historically and culturally' (p. 67).

Indeed, the ideal motherhood varies from mother to mother and in each era. In the same way the concept of a 'good enough mother' varies.

Adrienne Rich (2007) claims that according to the ideal of good motherhood, '[a] 'natural' mother is a person without further identity' and '(...) that maternal love is, and should be, quite literally selfless' (Rich, 2007, p. 12). Elizabeth Butterfield (2010) further states that '(... the message of ideal motherhood pushes women towards sacrifice of the individual self for the sake of service to another' (pp. 70-71). According to Anne '*[a] good mother is there for her children. Enjoyment and love has to be there*' (Anne). However, it can be argued that a difficult life situation significantly affects a mother's ability to be there for her children, even to find enjoyment in mothering. Most of us are not ideal mothers, at least not all of the time. We move between ideal motherhood and unideal motherhood, and sometimes we even cross the line of what is considered to be 'good enough'. It is questionable that race, ethnicity, age and class actually are risk factors in mothering. Maybe Kvello's ideal mother is too narrow a concept, which indeed focuses more on the risk factors than protective ones and allows very little room for cultural diversity.

5.2 Race and ethnicity & being a 'good enough mother'

'(...) something that you have to think about all the time is the cultural diversity, and not only just by our own standards. But it is clear that you cannot explain everything by culture.'

(Diana). Diana highlights how it is important to widen our own views of mothering and respect mothers with other cultural backgrounds, but there are limits to what can be accepted and explained by cultural diversity. All informants of this study were white native Norwegians. Most of the social workers that are caseworkers as well at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger are white Norwegians. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) states, '(...) the term whiteness signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than disadvantage' (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 237). The social workers ethnicity and race matters, because her concept of what it is to be a 'good enough mother' are influenced by them. White Norwegian social workers' views of good motherhood can differ significantly from other ethnic group and racial background mothers' views.

There is a larger percentage of children with immigrant background than ethnic-Norwegian children as service users at the Child Welfare Services in Norway²². This can be partly explained by parents with different cultural backgrounds having distinctly different parenting methods from native Norwegians that are not considered acceptable in Norway²³. Another explanation is that immigrant's parenting methods are more easily intervened than parents who are ethnic-Norwegians. The largest method was to offer help and advice, although it has been shown that children who were first generation immigrants were more likely to be placed outside of their home than children whose parents were ethnic-Norwegians²⁴. This had led to the assumption that immigrant parents are treated unfairly and are discriminated in the Norwegian Child Welfare Services. Elvis Chi Nwosu states that the Norwegian Child Welfare Services have lost the respect of many immigrant groups, such as the Russian, Tamil, Somali, the Polish, Indian, Nigerian and Kurdish communities. He says that it is difficult to claim that all these ethnic groups are wrong and the Child Welfare Services in Norway are right (Ellingsen, Kumano-Ensby, & Grønli, 2014). However, it should

²² During 2012 there were 53 198 children and adolescents aged 0-22 years who received an act from the Child Welfare Service in Norway. 7331 of them were immigrant children which is 7.6 percentages from all of the children in Norway. 5136 of them were Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents, which is 5 percent of all children in Norway. This can be compared to 3.2 percent of children in the Child Welfare Services who were without an immigrant background (Statistics Norway, 2015).

²³ Use of any physical punishment towards children and threatening with it is illegal in Norway

²⁴ In 2005 there was 14.4 out of 1000 first generation immigrant children and adolescence aged 0 to 22 years who were placed outside of their family home. Corresponding figures for children with ethnic-Norwegian parents shows that 6,6 out of 1000 were placed outside of their original family home (Kalve & Allertsen, 2006).

be mentioned that from the countries of origins of these ethnic groups, only Poland²⁵ has prohibited parents from using physical punishment on children (The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2015a). In Norway the Article 30(3) of the Act originally corrected in 1987, states that:

‘[t]he child must not be subjected to violence or in any other way be treated so as to harm or endanger his or her mental or physical health. This shall also apply when violence is carried out in connection with upbringing of the child.’²⁶ (The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2012).

In Norway the general attitude towards physical punishment of children is that it should not be allowed. UNICEF’s Nordic Study on Child Rights to Participate 2009-2010 included 1199 students from Norway aged 12 to 16 years. The survey points out that 82,4 percent of the study population thought that ‘a child should never be corporally punished’ (Unicef, 2010, p. 18). As the laws and regulations in each country have an impact on the concept of a ‘good enough mother’, it can be said that Norwegian society that to be considered in this category, one must not use corporal punishment towards children. 45 other countries agree with this concept and do not allow any type of corporal punishment towards children (The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2015b). However, as I do not have access to the cases where the Child Welfare Service have intervened immigrant mothers’ abilities to take care of their children, I cannot state whether they have been abusive towards their children or not. I am only highlighting the social construction of concepts in ‘good enough mothering’.

In 2012, 65 percent of the residents in the Crisis Centres in Norway had an immigrant background (Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, p. 13) compared to only 13,1 percent within the general population (Statistics Norway, 2013a). A larger proportion of residents with immigrant backgrounds than non-immigrant background had their children with them²⁷.

²⁵ Poland has had laws against corporal punishment on children from 2010. However, ‘[a] study conducted in 2011 on behalf of the Children’s Ombudsman, involving 1,005 residents of Poland aged 15-75, found decreases in the social acceptance of parents hitting children since the achievement of full prohibition in 2010’ (The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2013).

²⁶ The law was challenged in 2005, when a stepfather was in a court for smacking his stepsons’ bare bottoms with his hand, and the Supreme Court stated that ‘lighter smacks would be permitted’. This caused a review of the law and ‘(...) further amendments to legislation were passed in April 2010 which confirm prohibition of all corporal punishment’ (The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2012).

²⁷ Respectively 55 percent of residents who had their children with them had an immigrant background (Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, p. 59).

There are no statistics available how many referrals from the Crisis Centres in Norway to the Child Welfare Service are concerning immigrant background children.

These statistics highlights the importance of cultural understanding among social workers at the Child Welfare Service and the Crisis Centres in Norway. The mostly white Norwegian social workers, who are evaluating mothers who have a different cultural background, might not share the same concepts of 'good enough motherhood'. When a conflict between concepts and values occurs, whose perception is dominant and whose perception is correct? The polarisation between mothers who are ethnic-Norwegians and those who have an immigrant background in the Child Welfare Service system is problematic, especially since immigrant mothers face a higher risk of getting their children replaced outside of the family home than ethnic-Norwegian mothers.

5.3 Social and economic class & being a 'good enough mother'

It is important to highlight the social workers ethnicity, race and class, because these are interlinked with the notion of gender which plays a remarkable role in the power structure in society and hence in the social workers professions: '(...) their race and their class are so closely intertwined that to try to understand either separately is tantamount to misunderstanding both entirely' (Younge, 2005). It can be argued that all informants are middle-class professionals²⁸. Even though, many feel that the concept of 'class' is old fashioned, even rude to mention (Sayer in Gillies, 2007, p. 19), it is an important concept in social studies and also this research. Furthermore, '[w]ithout the language of class to explain their lives, such mothers are set apart, misinterpreted and ultimately blamed for the social and economic marginalisation that characterises their lives' (Gillies, 2007, p. 19). A white middle class social worker is educationally, professionally and perhaps economically in a privileged situation whereas many working class non-white mothers are not: '[i]nequality is the product of a range of social factors, with gender, race and ethnicity similarly powerful in exerting influence over access to resources' (Gillies, 2007, p. 20). However, it is important to point out that the service users in the Crisis Centres and the Child Welfare Services are from many ethnic and racial groups, including white Norwegians, and all social and economic classes. However, as pointed out earlier, immigrant parents are well represented over

²⁸ Here I mainly state their social class based on their educational background and profession as social workers.

native-Norwegian parents as service users in the Child Welfare Services and the Crisis Centres. Also, 74 percent of the children in the Child Welfare Services in Norway come from lower social class families (Kvelling, 2010, p. 185).

Life situation and/ or economical struggle can significantly affect mothers' abilities to fulfil their children's needs. However, it is often assumed, they should always put their children first even when it causes suffering for the mothers. One of Gillian's informants, Kelly, who was struggling financially, often went without food to ensure that her children would get enough to eat. Her situation was not caused by her bad decisions as a mother, but because she had to escape from her violent husband and the state failed to offer her and her children a safe place to stay, or sufficient financial support. This kind of poverty is hard to understand, but it is unfortunately a reality for many lone mothers and their children in the UK and also in Norway. In the UK it is estimated that 'one in two children in the most deprived areas live below the poverty line, while 2.3 million are classified as in relative poverty' (Butler, 2014). Even though the numbers are much lower in Norway, it is shocking to many that one of the world's wealthiest countries has

'(...) an estimated 78,000 children lived in low-income families in 2012, half of them with immigrant parents. The overall portion of children in low-income families rose from 5 percent in 2002 to 8 percent in 2012, according to statistics compiled by the auditor general's office' (Berglund, 2014).

