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A Narrative Understanding of the Maternal Experience of urban Black South African Mothers

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Arts Masters in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the maternal experiences of black South African mothers living in a township in Johannesburg. Extensive research and literature has begun to address the experiences of motherhood from the mother's perspective, however research into the experiences of black mothers is still limited. In the past psychological literature on South African motherhood tended to focus on at-risk mothers and children rather than exploring their personal narratives. This study presents the narratives of six black mothers living in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, Gauteng. The six mothers participated in individual, semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using the narrative analysis technique. The analysis provides insight into the personal experiences of motherhood and highlights the central narratives that these mothers told. What emerged is that mothers have individual and unique stories to tell, their stories about becoming a mother are central to their narratives on motherhood and the context in which mothers mother is pivotal in shaping their mothering experiences.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

O'Connell (1994) claims that "becoming a mother is an astonishing event and one which very many women regard as the most important in their lives" (p. 20). Many cultures support the notion that motherhood can be seen as the ultimate fulfilment in a woman's life, however this notion can be problematic as it may not allow for mothers' experiences to be fully engaged with. When it is considered that most people are mothered at some point in their lives and many women's adult lives are preoccupied with the act of mothering, it is "perhaps not surprising that motherhood has been, and still is, a popular theme in many novels, developmental psychology books and child care manuals" (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999, p. 17). While much theorising has focused on motherhood and many have written about mothers, there is a need to explore more of the actual lived experience of motherhood which this research aims to address. There is a disjunction between what is known about motherhood and mothers' individual experiences of motherhood. Some research has begun to address the experiences of mothers from their perspectives, yet the focus has largely been on white, Western mothers. It is understood that motherhood is not a homogeneous experience, however, in order to fully understand this, it is essential that all mothers from various backgrounds, ethnic groups and cultures are provided with a means of expressing their stories.

Many psychoanalytic theorists have addressed the importance of mothers in infants' lives and in their development. Winnicott (1960) states that "there is no such thing as an infant, meaning that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant" (p. 39). This statement highlights the importance of mothers' roles in infants' developing egos. Much of this writing has allowed psychologists to become aware of the infant and infants' internal worlds as they mediate through the many developmental challenges in their lives. The transitional process into motherhood can be considered an important developmental challenge that many women have to mediate. Woollett and Phoenix (1991) explain that "motherhood is generally seen as an essential stage in women's adult development and as providing them with a central identity as adults" (p. 28). Developmental psychology has addressed the manner in which the infant is able to mediate through the developmental challenges that people face, however, little is understood regarding how the

mother manages this unique developmental transition that many women experience. Motherhood is perceived as important for the development of children rather than understood for what it is. "Theoretically, socially and personally motherhood is often constructed as a function rather than an experience: the subject of motherhood is the child receiving mothering rather than the mother herself" (Long, 2009, p. 55). Traditionally, the focus of studies on mothering has been on how the mother is a tool in her child's development rather than how she experiences mothering herself.

Arendell (2000) explains that there has been a shift in present literature on mothering and motherhood. It has expanded from a solitary focus on the effects of mothering on children to include the experiential nature of motherhood. Thus, the subjective experience of mothers has become important as it addresses the limitations to understanding mothers as objects in children's lives and provides an understanding into an experience that is largely unexplored. Often, the subjective experience of motherhood is overlooked in favour of objective understandings of motherhood. "Mothers don't write, they are written" (Suleiman, quoted by Parker, 1996, p8). With the emergence of the feminist movement there has been an increased awareness of women and an aim to understand women from women's perspectives (Choi, Henshaw, Baker & Tree, 2005; Kruger, 2003). Feminists seek to enhance the voices of women who have been previously overlooked (Ambert, Adler, Adler & Detzner, 1995). Black mothers' stories have been overlooked in the past and it is important to tell the stories that have not yet been told in order to get a true picture of motherhood from the mothers' perspectives.