It is evident that race is a marker in child poverty in Norway along with the families where the parents do not work. Often parents do not know what benefits and help is available to them, as the local authorities fail to inform them:

'[t]he needs of children, (...) are not well-enough registered when parents seek social welfare assistance, nor are state and local government efforts to address the needs of children in poor families sufficiently coordinated. Many municipalities, which are responsible for implementing Norway's social welfare programs, don't do enough to ensure that children in low-income families can participate socially' (Foss in Berglund, 2014).

It is crucial that social workers, whose service users are facing poverty, provide adequate help and guidance for them. Especially when a service user is an immigrant and is heavily dependent on the information from her case worker because her lack of language skills and/ or social contacts.

5.4 Domestic violence & being a 'good enough mother'

'(...) [t]hey are in such a big crisis that they are not capable of taking care of their children, that they don't see them. [Pause] and they might choose [pause] wrong so that it will be a negative decision for the kids. Possibly they move back to their abuser even though they know that we will report a concern to the Child Welfare Service' (Carol).

Kvello states that 90 percent of victims of partner violence are women and many research points out that children who have witnessed domestic violence have suffered emotional neglect (2010, p. 276). He continues that one study shows that in Norway, 4,2 percent of all women have experienced violence from their partner when they have been pregnant, and that children witnesses every third assault between their parents (p. 283). According to Kvello (2010), mothers that are victims of domestic violence often have either little warmth towards their children or they are over protective towards them (p. 284). Jackson (2003), Ulman and Straus (2003) claim that mothers that have been in abusive relationship have little authority and weak control over their children (in Kvello, 2010, p. 284). According to these researchers, mothers that have violent partners have reduced abilities to look after their children. However, Sarah Wendt, Fiona Buchanan, and Nicole Moulding (2015) state in their article 'Mothering and Domestic Violence: Situating Maternal Protectiveness in Gender' that in their research, out of

'(...) interviews with nine women who had mothered in domestic violence, it was found that women do attempt to protect children from physical and emotional harm; however, the climate of fear, power, and control present in domestic violence limits protection, and women try pleasing their partners to prevent violence' (p. 1) .

Kvello, and many other researchers (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2005), are focused on how well mothers protect their children from harm and look after their wellbeing as well as their connection with their children in domestic violence situations (Wendt et al., 2015, pp. 1-2). Furthermore, child protection workers are generally concerned that *'(...) women in domestic violence are unprotective, limiting dialogue and exploration about maternal protectiveness in highly volatile contexts'* (Douglas & Walsh, 2010; Mandel, 2010 in Wendt et al., 2015, p. 2). Some researchers have chosen to focus instead *'(...) on the strengths and capabilities of women parenting in domestic violence, arguing that we should not assume that being a victim automatically diminishes parenting ability'* (Wendt et al., 2015, p. 2). Indeed, Wendt et al found among other studies (Haight, Shim, Linn, and Swinford, 2007) that *'(...) mothers try to protect children's physical and*

psychological well-being during episodes of domestic violence' (Wendt et al., 2015, p. 2). Lapierre's (2010) study found that '(...) despite the hostile environment of domestic violence, women consistently aimed for what constitutes as good mothering, that is, putting children first, and trying to protect, provide, and care for them' (in Wendt et al., 2015, p. 2). His study also found '(...) protection in terms of women trying to prevent children from being exposed to violence, trying to respond to children's emotional needs after witnessing violence, and not leaving children alone with partners' (ibid). This highlights that mothers who are victims of domestic violence are often doing their best in very difficult situations to protect and provide for their children. Although, they do sometimes recognise that the situation is harmful for their children, they are often delaying moving out from the abuser perhaps because of fear or shame. Indeed, it is important to point out, that domestic violence victims are in a constant state of fear: '[d]omestic violence is terror in the home, whereby an adult (mostly a man) exerts power, control, and domination through creating a climate of fear' (Johnson, 2011; Yodanis, 2004 in Wendt et al., 2015, p. 10).

When a mother decides to leave the violent relationship, she can end up in the Crisis Centre.

'(...) [C]hildren are a key user group of shelter services. In all, 1,763 children were registered as residents at shelters in 2012, of which just over half were between 0 and 5 years old. In the wake of the Shelter act, we are seeing a tendency for shelter services to become somewhat more arranged for children. However the shelters do not always follow the reporting requirements to the child welfare authorities when children are involved' (Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, p. 12).

The Crisis Centre's employees have a statutory duty to provide information to the Child Welfare Service. This obligation takes place when there is a reason to believe that children are abused at home, that children are experiencing neglect or that children show persistent behaviour problems. The service users at the Crisis Centres who have children have generally been domestic violence victims over a longer period of time than those without children (Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, p. 60). In 47 percent of the cases in 2012, the Child Welfare Services were already involved before the mother with children arrived at the Crisis Centre. Only 29 percent of the cases where the residents had children resulted in no report of concern to the Child Welfare Services. In total, 197 residents with children under 18 years went back to the perpetrator of domestic violence after their first stay at the Crisis Centre. 48 percent of these residents were reported to the child protection service and 30 percent

already involved the child protection services. However, 22 percent had no prior involvement or were reported to the Child Welfare Services (Statistics in Nersund & Govasmark, 2012, pp. 60-61).

It is understandable, that not all mothers with children at the Crisis Centres in 2012 were reported to the Child Welfare Service. As stated, many mothers that are victims of violence do manage to be good mothers in the spite of violence in their lives. Also, mothers who have left their abusive husband have done what a good mother is supposed to do in order to protect her children from harm. However, it is questionable that the Child Welfare Service is not informed when a mother chooses to move back to an abusive partner with her children. One can ask, how bad the situation has to be before concerns for the children's wellbeing are raised enough to send a referral to the Child Welfare Service? Social worker Sylvi Stangeland from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger states that they actually have a legal obligation to report to the Child Welfare Service when a service user who has children moves back to an abusive spouse. She highlights that this is done with all parents, irrespective of their previous connections to the Child Welfare Service. They have ensured that this is done with each case by performing regular reviews of their cases to ensure that they send reports of concern to the Child Welfare Service when they have information of domestic violence within a family. Stangeland refers to the national statistics from 2012 that reveals that 52% of cases were not reported to the Child Welfare Service when a resident with children moved back to their abusive partner: '[a]ccording to the law for shelters, we are required to report cases to the Child Welfare Services where the victim returns to the abuser. What the reason is for the figures in the statistics I cannot quite explain, but I think it is a combination of poor routines and incorrect entries in the statistical form²⁹'. Stangeland highlights that it is the Crisis Centre's employees' statutory duty to inform the Child Welfare Services when a mother moves back to an abuser with her children. This perhaps can help to prevent violence in the home and provide adequate assistance for mothers and children if violence occurs again.

5.5 Age & being a 'good enough mother'

'(...) I was so young when I became a mother so I didn't think that much about it, what it was to be a good mother. I didn't think about that because I kind of just became a mother (Diana

²⁹ Translated comment from email discussion.

laughs). (...) But now I think that I am more aware about things and what is important interaction, [and] security [for children]' (Diana).

Young age and being immature are risk factors according to Kvello (Kvello, 2010, p. 41). Bea also stated that she was more aware of how important it was to be present for the children after she had her second child in a more mature age than she was when she got her first. Getting pregnant at a young age is often associated with irresponsibility and casual unprotected sex. This leads to the assumption that young mothers are irresponsible, lacking class and perhaps intelligence:

'(...) the hugely popular BBC television comedy series *Little Britain* features "Vicky Pollard", a dim, crude schoolgirl (played by a man) who is often depicted as pregnant or wheeling a pram. Again, her working-class accent, council estate habitat and clothes unambiguously locate her in terms of class. An essential part of the humour associated with this and other representations stems from the notion that casual sex leads to casual motherhood' (Gillies, 2007, p. 27).