Some research in South Africa has attempted to explore South African mothers from their perspectives (Daniels, 2004; Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004; Kruger, 2003; Mamabolo, 2009; van Doorene, 2009; Walker, 1995), however, research of this nature is still limited, particularly within the black urban context. The psychological literature on South African motherhood tends to focus on at-risk mothers and children (Kruger, 2006). Black mothers in South Africa have typically been portrayed as helpless victims with "little or no control over their lives" (Daniels, 2002, p. 1). Other studies overemphasise the pathological when looking at black mothers (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). There is also a pervasive tendency when studying marginalised mothers to focus on the 'problems' associated with motherhood rather than the subjective experiences of the mothers themselves (Kruger, 2006). There are assumptions about culture and motherhood that have not been told from black

mothers' perspectives. It is of importance to locate black mothers' narratives and to position them within the broader context of motherhood in general.

1.2 Research aims

The aim of this research is to explore urban black South African mothers'[1] experiences of motherhood through an interpretation of their narratives. This study recognises the importance of stories and how they are told. Smith and Sparkes (2006) explain that, through language, talking and writing, people are engaged in the process of understanding themselves and constructing stories that shape their identities. This statement highlights the importance of attending to the stories that people tell and, particularly for this study, the stories that mothers tell. What is of interest is what kinds of stories they tell, how they tell them and what meanings they construct about motherhood through the telling of their stories. This was achieved by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with mothers who access the Alexandra Health Centre in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, Gauteng. Narrative analysis was used to analyse the interviews. Their feelings, thoughts, experiences and ideas about mothering were explored. Through an interpretation of the interviews, this study aims to provide an account of black mothers' experiences of motherhood in the stories that they tell.

Walker (1995) asserts the importance of taking a multidimensional approach to understanding motherhood; to view motherhood from only one perspective is problematic in that a wealth of information is overlooked. The experience of motherhood is multifaceted and the aim of this research is to explore the various parts that are central to a black mother's experience. Of particular interest was black mothers' experiences within a particular, unique urban context, i.e. Alexandra township. It is acknowledged that the findings will not be generalisable to all black South African mothers living in a township, however, the aim is to present the unique stories that these particular women tell and to consider the aspects of their stories that converge and diverge. It is also vital to note, however, that not all black mothers' experiences will be the same, even within this context. Women all have unique narratives and the stories of mothers differ: motherhood is a heterogeneous experience rather than a universal, homogeneous one. Following this, this research study aims to consider the

[1] From this point onwards the term 'black mothers' will be used to describe urban black South African mothers

individual stories told by the mothers in this study, to address how their narratives on motherhood began and what contextual factors play a role in their experiences of motherhood.

South Africa, as a nation, is implicitly aware of culture and race. The political context from which many mothers have emerged in the past has had a marked impact on the perspectives and constructions of motherhood. It is important to consider South Africa's particular history when considering how cultural influences impact on the meaning of motherhood for black and white South African women (Walker, 1995). This study aims to take the culturally embedded perspectives of motherhood into consideration and to explore how culture may be important in conceptualising motherhood for black mothers. It is also important to consider their perspectives on the position of mothers in society, their race and the various roles they play in addition to the role as a mother and how this impacts on their experiences as a mother in contemporary South Africa. Through the interpretation of these women's narratives the researcher hopes to gain a greater understanding of black mothers' unique internal experiences that shape their external practice and how they mediate the role of mother within a broader socio-economic and cultural context.

While it is important for mothers to be given an independent voice from which they can express their stories, it is vital that these stories are scrutinised, analysed and understood in relation to other stories, and it should be assumed that these stories are shaped by social factors (Kruger, 2006). From this perspective, the aim of this study will also take into account how black mothers' narratives are linked to common motherhood ideals. The aim is to give a voice to women who may not have had the opportunity to share their narratives and, in doing so, construct additional perspectives of being a black mother in the South African context. All mothers' experiences are unique. What is of interest here is particularly how black working class mothers living in Alexandra construct their narratives.

This research study aims to explore a population that represents the majority in South Africa but which is largely under-researched and aims to explore and understand this unique perspective from the narratives that they offer. This understanding will add greater depth and reality to the understanding of mothers in general and specifically black mothers. The aim is to contribute to the body of literature on this topic in South Africa and to stimulate further

research in this particular area, specifically focusing on how black women create meaning around motherhood through their narratives.

1.3 Research rationale

As discussed, while research is increasingly focusing on the lived experience of women and particularly mothers, there is still a gap in current literature. A particular gap is in understanding the experiences of black mothers, not only in South Africa but in all parts of the world. While there has been an attempt to understand more of the experiences of motherhood, the limited range of research tends to homogenise mothers as there is limited understanding into the many experiences that mothers have. Daniels (2004) explains that there are many reasons for the misrepresentation of women, one of them being that when one attempts to study groups of people, one tends to universalise the experience which ignores the extensiveness and uniqueness of women's experiences. She also asserts that factors such as linguistic, ethnic, racial and cultural differences in cross cultural research has been found to contribute to this misrepresentation (Daniels, 2004). There is a concern that despite feminist research making ground in the researching of the experiences of women, Western researchers are still unclear on African women's experiences (Nnoromele, 2002). It is from this understanding that this research locates itself. While black women's experiences are underrepresented, black mothers' experiences are even more so.

Many black mothers raise their children in urban townships. While some may consider this to represent at-risk mothering, this experience is normal for many women. A general aim is to understand the stories that black mothers living in an urban setting tell. Township living is a unique context which gives flavour to the stories that mothers tell and it is inextricably interwoven into their narratives. Research that addresses the experiences of mothers living in this context is limited in South Africa, thus this research aims to address this gap in the literature. "The motherhood that emerges from the literature is primarily middle class, (mostly) white and part of a nuclear family, with very little attention being given to cultural and structural diversity" (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999, p. 18). Thus, is it vital that other mothers' experiences also be explored, particularly black, working class mothers who may not depend primarily on the nuclear family.

Kruger (2006) explains that "an analysis of how contemporary mothering and mothers are psychologically impacted upon by race, class and culture is almost entirely missing from the

South African literature" (p. 194). Furthermore, research on the subjective experiences of mothers is limited (Kruger, 2006), thus this research study is important as it contributes to a greater understanding of the subjective experience of mothers and particularly sheds light into the condition of black mothers living in a township.

1.4 The context of this study: Alexandra township

The aim of this study is to explore the maternal experiences of mothers living in an urban context. Black, working class mothers are the focus of the study as black mothers' experiences are underrepresented in current literature on maternal experiences in South Africa. It was for this reason that mothers were selected from within Alexandra township. It is reported that approximately 350 000 people live in the Alexandra area (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2006; Wilson, 2011) and therefore it is assumed that this particular context plays a role in many mothers' lives. The participants in this study are working class mothers who live and raise their children in this environment and who access health care from the Alexandra Health Centre. In order to explore the experiences that mothers have, it is vital to contextualise the environment in which this study is based.

The Alexandra Health Centre is located on the outskirts of Alexandra township and provides primary health care to an impoverished community. The clinic began as a mother-child clinic in 1939 and has grown from a two-roomed corrugated iron building to a much larger community based primary healthcare facility (www.alexclinic.org.za). Alexandra township is located in the north eastern suburbs of Johannesburg and borders one of South Africa's wealthiest suburbs, Sandton. This serves to produce a strong contrast between the vibrant economic hub of Sandton and the severely impoverished Alexandra township (Wilson, 2011). Alexandra covers an area of 7.6 square kilometres, holds around 20 000 shacks and is very well located close to the centre of Johannesburg with access to main roads which is an anomaly when compared to other peri-urban settlements that were formed during Apartheid. Most often these settlements were huge and located far from the city centres (Wilson, 2011; Zach, 2001). "The housing environment consists of formal houses, brick or corrugated iron structures attached to the formal structures, attached rooms, subdivided dwellings, backyard rooms and shacks, freestanding shack settlements, hostels created as single sex accommodation, several complexes of flats" (Zach, 2001, para. 5).