In the collectivistic societies where child care is family centric and grandparents and other relatives are participating in the care, young motherhood is not such issue (Kvello, 2010, p. 189). For example, it is common that in societies where child care is not subsidized by the state, grandparents are helping care for their grandchildren more than in societies where the care is subsidised (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 91). In individualistic Norwegian society the care is provided mainly by the parents and subsidised child care during the working week. Norwegian grandparents often work as well and are not as much involved in helping with their grandchildren compared to countries like Italy and Spain where the grandparents often look after their grandchildren for approximately seven hours a day (Esping-Andersen, 2009, pp. 91-92). Also, Moen describes in Russia, the grandmothers along with other female family members are an important supportive network for mothers, who are often quite young (2009, p. 58). Russian grandmothers retire at a relatively young age and thus have time to help with child care. It is also expected that grandmothers will help with the grandchildren in Russia (Moen, 2009, p. 59), whereas it is commonly accepted in Scandinavia that grandparents will lead their life independently (Esping-Andersen, 2009, p. 91). Maybe a reason for this is that in Norway, grandmothers are typically economically independent, whereas in Russia they rely heavily on their children's financial support (Moen, 2009, p. 59).

As mentioned earlier, Sonya Michel's (2010) study stated that adoptions from abroad and reproductive tourism have enabled many older women, single, and infertile mothers to have children. She argued that some of these practises are accepted, whereas others are not (p. 89). This raises a question of what is the right age to become a mother? Young mothers are associated with being irresponsible and even immoral. Yet they are in their biological child bearing age. However, older women who have passed their fertile age might have more life experience and wisdom than younger women, but are struggling to become a mother in the traditional way. Maybe the ethical dilemma is not about age, but that in Norway the extended family plays a minor role in the child's care and providing help to the mother. The old pronoun 'it takes a village to raise a child' is very true. Today's mothers in Norway are often very much alone with their children and lack support from their families.

5.6 Social & biological motherhood & being a 'good enough mother'

In the beginning of this paper I discussed the differences between biological and social parenthood. It was stated that in Norway biological parenthood is valued over social parenthood. Syse asked does it really matter how one becomes a parent in the relation of what is best for the child (NOU 2009:5, 2009b, p. 32). It can be argued that foster and adoptive parents have thought and evaluated the parenthood more than people that are biological parents. The child of foster and adoptive parents is often very much wanted and longed for: *'It was painful for me not to be able to have my own biological children before we adopted our two girls. Motherhood was not a sure thing for me. It was conscious decision for us, for my husband and me to have children'* (Anne). Indeed, as Johanna stated in the beginning of the first chapter: *'A good motherhood is not about the genes --- the biological relationship is not that important'* (Johanna). Diana described her close relationship with her foster son, who is also her grandson: *'Most of the time I think that he is my boy. But at the same time I do know that I am his grandmother. (...) But even though he calls me a grandmother, I see the mothering function is there, thus, it is just a word (...)'* (Diana). In the child's perspective, a 'good enough mother' is not necessarily the one who has brought her into the world. A 'good enough mother' is the one who nurtures, loves and fulfils the child's basic needs for a safe childhood.

5.7 Lone motherhood & being a 'good enough mother'

Lone mothers are often targeted and questioned about their abilities to nurture and fulfil their children's need for a safe childhood. As pointed out in the first chapter of this dissertation, in the UK lone mothers, especially the ones who need welfare benefits to support their families, are considered to be irresponsible, even a danger to their children:

'[a] determination to avoid encouraging lone motherhood as a lifestyle 'choice', combined with a more general male-orientated valorisation of participation in the labour market, sustains an essentially blaming view of welfare recipients as lazy, irresponsible and indifferent to the needs of their children' (Gillies, 2007, p. 46).

However, for many lone mothers raising the children alone is not 'a lifestyle choice' but a necessity because the other parent is violent, absent or is a substance abuser. They would, as Gillian states face a financially much brighter future if they would just walk away from their responsibilities, as in many cases their spouses did (2007, p. 47). She describes further how the working class lone mothers in her study

'(...) had consciously sought to become mothers and live up to the ideals of commitment associated with this social role, but this inevitably entailed a relinquishment of self-interest for a focus on the 'needs' of their children. While many gained a powerful sense of satisfaction and self-worth from being a 'good mother', this positive identity could not be enjoyed without considerable sacrifice and struggle' (p. 140).

Even in Norway lone motherhood is linked with poverty among those with an immigrant background. It is evident that lone mothers are in a more vulnerable position than mothers that live with their partners. Many mothers experience the feeling of failure when facing separation from their spouse:

'[t]he thing that has been difficult is that I could not keep [our] family together. (...) I thought I would never be divorced, and then I did. (...) [However] [w]hat was the most important was that I was there for them [my children] and that they felt loved. (Pause) So it is comforting that [even though] they have not grown up in an A4 family but with me alone, I have managed to keep it safe. And that has been important' (Carol).

Lone mothers are not by their status bad mothers. Even though they are often facing economic hardship and lack of support for child care from their ex-spouses, they are doing their best with the resources that they have. Many lone mothers are balancing working long hours, housework and child care. In spite of the obstacles, most of them are 'good enough mothers' and like Carol, have managed to secure a safe and loving home for their children.

5.8 Power & evaluation

'Power can be named responsibility, control can be named care and rules can be named protection' (Young, McKenzie, Schjelderup, & Omre, 2011, p. 11). Power is used when judging mothers' abilities of taking care of their children. The social worker and the service user are not in an equal position. The nature of their relationship is based on the fact that the service user is in a vulnerable situation, otherwise she would not be at the Crisis Centre or the Child Welfare Service office. She is a victim of violence and/ or she has failed, in some extent, to be a 'good enough mother'. The preconception of her is already there before the caseworker even meets her. She has read background information about her beforehand. The evaluation process begins from the moment when the social worker meets the service user for the first time (Zelenko in Kvello, 2010, p. 27). Many caseworkers at the Child Welfare Service describe the impression that they got when they have met the parents for the first time in the waiting room (Kvello, 2010, p. 27). At that moment the categorising of the mother by her class (how she has dressed up and how she speaks), ethnicity (her outlook and how she speaks) and by her age begins. The mother is also likely to be in a highly stressed state at this point and not representing of her typical self.

'I haven't ever experienced that an observation would have been totally wrong. Often there are bigger problems than one thought before [the observation]' (Anne). It can be stated that the danger in an observation is that the social worker already has a pre-assumption of the mother. The case worker steps into the investigation with her understanding of the situation, based on the data collected on the observed and her experience as a social worker. No matter how much she tries to be a neutral observer, she is a subjective being observing a mother and her children. Her pre-assumption can be that there probably is something wrong with the mother's caring abilities, otherwise she would not be a service user in the first place. In her PhD thesis 'Behind the Closed Doors; Exploring the institutional logic of child protection work', Åse Vagli states that

'[t]he constructed power/ knowledge of the Dangers establishes particular way of seeing. It casts people 'out there' into typified epistemological net. This net creates boundaries between 'them and us', looking at the others as unpredictable, disordered, weak, and stupid. It makes one look at people in a suspicious way and it creates a morally negative perspective (Vagli, 2009, p. 222).

One way to avoid such a suspicious view is that the evaluation of mothers' abilities of taking care of their children is done by more than one social worker. Another way is that the social worker is aware of her own pre-assumptions and her epistemological standpoint and the impact of those on her work.

5.9 Epistemological standpoint

Knowledge is socially situated. The social workers knowledge of 'good enough motherhood', their epistemological standpoints, are based on their geographical and historical location, on their race, ethnicity and their social and economic class. No knowledge, as stated, is value and cultural neutral. Sandra Harding (1993) says that

'[t]he starting point of standpoint theory --- and its claim that is most often misread --- is that in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such politics shaping the very structure of a society, the activities of these at the top both organize and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them' (p. 54).

This way the social workers can only understand motherhood from their epistemological standpoint. Moreover, the informants of this study have learned mothering from their mothers, family members, friends, from their own motherhood and from surrounding society through the laws and regulations of what is acceptable. Their professional knowledge about the concept of being a 'good enough mother' is based on their education and what they have learned while working as social workers. The knowledge that they have gained according to what is 'good enough motherhood' is valuable, even though it is partly, perhaps even mainly subjective knowledge rather than objective theory based knowledge:

'Standpoint epistemology sets the relationship between knowledge and politics at the center of its account in the sense that it tries to provide casual accounts --- to explain --- the effects that different kinds of politics have on the production of knowledge' (Harding, 1993, p. 55).