Alexandra is not a homogeneous community; it is instead diverse and disparate. People from various cultural and language backgrounds have moved to this township in order to seek better employment options, however unemployment and poverty is increasingly high (Wilson, 2011). Kaplan (2004) explains that approximately 60% of Alexandra township's population is unemployed. While education in this township is higher than in other township areas, very few people from Alexandra have studied beyond secondary levels (Wilson, 2011). It is also reported that crime and violence is a reality for those living in Alexandra (Wilson, 2011). Despite the high levels of poverty, unemployment and crime, Alexandra township is rich in history. It is one of the oldest developed areas in Johannesburg and one of the few places in South Africa where black people were able to acquire and own land during Apartheid (Kaplan, 2004). When migrating to Johannesburg many people found themselves staying in Alexandra township and the township began to be described as a "melting pot" of culture and diversity (Kaplan, 2004, p. 383). Today, this cultural diversity remains and the people living in Alexandra express their diversity through the different languages spoken and the celebration and practice of many different cultural traditions (Kaplan, 2004). It is within this context that this study aims to locate the narratives of the mothers interviewed.

1.5 Outlines of the chapters

The current chapter of the report provides an introduction to the study and describes the aims, rationale and basic structure of the research to be presented. In the following chapter, Chapter 2, the relevant literature on motherhood from a number of perspectives will be reviewed and discussed. In the literature review motherhood is first conceptualised in terms of what has been researched in the past and how current writers are writing about motherhood. The influences of culture, class and socio-economic status on motherhood is then explored. Following this there is an overview of motherhood in South Africa. Chapter 3 outlines the research method. The results of this study are then reported in Chapter 4 and an analysis that is divided into three sections is presented. The first section provides an overview of each mother's narrative, in the next section stories about becoming a mother are explored and in the final section stories about how context plays a role in motherhood are presented. An important focus is on where the participant's stories converge and diverge. The concluding chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the results and consolidates the analysis. This chapter considers insights attained from the study and, in light of the limitations, makes practical recommendations for further explorations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature explores motherhood and how motherhood has been conceptualised in many different ways over the years. Mothers have been of interest in psychoanalytic literature for many years. Much of this literature focused on mothers' roles in infants' development. Through feminist writings there has been a shift to the understanding of mothers from their own perspective. Theorists have explored whether motherhood is considered the ultimate expression of femininity or whether there is more at play in mothering and being a mother and exploring some negative aspects of motherhood. The literature also considers how a mother's culture, race, socio-economic status and class impacts on mothering. Finally an overview on current explorations into South African motherhood is presented. From the review of the literature it can be noted that motherhood is not a homogeneous experience but rather subjective, unique and dependent on a number of factors. The experience is also situated within a larger social and cultural context. This literature review, while explaining current advances regarding the understanding of motherhood, also attempts to locate current gaps in the knowledge of motherhood and provide a context for this research study.

2.1 Conceptualising motherhood

Motherhood has been a topic of interest for many psychoanalytic writers and theorists. The role of the mother has been considered to be vital to infant development in a number of psychoanalytic developmental theories offered by Klein, Winnicott, Kohut and Bion (Watts, 2009a; Watts, 2009b; Swartz, 2009; Ivey, 2009). Sayers (1993) claims that psychoanalysts have in the past idealised mothering in terms holding, containment, empathy and transformation. Mothers were theorised as playing a primary role in their infants' development and as having the inherent capacity to provide nurturing in order for growth to occur. The converse of this is that mothers may also fail their infants if they are not able to provide such empathy, holding and containment. Developmental theories have largely been influenced by the social context within which they are formed. Much of children's well-being was placed on women, particularly the mother. However, due to inequalities between genders, women were oppressed and as a result mothers were blamed for any disruptions to childhood development (Kruger, 2006). Recent feminist psychoanalysts have aimed to inform mothering from mothers' perspectives, however, this too has focused on the idealised aspects

of motherhood and celebrates women's mothering (Sayers, 1993). Karen Horney and Helen Deutsch were two female psychoanalysts who began exploring female psychology. They drew heavily on their own experiences with their mothers and how this shaped their development (Sayers, 1993). While their explorations led to a different perspective on understanding women, it still tended to place women as mothers into a homogeneous category rather than allowing the individual experiences of motherhood to speak for themselves. More recently, scholars are attempting to understand mothers and their own subjective experiences (Arendell, 2000; Long, 2009; Kruger; 2006; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a).

"Mothering and motherhood are the subjects of a rapidly expanding body of literature" (Arendell, 2000, p. 1192). As discussed, there is much theorising about motherhood and more recently, the study of mothers' experiences has become of interest (Arendell, 2000). A significant contribution to this body of literature has been the conceptualisations of the ideology of mothering and maternal practice (Arendell, 2000). A wide array of topics on mothering and motherhood are currently being considered and this includes understanding mothers from their own perspectives, exploring the experiences of mothers belonging to different racial or cultural groups and trying to gain a sense of the uniqueness and individuality to mothering experiences rather than considering motherhood as one collective experience shared by all mothers (Arendell, 2000).

Arendell (2000) explains that "today's scholarship on mothering and motherhood considers mothers' activities, understandings and experiences. This represents a broadening of much of the earlier work focused on the quality of mothering and its supposed effects on a child" (p. 1192). In previous years, the focus was on childhood development and how mothers assisted in their children's growth. As Winnicott (1960) famously stated, "there is no such thing as an infant, meaning that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant" (p. 39). Through his work as a paediatrician he was able to observe the important role that a mother played in her baby's development. He also acknowledged that an infant could not exist without a mother and, in the first months of an infant's life, the mother and infant are considered a unit rather than two separate individuals. Eventually, through the process of maturation, the infant is able to individuate. His theories also highlight the importance of a mother becoming primarily preoccupied with her infant (Winnicott, 1960) and in some ways becoming merged with her infant so that her ego or self is not her own but rather a vehicle for the baby to develop his or her ego. Thus, she exists

purely for the sake of her infant rather than for herself and her role as mother becomes less subjectively understood and rather understood in relation to her infant. A critique of his theories is that the development of an infant self is entirely contingent upon the quality of the mother's care (Watts, 2009b). This places a mother in the position of being judged or blamed should she somehow fail her infant. "Psychoanalysis is commonly critiqued as being mother-blaming" (Long, 2009, p. 64). Winnicott does allow mothers to fail their infants to some degree, in terms of his concept of appropriate failure (Watts, 2009b), however, it still places her in a particular position, one which does not allow for much understanding of her own personal needs, desires, hope and experiences around her baby and mothering. "Psychoanalysis routinely constructs the mother as secondary to the child and overlays her with fantasies similar to those attributed to the infant" (Long, 2009, p. 64). It also implies that mothers should have the innate ability to mother. Psychoanalytic theory has had a profound influence on motherhood. It has acknowledged that motherhood is a powerful human experience and when used to understand the mother's experience with maternal subjectivity as its focus, it can be extremely useful (Long, 2009).

The focus on mothers and motherhood has shifted to accept that mothering is not a static concept in which all mothers mother in the same way and possess a natural maternal instinct but instead constitutes a dynamic social construction around nurturing and caring for people (Arendell, 2000, Forcey, 1994). Mothering is particularly significant because many people form their identities through the mothering they experience as infants (Arendell, 2000). Infants come to know themselves and develop an ego through their early experiences and interactions with their mothers who largely fulfil the role of primary caregiver. Thus, mothering plays an important role within society, yet it is still a concept that is largely difficult to define due to its heterogeneous and fluctuating concept formation (Glenn, 1994). Motherhood has often been viewed as something that is instinctual for women. Because of a woman's biology, it is commonly expected that motherhood is inherent (van Doorene, 2009). Recent literature is exploring motherhood as a social construct rather than perceiving it as a purely biological task (Badinter, 1981; Glenn, 1994; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a; Sudarkasa, 2004).

Surrey (cited in Kruger, 2006) explains that women's identities are organised around the self in relation to others, rather than purely in relation to the self. This indicates that to some degree motherhood is a social construct that is created through the interactions with others in the community as well as in relation to the child. Motherhood is a concept that changes over

time and follows the fashions or fads in the prevailing society and, because of this, social ideals about motherhood have changed over time (Kitzinger, 1978). Women are exposed to various discourses about motherhood through the communities of which they are a part. Walker (1995) asserts that mothers create their identities through both being informed by common discourses on motherhood and their own experiential practice of mothering. These two cannot be clearly delineated but rather both play a role and interact with the other.