The questions arise: what is the 'right' kind of knowledge of motherhood and who are the mothers who have it? It is important to point out that here the social workers' knowledge of 'good enough motherhood' is valued over the service users' knowledge. The social worker who evaluates whether the mother is 'good enough' has the power over the marginalised service user. The service user, who has also learned how to mother from her family members, friends and her surrounded society might have quite a different concept of what it is to be a 'good enough mother'. Her epistemological standpoint is important as well. It

cannot be that the only right knowledge of how to be 'good enough mother' is produced in Norwegian society by middle class academics. The service users' views and experiences of motherhood need to be heard and to some extent respected. As the standard of motherhood is very high in Norway it can create an ethnocentric illusion that mothers from other cultures are second class mothers. Most of the books about how to parent are written by white middle-class academics, claiming that there is a universal way to raise the children. The pure academic approach to 'how to get parenting right' contradicts the traditional way of parenting by instincts (Henry, 2010, p. 18). This ignores the differences between parenting in each social and economic class, as the challenges that the working class mother faces often impacts her mothering and what she feels is important to teach her children: '[f]or working-class mothers (...) giving is more likely to be associated with a notion of worth and deservingness rather than moral or educational appropriateness (Gillies, 2007, p. 129). Even Kvello (2010) points out that there is a remarkable difference between people in the definitions of what good enough care is and what is not. He states that it is easy to agree with extreme cases, but the borderline situations are the difficult ones (p. 32).

5.9.1 Informants and their objectivism

As stated, according to objectivism, knowledge should be value free. In that sense, being objective means to be a value free, neutral actor. In this research, the social workers from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger had a more distinct interpretation of what objective evaluation was than the social workers from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger.

Anne and Bea, who are social workers at the Child Welfare Services in Stavanger, stated that the evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children is mostly objective. They use Kvellos's guidelines, which are aimed to fulfil objectivity in the best possible way while focusing on risk and protective factors in evaluation situations. As well as Kvello's guidelines, Anne and Bea use their professional knowledge which is a combination of their background education and what they have learned while working in child protection. They were both aware of their subjectivity, and in some extent they agreed that they use it in their work: their gut feelings from the situation, their preconception and their personal knowledge from their own motherhood and what they have learned from their mothers as well.

Carol and Diana, from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger, stated that they did not really have guidelines on how to evaluate mothers' caring abilities, but they used their professional knowledge and their personal knowledge of motherhood as an evaluation tool in the observation situation. Objectivity was different for them than it was for Anne and Bea. Diana stated that for her, the goal was to be as objective as possible and to secure that she discussed her observation with other colleagues to achieve 'a collective agreement'. Carol stated that on the one hand, she did not want to be too objective, too professional, because for her that meant that she would become a cynical case worker who was not able to be 'present' with the service users at the Crisis Centre. On the other hand, she stated that it was necessary to be objective enough to be able to help. This meant for her that she needed to keep some distance between the service users and herself.

Although, the social workers at the Crisis Centre are not directly responsible for assessing mothers' ability to take care of their children and deciding whether intervention is required, their input and evaluations are critical when the Child Welfare Service makes these decisions.

At the Child Welfare Services, Bea stated that the subjectivity and diversity between social workers is evident when they are discussing the cases: *'We do have different levels of what we consider serious, right? We are different, right? We have different backgrounds, upbringing, pre-understanding, right? (Bea).*

In this sense, it can be said that the social workers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and in the Child Welfare Services in Stavanger had different understandings or interpretations of what is objective and how to achieve it in evaluation process and in their work. In science objectivity is used as a measurement of validity. Validity is achieved when results are objective, hence value neutral: '[o]bjectivists claim that objectivity requires the elimination of *all* social values and interests from the research process and the results of research' (Harding, 1993, pp. 70-71).

Some feminists argue that aiming for scientific objectivity that is value neutral, dismisses the notions of the standpoints of the researcher: her race and ethnicity, class and gender, her location historically and geographically. That the results of the research that has been stripped from these important notions, that shapes the surrounding world remarkably gives

only incomplete results, hence they are not fulfilling their aim for validity: '(...) objectivism operationalizes the notion of objectivity in much too narrow a way to permit the achievement of the value-free research that is supposed to be its outcome' (Harding, 1993, p. 70).

Being an objective actor in an evaluation situation is difficult. Making decisions on a mother's ability to take care of her children is complicated. There are the social worker's views about 'good enough motherhood' versus the service user's views. These two participants in this situation can have very different epistemological standpoints according to the concept of being a 'good enough mother'. For example a white ethnic-Norwegian social worker's views of the concept can differ significantly from an immigrant mother's views:

'Multiculturalism poses a major dilemma in modern democracies because it contests the dividing line between the public and the private spheres (Kymlicka, 1995; Benhabib, 2002; Archard, 2004). In the area of child welfare, this dilemma consists of the fact that children have rights that the state needs to protect, while parents have the right to determine how to raise their children, and define what is best for them. Social workers, who operate at the fault line between the public and private realms, routinely negotiate this dilemma in their work with black and minority ethnic families (...).' (Križ & Skivenes, 2010, p. 5).

Kvello's evaluation guidelines create the false assumption that the social worker can hide behind the checklists and aim for objectivity. It was evident from all the social workers at this research that subjectivity was unavoidable in the evaluation process. Furthermore, all the social workers used their gut feelings and personal experiences of motherhood when evaluating mothers' abilities to take care of their children. Kvello's definition of a 'good enough mother' is not a universal concept. It is difficult to justify a model that stigmatises certain mothers according their race or ethnicity, class and age. It also targets abused mothers who are already in a vulnerable situation. It focuses on the mothers' responsibility to protect their children and moves the focus away from the fact that it is indeed the man in most cases who is responsible for the abuse and creating the fear in the family. This proves the requirement for a more flexible and understanding model for evaluation than Kvello's guidelines that are based on the calculation of risk and protective factors. Maybe there is something to learn from other cultures' ways to mother as well. Individualistic Norwegian society leaves mothers to take care of their children alone with the guidance and

[Kandidatnummer: 6245]
[Mira Aurora Marlow]

interference of the state on how to 'do it right'. Collective societies are more family central, where the guidance and help comes from the surrounding family and society. Perhaps the focus in Norway should be how to help to strengthen mothers caring abilities and create the supportive 'family' network for those who do not have one. This is society's task, to create a 'village' for mothers who do not have one, rather than labelling mothers to be either 'good enough' or failed.

6 Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was to discuss the Norwegian way of mothering and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' within the society. In particular I wanted to research on how social workers at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and in the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger measure what is required to be a 'good enough mother'. A further focus on this research was to find out whether the social workers' own personal and professional history affected their judgement of who is a 'good enough mother' and whether social workers believe that their judgement is objective or subjective. The specific research objectives within the context of 'good enough motherhood' within the Norwegian society were to:

1. *Identify* the ideas behind the concept of what it means to be a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society.
2. *Evaluate* critically the models and frameworks relevant to supporting the social workers' judgements of who is a 'good enough mother'.
3. *Explore* social workers' views and practices related to making such judgements.
4. *Discuss* the concept of a being 'good enough mother' within the references of Feminist Standpoint Theory.
5. *Assess* critically if a Universal view of what constitutes being a 'good enough mother' exists.

This chapter will revisit the research objectives above. Recommendations for future research will be discussed, in terms of how to progress this study. Finally, I will reflect on my experiences of the research process.

6.1 Research Objectives

6.1.1 Research Objective 1: Ideas behind the concept of a 'good enough mother'

The literature research in this study identified that the concepts of family, mother and what constitutes a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society are socially constructed. Moreover, how motherhood is defined is dependent on the society's reference frames of motherhood and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother'.

Empirical research of this study showed that social parenthood was valued over biological motherhood when the mother was failing to be 'good enough'. For example, one informant who had a problematic relationship with her biological mother found a mother figure in her grandmother and later became a foster mother to her own grandson and described her close loving relationship with him.

The literature review related to my study highlighted that certain concepts of equality and the child's best interests are often misinterpreted or misused to promote other interests, and too often they are assumed to be identical, which is not always the case. The problem is that whose perception is valued in conflict situations? For example, it was shown that in many countries physical punishment was still allowed towards children, whereas it is illegal to use any type of physical punishment or even threatening with it children in Norway. My empirical research identified that informants thought that physical punishment towards children was not acceptable under any circumstance. My literature review also showed that lone motherhood in Norway is not as a negative concept as it is in the UK, even though it is linked with a lower social and economic class in Norwegian society.

6.1.2 Research Objective 2: Models and frameworks for the concept of a 'good enough mother'

The literature review related to this study showed that Øyvind Kvello's model for a 'good enough mother' was based on the correlation of risk and protective factors. He has developed checklists for the observation process and final report writing to help child welfare professionals come to a conclusion about whether a mother is 'good enough' to take care of her children. The child's best principle was central in Kvello's model to evaluate parents' abilities to take care of their children.

I found during my literature research that the list of risk factors among parents was much longer than the list of protective factors. This could be because the checklists were developed to be used with parents who were already service users at the Child Welfare Service. However, in my point of view it is problematic that Kvello (2010) in his book 'Children at risk: damaging care situations'³⁰ had included research material that was

³⁰ Barn i risiko: skadelige omsorgssituasjoner

stigmatising certain groups of mothers, but missed research that highlighted the marginalisation of these groups and other material that contradicted his study.

This literature review showed that Kvello and many other researchers perceived mothers that are victims of domestic violence to have reduced abilities to look after their children. However, feminist researchers have shown that many mothers who lived with a violent partner did try to protect their children from physical and emotional harm, put their children first and managed to provide and care for them adequately. Furthermore, that they were consistently aiming for what can be described as good mothering. However, the constant state of fear, and the abuser's use of power and control within families was affecting mothers' caring abilities.

This study's empirical research showed that it was difficult for informants from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger to understand why the mothers moved back to their violent spouses, especially when children were involved. It was also showed that the Crisis Centre in Stavanger sends notifications as of concern to the Child Welfare Service when a mother returns to an abuser with her children.

The literature research that I performed, pointed out that young mothers were often perceived as irresponsible, lacking class and perhaps also intelligence. Furthermore, their motherhood was seen to be a result of casual sex that leads to casual motherhood. I asked further, whether young motherhood would be such an issue if the Norwegian society would be collectivist rather than an individualistic. Furthermore, in collectivistic societies the guidance and help is provided mainly from the extended family members, whereas in Norway the guidance and help is expected to come from the state. However, this has led to many (young) mothers being left to look after their children without their families' support.

This study's empirical research found out that Kvello's guidelines for evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children were used at the Child Welfare Services in Stavanger. Furthermore, for the informants from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger, Kvello's checklists provided security in an evaluation process, so that they knew what to focus on. This was used as an objective tool in observations and in report writing. It was stated by one informant that using Kvello's checklists initially felt like they should have been focussing on

the negative aspects rather than the positive. However, the same informant stated that they do focus on the mothers' strengths as a parent as well.

6.1.3 Research Objective 3: Views and practices for judgement

The literature review on this study highlighted that the social workers' epistemological standpoints were based on their geographical and historical location, on their race and ethnicity as well on their social and economic class. Furthermore it was claimed that they could only understand motherhood from their own epistemological standpoint. This paper's empirical research found that informants' knowledge of good motherhood was learned from their mothers, family members, friends and their own motherhood. The surrounding society's norms and regulations of what is right and wrong according to motherhood also played a remarkable role. However, I questioned what the 'right' kind of knowledge is according to good motherhood and who has it. Furthermore, the service user's knowledge is as valid as the social worker's view and needs to be respected to a certain extent.

The empirical research in question revealed that the social workers personal knowledge of motherhood and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' had an impact on their evaluation of mothers' abilities to take care of their children. None of the social workers had a 'typical' mother or childhood of their era. All of the informants described challenges in their own mothering, or in becoming a mother. The informants' personal knowledge of motherhood was seen as a source of valuable knowledge that all of them used it in their work. It helped them to understand the mothers in their struggles and their fear of losing a child.

My empirical research revealed that subjective knowledge of the informants' motherhood was stated as important during evaluation situations. They highlighted how childless social workers can be much stricter in their decision making process than those with children and that situations can be more black and white for them, because they have not been in similar situations themselves. It was also shown that it is often difficult for them to gain respect from service users and from other social workers at the Child Welfare Service and the Crisis Centre.

Empirical research in this study showed that the informants from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger used objective tools, such as Kvello's guidelines with their professional

knowledge in evaluation situation. They also used subjective tools, such as their personal knowledge from their childhood and own motherhood and their 'gut feelings', of whether something felt right or wrong in the situation when evaluating mothers' abilities to take care of their children.

Informants from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger did not use any guidelines or checklists, when they were evaluating whether mothers were capable of taking care of their children. The evaluation was based on social workers' observations of the interaction between the mothers and their children, how well the mothers take into account the children's safety and needs. Objectivity was aimed for during the evaluation process by using their professional knowledge and discussions about other social workers' observation of the mothers and their children. Subjective tools that they used during an evaluation were their personal knowledge of what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' and also their instincts.

The informants at the Crisis Centre in Stavanger and the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger had distinct interpretations what objectivity means in their work. Objectivity was important to all informants, although none of them claimed to be purely objective in their work. They acknowledged that their evaluation was based on subjectivity as well. Their personal knowledge of motherhood, their 'gut feelings' and preconceptions of different seriousness levels among other social workers was stated to bring subjectivity into the observation. Being objective enough, according to one informant from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger, was necessary to be able to help. However, too much objectivity was seen as problematic as this could lead to cynicism in one's work. The other informant from the Crisis Centre in Stavanger stated that the goal was to be as objective as possible. Objectivity, according to her, was secured when one speaks to as many colleagues as possible allowing them to come to a collective understanding and agreement of a mother's ability to take care of her children. It was suspicious to her to make decisions based on only one social worker's view of whether a mother is 'good enough'. However, I argued that objectivity in an evaluation situation is difficult because making decisions of mother's ability to take care of their children is complicated. There are the social worker's view and the service user's view of what it takes to be a 'good enough mother'. In these kinds of situations it is the social worker's interpretation of the concept that is dominant and the service user's interpretation that is marginalised.

Empirical research in this study pointed out that the informants at the Child Welfare Centre had strong opinions of how the service users' childhood impacts their mothering abilities. Moreover, that many of the mothers who are service users at the Child Welfare Services are on the edge of what is a 'good enough mother' or even failing to be 'good enough'. They have often experienced poor parenting themselves and thus do not have good references for their own mothering. Informants from the Child Welfare Service stated that often the observation of mothers reveals bigger problems than was originally expected. They did have sympathy for the service users and realised that perhaps some changes in the Child Welfare Services were needed. Furthermore, if families were to get necessary help at an early stage it could help to reduce the number of children being placed outside of the home.

My empirical research found that at the Crisis Centre, the service users were seen to be in crisis upon arrival which was affecting their child care. They were not seen to be bad mothers, but in a way they were in a grey zone of what is considered to be 'good enough'. Furthermore, that they had the right not to work optimally as mothers because of the trauma they had experienced from abuse. It was also stated that the victims of domestic violence often normalise the abnormal, because they have lived in the violent reality for so long that they do not react to what is abnormal anymore.

Empirical research related to this paper also concluded that truly understanding the service users' situation was difficult because of the short period of time that they were staying at the Crisis Centre and the language barrier was often causing difficulties to get to know the service users. At the Child Welfare Centre, it was stated that as such it was not necessary to get to 'know' the service user as the focus should be on the child's wellbeing. Furthermore, the time given for concluding an observation was found to be challenging, although it was enough to get an impression of the service user's situation and make a judgement of the mothering abilities.

6.1.4 Research Objective 4: Being a 'good enough mother' and Feminist Standpoint Theory

The literature concerning this study highlighted that there does not exist such a thing as an objective true value. Furthermore, the Standpoint Theory states that knowledge is socially constructed, where cultural and racial aspects are visible and important. Indeed, it was shown that every mother has individual concepts of motherhood and what constitutes being

a 'good enough mother'. A mother's epistemological standpoint is important. That is based on her historical and geographical locations, on her ethnicity, race, class and on her age. These variables have shaped her knowledge and concepts of what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' within the society. Class, race and ethnicity are important markers in society's power structure. They play a remarkable role when discussing the power imbalance between social workers and service users at the Child Welfare Services and the Crisis Centres in Norway. Furthermore, as stated in an evaluation situation it is often the social worker's knowledge of motherhood that is counted as relevant over the service user's knowledge.