Historically, psychology has been interested in motherhood. This focus, however, was largely instrumental; mothers' primary responsibility was to 'create' healthy children (Kruger, 2006). There is a contrast between the attention given to children and the lack of attention given to mothers in psychology. Mothers were only really discussed as important influences on children (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991b). This focus has shifted quite dramatically in recent years and some researchers have become more interested in the mother as a subject (Long, 2009; Kruger, 2006). What is now of particular interest to feminist researchers is mothers' unique, subjective experiences of motherhood and where that is located within the current understandings of motherhood. Jeannes and Shefer (2004) assert the importance of giving a voice to women's lived experiences, thus, in the study of motherhood, it is important to challenge current definitions of motherhood through exploring mothers' actual accounts of their experiences. Motherhood is not an entirely biological construct; it is also located within the culture or society in which children are raised. It may be problematic to define all mothers belonging to a particular culture or society as having the same experience. The experience of mothering is unique and idiosyncratic and Kruger (2003) explains that as much as motherhood is constructed by the society within which one belongs, mothers also construct their own experiences about motherhood through reproducing dominant motherhood discourses as a means of addressing the ambivalence that they may experience being a mother.

The impact of feminism led to a greater interest in the actual experience of mothering. While the aim was to explore the actual experiences of motherhood, this was not always what was achieved. As Kruger (2003) explains, a mother's experience is influenced by the society within which she mothers and vice versa, therefore it can be problematic to confidently extract her narrative without considering the dominant discourses that are present. "Psychology has been instrumental in constructing the ways in which motherhood is seen and in maintaining mothers in their current social position" (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a, p. 13). Many psychoanalytic theories have been interpreted as providing an ideal model for

mothering, for example, Winnicott's notion of 'good-enough mothering' (Watts, 2009b) which places the mother as the primary object in her infant's life. Initially the mother must merge with her infant and provide a substitute ego for him or her until he or she is able to develop his own ego. The infant's ego develops through appropriate failures in which the mother provides a good-enough experience of holding that shapes this development. Particular societies also have constructed ideals about appropriate mothering (Kitzinger, 1978). However, social constructions of motherhood that emphasise the good and the ideal are often in contrast to the reality of motherhood for many mothers (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Social and psychological constructions of motherhood allow for a limited range of maternal experiences and mothers come from a variety of backgrounds from which they bring with them a broad range of unique experiences (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Phoenix and Woollett (1991) explain that "normative social constructions of 'good/normal' mothers are usually implicit rather than explicit" (p. 14). Thus, appropriate maternal practices become intrinsically interwoven into mothers' experiences and ideals are incorporated into mothers' views about mothering and motherhood.

The idea of motherhood is often romanticised as a supreme achievement, yet many mothers report little congruence with this notion (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Mothers do at times express some dissatisfaction with motherhood or mothering and some women choose not to become mothers, which opposes this viewpoint (Frizelle & Hayes, 2006; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). "Regardless of whether women become mothers, motherhood is central to the ways in which they are defined by others and their perceptions of themselves" (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a, p 13). In other words, women's roles in society are largely defined by their choices regarding whether or not to become a mother or how they choose to mother their children. Various societies promote various discourses on what it means to be a 'good' mother (Phoenix & Woollett, 19991). Some research has focused on this incongruence between the idealised perceptions of motherhood and the actual experience of motherhood (Choi et al., 2005; Van Doorene, 2009). Glenn (1994) found that motherhood ideology encompasses multiple contradictions. Mothers are often romanticised as life-giving, self sacrificing and forgiving, however, they are also often thought of as smothering, overly involved and destructive. Much literature on motherhood also frames the mother as being perceived as devalued in society (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Structural factors, such as social class, are important as they have an impact on how mothers are defined in society as well as their experiences of motherhood (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Thus, the concept is

not a static one but one that is constantly changing and shaped through the environment in which mothers mother.

Broader social ideals, viewpoints and perspectives permeate unconscious thought as to what it means to be a mother or to be mothered. Different societies value and institutionalise various types of mothering (Kitzinger, 1978). Women are "exposed to powerful ideologies that impact on their experiences of motherhood, mothering and mothers" (Kruger, 2006, p. 182). While there are many ideals around what it means to be a "good", perfect mother, the opposite is also true. Motherhood has also been denigrated and mothers have been conceptualised as being responsible for 'harming' their children and blamed for not producing 'perfect' children (Welldon, 1992). The assumption that a mother has the major responsibility in child development places the blame on mothers for their behavioural problems (Woollett & Phoenix, 1993, as cited in Mamabolo, 2009).

There is a juxtaposition of the mother being conceptualised as both the Madonna and the whore, which has an impact on both how she perceives herself as a mother and how others view her mothering (Welldon, 1992). Much of the Western world has depicted the mother as pure, all-loving and kind. Various ideals have emerged, such as Mary, Jesus' mother, and Mother Theresa (Long, 2009). Mary is often depicted as the ideal model of maternal tenderness (Long, 2009). These ideal depictions create a disjunction from the actual experience of motherhood (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Mothers unconsciously expect that they too should be kind and all-loving and therefore do not have an outlet to express possible hatred and anger towards their children and their role as a mother.

Kruger (2006) explored the various ideologies that have been influential in the conceptualising of motherhood thus far. She reviewed the medical discourse and explained that from this perspective motherhood can often be reduced to medical terms leaving little room for personal experience. In this discourse mothering is regarded as instrumental in the production of healthy children (Kruger, 2006). This model's primary focus is on understanding the biology of mothering and a criticism of this model is that women become depersonalised and are expected to be rational and responsible when it comes to child-bearing and rearing and any deviation from this 'norm' is viewed as pathological (Kruger, 2006). It is important to note here that motherhood ideologies are constantly fluctuating due to economic status and context therefore women from different backgrounds would draw from and reject different ideologies.

Frizelle and Hayes (1999) reviewed the manner in which motherhood has been and is conceptualised in their study addressing the experiences of motherhood when compared to mothering ideals. What has been discussed is that motherhood is both a concept that it imposed on mothers and something that is fulfilling and therefore is maintained through experience (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999). While society expects mothers to live up to various ideals, mothers themselves also choose to actively participate with these ideals and thus reinforce them, making it more difficult to change (Kruger, 2003). "The expectations placed on mothers by themselves and others are thus the result of a complex combination of psychological, social and historical factors, yet motherhood presents itself as a natural outcome" (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999, p. 19). It is then assumed that mothering and motherhood is a natural outcome for women and that they are naturally equipped to provide care and nurturing to their children, thus always being able to provide unconditional love for their babies and to therefore keep their babies happy and content (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999).

Another overarching idea is that the mother should be all-giving and self-sacrificing (Badinter, 1980; Choi et al., 2005; Kruger, 2006). Mothers are expected to find their ultimate fulfilment in their role as a mother (Kruger, 2006; Parker, 1996; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). This can result in increased distress and concern for the mother if or when she does not live up to this ideal. Connected to this ideal is the notion that women should be natural mothers and should instinctually be able to care for and love their babies (Choi et al., 2005, Badinter, 1980). This predominant ideology is that motherhood should come naturally to women and that this experience should be a fulfilling one (Badinter, 1980; Hird, 2003; Parker, 1996). Badinter (1980) chooses to reject this opinion as she states that women are expressing their disillusionment with motherhood without fear of being rendered pathological. When society's expectations are in stark contrast to individual experience it can be difficult for a mother to be able to express the more negative aspects of motherhood for fear of being labelled a bad mother. They are left alone to deal with not living up to this universal standard. Social and psychological constructions of 'normal' mothers ('normal' can be interchanged with 'good' or 'ideal') tend to not be accurate when one examines the reality of motherhood for many mothers (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a).