Most of the social workers at the Child Welfare Service and the Crisis Centre in Stavanger are white ethnic-Norwegians, whereas a larger proportion of the service users are not. However, white ethnic Norwegian's views of 'good enough motherhood' can be distinctly different from other ethnic group and racial background mother's views. It was discussed whether the reason that immigrant parents and their children were well represented in the Child Welfare Services in Norway was because of their alternative parenting methods to the Norwegian tradition or because their parenting methods were more easily intervened than those of the natives'. However, it was shown that immigrant parents' children were more likely to be placed outside of their family homes than ethnic-Norwegian parents' children. This has caused arguments that certain ethnic groups are discriminated against in Norway. Because of the high rate of ethnic service users at the Child Welfare Services and the Crisis Centres in Norway it is important to have cultural understanding and acceptance among social workers. It is crucial to acknowledge the power imbalance between social workers and service users when conflict between concepts and values arise.

Even though the service users are from all social and economic classes, the literature review showed that lower classes were more represented than middle class in the Child Welfare Services in Norway. A middle-class social worker is in a better social position and probably has a different understanding of 'good enough motherhood' than a working-class mother. Poverty can significantly affect a mother's abilities to look after her children. However, the literature research showed that welfare authorities were not doing enough to help mothers in their financial struggle. Lone motherhood and immigrant background was a marker in poverty as well.

The literature research in this study showed that the power relationship between the social workers and service users was evident. It was stated in Kvello's book that many social workers at the Child Welfare Services start to judge the service users based on first impressions prior to any conversations taking place. Informants in this research pointed out the danger of the power that they have in the evaluation and report writing processes. They were also concerned and aware of their own and other social workers' pre-assumptions in the evaluation situation.

6.1.5 Research Objective 5: Universalism in a 'good enough motherhood'

This study's literature findings stated that Norway is a multicultural society and that concepts are different within each culture and have different reference frames. For example in Russia the working mother was not a positive concept, whereas it is in Norway. My literature review pointed out that objectivity in research and in the evaluation situation means that it is missing the direct personal experience and therefore the knowledge is more likely to be inaccurate, unreliable and distorted. According to this literature review the true sense of knowledge is internally constructed. Furthermore, social constructivism holds that the world, concepts such as motherhood and being a 'good enough mother' are products of a collective reality. Indeed, we do not live in a world that is culturally neutral and our concepts and values are not based on universal truth.

Kvello's guidelines in an evaluation process are aimed to fulfil objectivity. I criticised that this leads to a false assumption of neutrality in an observation situation. Furthermore, it is problematic to justify that a 'neutral' observer has an objective knowledge of what it takes to be a 'good enough mother'. No matter how much the social worker tries to be a neutral, value free observer, she is doomed to fail because she is, indeed, a subjective being. Kvello's 'good enough mother' is not a universal concept. His a 'good enough mother' is more likely to represent an ethnocentric illusion, where a white middle-class Norwegian mother is central in the concept and mothers with diverse cultural backgrounds, class and civil statuses are in a marginalised group. Though, such a culture and value neutral concept of 'good enough motherhood' does not exist. The ideal motherhood varies in each era, in each culture and from mother to mother. It is questionable whether Kvello's risk factors, race, ethnicity, age and class actually negatively affect mothering abilities. It cannot be that the

only 'right' kind of knowledge of what is to be a 'good enough mother' is produced in Norwegian society by white middle-class academics. Hence, we must reject the view that a universal concept of a 'good enough mother' exist.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

If I would have more time to continue this research, I would have expanded it to focus on how immigrant mothers are actually treated in the Child Welfare Services, the Crisis Centre and by other welfare authorities. Immigrants make up the majority of service users at both the Crisis Centres and the Child Welfare Services in Norway. They are also suffering from poverty in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Furthermore, are immigrant mothers discriminated against and targeted because of their low social and economic class and their ethnicity by the welfare authorities in Norwegian society? Have their views of mothering been respected or dismissed as unimportant and too distinct from the Norwegian tradition by the Child Welfare Services in Norway?

If I would have even more time and resources, I would perform an international research of the concept 'good enough motherhood'. I would try to find answers to whether there are similarities within the individualistic societies (Norway, the UK, Finland for example) and also with more collectivist societies (Portugal, Nepal, Ghana for example) in practices of how social workers at the Child Welfare Services evaluate the mothers' abilities to take care of their children. What are the collectivist societies' demands for 'good enough motherhood'? Are the practices in these quite distinct cultures based on guidelines similar to Kvello's or are they accepting a more subjective method of evaluation? Moreover, are diverse ways of mothering more accepted in collectivist societies than they are in individualistic societies?

In the introduction I discussed the rights to become a parent in Norway, and how this can be seen as a normative control to who are socially accepted to be parents. As egg donation and surrogacy are illegal in Norway, couples who do not have usable eggs or a functioning uterus and gay men are in a disadvantaged position reproductively. Most likely their only chance to get genetic children is to travel abroad and pay a fortune. It is interesting how the family/ reproductive politics in Norway clearly state that woman's eggs are more valuable than man's semen. Cloning is also banned in Norway, so without semen and an egg there cannot be a child. In this way, lesbian mothers are in a better position than

gay men, as donated semen can be used for artificial insemination, as long as they have usable eggs. Further studies need to be done to find out whether lesbians are valued over gay men in adoption situations when the children are not one spouse's offspring. Furthermore, is sexuality and gender seen to have an impact to the concept of being a 'good enough parent' in Norwegian society and are lesbian mothers more acceptable parents than gay fathers?

Informants from the Child Welfare Service in Stavanger asked why I chose motherhood and not parenthood according to the concept of being 'good enough'. The reason behind the decision was not that I think motherhood is more important than fatherhood, but because parenting is not a gender neutral practice. Even though fathers in Norway are heavily involved in the parenting duties, the work concerning child care is done mostly by mothers (Statistics Norway, 2013b). They are the ones that work often shorter day to be able to fetch the children from the kindergarten (ibid). Mothers do also stay longer periods at home looking after their babies when they are born than fathers do (ibid). However, 'good enough fatherhood' needs to be researched as well. Perhaps in the fathers' point of view. Gay fathers and immigrant fathers would be an interesting study population.

6.3 Self-Reflection

'He was heavy in my arms, and on my breast, like the heaviest thing in the world, to the limit on my strength. He buried me in silence and darkness. All at once he had put the weight of the world on my shoulders. That was indeed why I wanted him. I was too light myself. Alone, I was too light' (Colette Audrey in Beauvoir, 2011, p. 568).

Audrey's quote speaks volumes to me: motherhood has been painful but also the best journey in my life. It has been full of worries and concerns, but also the greatest source of joy and love. Before becoming a mother, I had black and white picture of how to be one. One was either a good or a bad mother. An iconic mother or a complete failure. No grey scales, no room to fail. My burden was heavy. I did not have many good references from my childhood and I was worried that I would be a bad mother.

I could describe the process of this dissertation in the same way. Although, it does not compare to being a mother, it has been full of doubt about my own capability of doing the research. My emotions have changed from exploding excitement to deep uncertainty of whether I am doing good enough work. I juggled between duties of motherhood, being a

wife and a research student. There were days when I could not find the time or motivation to just sit down and progress my dissertation. It was heart-breaking to leave my daughters and go to campus to work with this paper. I was doubting my decision to study in the first place because I found it difficult to justify writing about being a 'good enough mother' when I had left my daughters with my husband to be able to commit to the research.

Initially I was going to write about Polish women's position in the Norwegian labour market and I had already started to do research for it. However, I lost interest in the topic because it did not seem to be that Polish women were actually in a marginalised position in the Norwegian labour market and they were also very distant group of people to me. Then I had an idea to write about motherhood and what it takes to be a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society and my dissertation advisor guided me towards this. I think the most important and crucial aspect to be a successful in dissertation project is to find a research topic that is genuinely interesting for the student. Many students are struggling to combine theory with their research. However, this was not a problem for me, as I knew before I had even decided what I was going to write my dissertation about, that my chosen theory would be Feminist Standpoint Theory. It has fascinated me from when I first discovered it while studying my bachelors eight years ago.

The most difficult part of this project for me was to write the transcripts from the interviews. The first transcript took over 14 hours to write. Luckily it got easier when I got a grasp of it. However, I would probably consider to let someone else write them for me if I would do this type of research again. I did not write the dissertation in linear order, but worked with all the chapters at the same time. I would say that the most time consuming chapters were interpretation and discussion, because I initially began to write them together and because of the analysing process of the interviews took a long time. Overall, everything took more time than I expected. Also, I did the literature research throughout the project. I did some of the background research for the concept of what it is to be a 'good enough mother' within Norwegian society, before the interviews, but I read most of the literature during the writing process.

For me writing this masters dissertation has been an amazing learning experience. I learned how important it is to reflect on own views and practices. I learned how essential it is when

[Kandidatnummer: 6245]
[Mira Aurora Marlow]

performing social work to be aware of my own preconceptions and interpretations when meeting service users who are in a vulnerable situation. I learned that such a thing as a universal concept for 'good enough motherhood' does not exist, but laws that protect children from abuse and neglect are a necessity. I reflected throughout the whole study on my own views of what is a 'good enough mother'. For me it means a mother who accepts and respects her children as they are. She is the one who does her best and recognises her own weaknesses and seeks help when needed. A mother, who embraces the differences between all mothers and respects their views. She is one who fails, apologises for it and moves on. She sees herself as a unit with her children on the one hand but also recognises the individuality in each of them. Most of all, she loves her children.

7 Bibliography

- Banks, S. (2006). *Ethics and values in social work* (3rd ed.). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beauvoir, S. d. (2011). *The Second Sex* (C. Borde & S. Malovany-Chevallier Eds.). London: Vintage.
- Benard, B. (2005). Using Strengths-Based Practice to Tap the Resilience of Families. In D. Saleebey (Ed.), *The Strengths perspective in social work practice* (pp. 197-220). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Beresford, P. (2003). *It's our lives : a short theory of knowledge, distance and experience*. London: Citizen Press.
- Berglund, N. (2014, June 26 2014). Child poverty on the rise in Norway. Retrieved April 18 2015, from <http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/06/26/child-poverty-on-the-rise-in-norway/>
- Biggam, J. (2008). *Succeeding with your master's dissertation : a step-by-step handbook*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Blaikie, N. W. H. (1993). *Approaches to social enquiry*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blaikie, N. W. H. (2000). *Designing social research : the logic of anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boulton, D. (2000). Unusual terms: what do you mean by ...? In B. Humphries (Ed.), *Research in social care and social welfare : issues and debates for practice* (pp. 86-91). London ; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Bufeta. (2013, October 8th 2013). Child welfare service. Retrieved April 4th, 2015, from <http://www.bufetat.no/Information-in-English/Child-welfare-service/>
- Butler, P. (2014, Wednesday 15 October 2014). Child poverty levels in UK mapped out by new research. Retrieved April 18, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/oct/15/child-poverty-levels-uk-mapped-out-research>
- Butterfield, E. (2010). Days and Nights of a New Mother: Existentialism in the Nursery. In S. Lintott (Ed.), *Motherhood : philosophy for everyone : the birth of wisdom* (pp. 65-76). Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- CPS. (2014). Offences against the Person, incorporating the Charging Standard. Retrieved 2014.10.07, from http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/l_to_o/offences_against_the_person/#correction
- Crowdson, G., & Banks, R. (2008). *Beneath the roses*. New York: Abrams.
- D'Cruz, H., & Jones, M. (2004). *Social work research : ethical and political contexts*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.
- Ellingsen, C., Kumano-Ensby, A. L., & Grønli, H. (2014). Barsediplomatiet (Article). Retrieved 2015.05.03, from NRK <http://www.nrk.no/magasin/barsediplomatiet-1.11646814>
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2009). *The incomplete revolution : adapting to women's new roles*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters : the social construction of white women*. London: Routledge.
- Furman, B. (2000). *Det er aldri for sent å få en lykkelig barndom*. Oslo: Pedagogisk forum.
- Gillies, V. (2007). *Marginalised mothers : exploring working-class experiences of parenting*. London: Routledge.
- Gray, M., & Webb, S. A. (2012). *Social work theories and methods* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Harding, S. (1993). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is "Strong Objectivity"? In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), *Feminist epistemologies* (pp. 49-82). New York: Routledge.

- Henry, S. E. (2010). How Many Experts Does It Take To Raise A Child? In S. Lintott (Ed.), *Motherhood : philosophy for everyone : the birth of wisdom* (pp. 17-28). Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2004). *Approaches to qualitative research : a reader on theory and practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought : knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (Rev. 10th anniversary ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Hugaas, J. V. (2011). *Foreldreskapets normative og faktiske grunnlag: en filosofisk drøfting med referanse til Locke, Kant og Hegel*.
- Intemann, K. (2010). 25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now? *Hypatia*, 25(4), 778-796. doi: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01138.x
- Kalve, T., & Allertsen, L. M. (2006). Plassering i barnevernstjenesten
- Store forskjeller i plasseringer av barn og unge, med og uten innvandrerbakgrunn. *Samfunnsspeilet*, 2006/4.
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Los Angeles ; London: SAGE.
- Krisesentersekretariatet. (2015). The Women's Shelter. Retrieved April 3rd, 2015, from <http://www.krisesenter.com/english/english.html>
- Križ, K., & Skivenes, M. (2010). 'We have very different positions on some issues': how child welfare workers in Norway and England bridge cultural differences when communicating with ethnic minority families: 'Vi har ganske forskjellige posisjoner i noen saker': om hvordan barnevernarbeidere i Norge og England håndterer kulturelle forskjeller når de kommuniserer med etniske minoritetsfamilier. *European Journal of Social Work*, 13(1), 3-18. doi: 10.1080/13691450903135626
- Kvello, Ø. (2010). *Barn i risiko : skadelige omsorgssituasjoner*. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Lintott, S. (2010). *Motherhood : philosophy for everyone : the birth of wisdom*. Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mathison, M. A. (1997). The Complicity of Essentializing Difference. *Communication Theory*, 7(2), 149-161. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.1997.tb00146.x
- Michell, S. (2011). Beyond welfare state models : transnational historical perspectives on social policy. In P. Kettunen & K. Petersen (Eds.), *Globalization and welfare* (pp. 119-138). Cheltenham ; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Moen, N. (2009). *Hjemme blant fremmede og fremmede hjemme : intervjuer med russiske kvinner i Norge i lys av diskursteoretisk perspektiv*. (Masters in Sociology Mastersgradoppgave), Universitetet i Oslo, Oslo Universitetet Retrieved from <http://www.duo.uio.no/>
- Nersund, R., & Govasmark, H. (2012). Rapportering fra krisesentertilbudene 2012 (pp. 52). Trondheim: Sentio Research Norge.
- Nortvedt, P., & Grimen, H. (2004). *Sensibilitet og refleksjon : filosofi og vitenskapsteori for helsefag*. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- NOU 2009:5. (2009a). *Farskap og annen morskap: Fastsettelse og endring av foreldreskap*. Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter, Informasjonsforvaltning.
- NOU 2009:5. (2009b). *Farskap og annen morskap: Fastsettelse og endring av foreldreskap*. Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter, Informasjonsforvaltning.
- NSPCC. (2012). Policy on physical abuse in high risk families. Retrieved 1.10.2014, 2014, from http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/physicalabuse/policy_wda87944.html
- Omre, C., & Schjelderup, L. E. (2009). *Barn i barnevernet: en studie om barns deltakelse og styrkeprosesser i familieråd*. Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forl.
- Platell, A. (2010, April 30th 2010). The town that marriage forgot: My journey to single mother central, News, *The Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1269898/The-town-marriage-forgot-My-journey-single-mother-central.html>

- Radford, L., Corral, S., Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C., Howat, N., & Collishaw, S. (2011). *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*. NSPCC web page: NSPCC.
- Regjeringen.no. (2000). Betalingsordninger i barnevernet. Retrieved April 4th, 2015, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumenter/betalingsordninger-i-barnevernet/id108601/>
- Rich, A. (2007). Anger and Tenderness. In A. O'Reilly (Ed.), *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings* Toronto: Demeter Press.
- Saleebey, D. (2005). *The Strengths perspective in social work practice*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Seim, S. (2007). Brukemedvirkning - et fremmeord for barn og unge i barnevernet. In T. Slettebø & S. Seim (Eds.), *Brukemedvirkning i barnevernet* (pp. 68-88). Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class and gender : becoming respectable*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again : feminist ontology and epistemology* (2nd Rev. ed ed.). London: Routledge.
- Statistics Norway. (2013a). *Immigration and immigrants in Norwegian municipalities*. Statistisk sentralbyrå: Statistisk sentralbyrå Retrieved from <http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/innvandrernes-fordeling-og-sammensetning-paa-kommunenivaa>.
- Statistics Norway. (2013b). *Yrkes- og familiearbeid i barnefasen. Endring og variasjon i foreldres tidsbruk 1970-2010*. <http://www.ssb.no/>: Statistics Norway.
- Statistics Norway. (2014). *Folkemengden, 1. januar 2014*. <http://www.ssb.no/>: Statistics Norway.
- Statistics Norway. (2015). *Barn og unge med innvandrebakgrunn i barnevernet 2012*. www.ssb.no: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- Stavanger Kommune. (2015). Kriesesenteret i Stavanger Retrieved April 4th 2015, from <http://www.stavanger.kommune.no/no/Tilbud-tjenester-og-skjema/Barn-og-familie/Kriesesenter/English-and-other-laguages/>
- The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. (2012, 2012.05.01). Norway. Retrieved 2015.05.05, from http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/frame.html?http%3A//www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/table_a-d.html
- The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. (2013, 2013.02.01). Poland. Retrieved 2015.05.05, from <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/reports/poland.html>
- The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. (2015a, 2015.03.01). Legality of corporal punishment worldwide. Retrieved 2015.05.05, from http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/frame.html?http%3A//www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/table_a-d.html
- The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. (2015b, 2015.03.01). States With Full Abolition. Retrieved 2015.05.05, from http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/prohib_states.html
- Unicef. (1989). The Convention of the rights of the child. Retrieved 2014.03.10, from <http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/Our-mission/UN-Convention/>
- Unicef. (2010). Nordic Study on Child Rights to Participate 2009-2010. In Innolink Research (Ed.). Child Health research.
- Vagli, Å. (2009). *Behind closed doors : exploring the institutional logic of child protection work*. University of Bergen, Bergen.
- Vehusheia, G. (2004). *Den juridiske konstruksjon av den gode mor : -en analyse av morsrollen ved bruk av begrepet om likestilling og begrepet om barnets beste*. (Masters of Law Master Thesis), Universitetet i Oslo, Norwegian Open Research Archives (NORA)
- Wendt, S., Buchanan, F., & Moulding, N. (2015). Mothering and Domestic Violence: Situating Maternal Protectiveness in Gender. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 1(13), 1-13.

[Kandidatnummer: 6245]
[Mira Aurora Marlow]

- Young, S., McKenzie, M., Schjelderup, L., & Omre, C. (2011). The rights of the child enabling community development to contribute to a valid social work practice with children at risk. *European Journal of Social Work*, 15(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/13691457.2010.543889
- Younge, G. (2005, Monday 5 September). Left to sink or swim, *Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/05/hurricanekatrina.usa12>
- Ystehede, P. J., & Kanestrøm, J. (2012, 2012.04.16.). Partnerdrap er et maskulint fenomen. Retrieved 2015.04.27., from <http://www.jus.uio.no/ikrs/forskning/aktuelle-saker/2012/partnervold.html>

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Background
 - a. Type of parenthood
 - i. Mother, biological/ foster/ adoptive mother, grandparent, none
2. What does 'motherhood' mean to you personally? / being a mother?
 - a. How would you describe your relationships with your mother?
3. How would you define a good mother?
4. What do you see in the picture? (Show participant a picture of a mother and a child)
5. What feelings does the picture provoke in you?
 - a. Why are the feelings positive/ negative?
6. What if you could see the picture a bit closer?
 - a. Why are the feelings positive/ negative?
7. Do you think that your personal history affects your opinions of what constitutes being a good enough mother?
 - a. If yes, how and to what extent?
 - b. If no, why not?
8. On what do you base your judgement of one's capability of taking care of one's children?
9. Do you think that you know the client and her history well enough when making an evaluation of her parenting abilities?
 - a. Do you think this type of evaluation is subjective or objective?
 - i. Why?
 - b. If you close your eyes can you recollect the feelings that you have had when you have been required to make such an evaluation?
10. Has becoming a mother/ grandmother/ parent changed your opinions of what constitutes being a good enough mother?
 - a. *Do you think that a person who does not have this experience (of becoming a parent/ grandparent) can make a good evaluation of one's parenting abilities?*

APPENDIX TWO: INFORMANT LETTER

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

”The Epistemological Standpoint and Motherhood in Norwegian Society”

Bakgrunn og formål

Å reflektere og vurdere ulike rammer for å være en god nok mor i det norske samfunnet. Prosjektet er en mastergradsstudie ved Universitetet i Stavanger i samarbeid mellom Krisesenteret i Stavanger og Barnevernet i Stavanger.

Personen som forespørres om å delta skal være sosialarbeider som har erfaring å vurdere mors omsorgsevne.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Mange takk for at du bidrar til mastersgradoppgaven min. Din deltakelse i mitt studie bidrar til å skape forståelse for definisjonen av moderskap i Norge, og hva skal til for å være en god nok mor i det norske samfunnet.

Datainnsamling som krever aktiv deltagelse er semi-strukturert individuelt intervju som tar cirka en time. Spørsmålene vil omhandle hvordan moderskap er personlig for deltakeren og hvordan evaluering av mors omsorgsevne blir gjort. Data som skal registreres er filmopptak.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Bare forskeren skal ha tilgang til personopplysninger. Personopplysninger og opptak lagres for å ivareta konfidensialitet. Koblingsnøkkel lagres adskilt fra øvrige data.

Deltakerne vil kunne ikke gjenkjennes i publikasjon.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes **01.06.2015**. Personopplysninger og opptak skal være slettet etter avslutte dato. Datamaterialet skal anonymiseres ved prosjektslutt.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Mira Aurora Marlow tlf: 456 93 283. Veileder til studentprosjekt er Kari Søndena tlf: 51 83 10 00.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

APPENDIX THREE: NSD NOTIFICATION

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Kari Søndena
Institutt for sosialfag Universitetet i Stavanger
Ullandhaug
4036 STAVÅNGER

Kaasid Hiltapen gate 29
N-5017 Bergen
Norsag
Tel: +47 55 58 21 12
Fax: +47 55 58 96 50
mailto:nsd@uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org. nr. 905 321 884

Vår dato: 01.12.2014

Vår ref: 40477 / 3 / MSS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 27.10.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

40477	<i>The Epistemological Standpoint and Motherhood in Norwegian society</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Kari Søndena
Student	Mira Aurora Marlow

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i melde skjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.06.2015, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Marie Strand Schildmann

Kontaktperson: Marie Strand Schildmann tlf: 55 58 31 52

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Mira Aurora Marlow ma.marlow@stud.uib.no

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDa rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontor / Depot Office

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47 22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7015 Trondheim. Tel: +47 73 59 19 07. kjenn-nsd@ntnu.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD SVE, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47 77 64 43 36. nsd@uib.no

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektur: 40477

Utvalget informeres skriftlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet.

Utvalget består av ansatte fra et Krisesenter og to ansatte fra barnevernet.

Det innhentes kun opplysninger om de ansattes opplevelse og det kuyttes ikke til enkeltsaker. Det innhentes ikke opplysninger om tredjepersoner (brukere av krisesenteret/barnevernet) og taushetsplikten vil derfor ikke være til hinder for datainnsamlingen.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Universitetet i Stavanger sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på privat pc/mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 01.06.2015. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette videoopptak

APPENDIX FOUR: PARTICIPATION CONCENT FORM

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

”The Epistemological Standpoint and Motherhood in Norwegian Society”

Bakgrunn og formal

Å reflektere og vurdere ulike rammer for å være en god nok mor i det norske samfunnet.

Prosjektet er en mastergradsstudie ved Universitetet i Stavanger i samarbeid mellom Kriesenteret i Stavanger og Barnevernet i Stavanger.

Personen som forespørres om å delta skal være sosialarbeider som har erfaring å vurdere mors omsorgsevne.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Mange takk for at du bidrar til mastersgradoppgaven min. Din deltakelse i mitt studie bidrar til å skape forståelse for definisjonen av moderskap i Norge, og hva skal til for å være en god nok mor i det norske samfunnet.

Datainnsamling som krever aktiv deltagelse er semi-strukturert individuelt intervju som tar cirka en time. Spørsmålene vil omhandle hvordan moderskap er personlig for deltakeren og hvordan evaluering av mors omsorgsevne blir gjort. Data som skal registreres er filmopptak.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Bare forskeren skal ha tilgang til personopplysninger. Personopplysninger og opptak lagres for å ivareta konfidensialitet. Koblingsnøkkel lagres adskilt fra øvrige data.

Deltakerne vil kunne ikke gjenkjennes i publikasjon.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes **01.06.2015**. Personopplysninger og opptak skal være slettet etter avslutte dato. Datamaterialet skal anonymiseres ved prosjektslutt.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Mira Aurora Marlow tlf: 456 93 283. Veileder til studentprosjekt er Kari Søndena tlf: 51 83 10 00.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)