"Maternal practices begin in love, a love which for most mothers is as intense, confusing, ambivalent and poignantly sweet as any they will experience" (Ruddick, 1980, p. 344). The journey of motherhood is thus characterised by many conflicting and fluctuating emotions and experiences and has been defined psychologically as ambivalence. Parker (1996) defines

maternal ambivalence as "the experience shared vicariously by all mothers in which loving and hating feelings for their children exist side by side" (p. 1). Mothers assume that love is a given factor and hostility is generally an accidental occurrence (Parker, 1996). There is often a conflict between love and hate that characterises the very act of being a mother. Psychoanalytic writers agree that the period from when a woman becomes pregnant to shortly after the birth of the baby is a time characterised by psychodynamic activity and conflict (Long, 2009). Parker (1996) explains that this very conflict between love and hate is what spurs mothers to begin to know their baby. Ambivalence tends to evoke suffering in the mother and through the suffering thought is generated about the baby as the mother attempts to make sense of her feelings. "Ambivalence, when acknowledged, can promote reflection and communication" (Parker, 1996, p. 90). Therefore, through expressing and understanding all of the aspects of the mother's feelings she can only truly begin to understand herself and her baby in a very real way.

Some research has come to the conclusion that there is no one ideal way of mothering. Mothering is generally characterised by much ambivalence and confusion (Parker, 1996). Parker (1996) reviews psychoanalyst Helene Deutsche's explanations of motherhood. In these writings it is explained that motherhood is polarised, it is both idealised and pathologised. The following polarities explain motherhood: "activity-passivity, aggression-masochism, femininity-masculinity and love-hatred" (Parker, 1996, p. 149). Through these conflicts, greater depth and richness emerges of the understanding of motherhood in psychology (Parker, 1996). Much of these dominant conceptualisations of motherhood have been constructed through Western thought and influence which allows little space for deviation from this norm and provides little space for non-Western conceptualisations to emerge (Glenn, 1994).

2.2 Motherhood and culture

Leira and Krips (1993) explain that a way of understanding psychological problems and possibilities is through revealing cultural myths. The external relations to one's culture provide a background for the internal dialogues of mothers with children and through this inner dialogue a mother can begin to make sense of herself and her identity within the cultural context in which she mothers (Leira & Krips, 1993). Culture offers a set of guidelines which individuals within that society inherit which tell them how they should

behave and how they should view the world (Swartz, 1998). There may be aspects of mothering or motherhood that transcend culture but other aspects are very determined by one's culture, such as the appropriate age at which to fall pregnant or to get married and whether or not it is appropriate for women to become mothers outside of a marital relationship (O'Connell, 1994).

Whether or not mothers are idealised or denigrated largely depends on how the society within which the mother resides views the role of motherhood. Many writers speak about the myths of motherhood and the perfect mother to explain the expectations that mothers face in this particular role (Badinter, 1980; Kruger, 2006). Much of the understandings of these myths are implicit in cultural experience and mothering is often a culturally determined role (Kruger, 2006). Mothers from different cultural groups may have different defined roles and positions within their unique societies and cultures.

Collins (1994) contends that motherhood can never be considered without analysing the context in which it takes place. "Motherhood occurs in specific historical situations framed by interlocking structures of race, class and gender" (Collins, 1994, p. 45). Some American studies examined the role of culture in motherhood ideologies (Collins, 1997). Collins (1997) explores how black mothers transmit various cultural ideals to their daughters and how competing perspectives of African-American mothering intersect to create a distinctly Afrocentric perspective. Through the transmission of these ideals Collins (1997) explains that children, and particularly daughters, are raised with specific discourses about motherhood which will play some role in how these daughters internalise motherhood for themselves when they become mothers. Collins (1994) asserts that for women of colour, their race and socio-economic status is inextricably linked to being a mother. She then goes on to explain that, while race may take on a particular dimension for mothers of colour, race also plays a role in white mothers' discourses of motherhood (Collins, 1994). This confirms the notion that motherhood is not a homogeneous construct and that different factors will play different roles in shaping discourses and understandings of motherhood. However, even by separating mothers of different racial groups or classes, there is a desire to homogenise their experiences as belonging to one or the other group. It is important to address all of the dimensions of motherhood and acknowledge that it is multifaceted. In addition, while Collins' writing provides useful information that allows an understanding of other mothers' experiences of motherhood as it opens up an additional facet through which to explore the experiences of mothers, it does not provide insight into mothers in South Africa.

The individual's culture plays a large role in determining many aspects of motherhood. In most cultures mothers have a different role to play than do women without children (Leira & Krips, 1993). In some cultures, getting pregnant and becoming a mother affords the woman an elevated position in her society and she is at that time considered more beautiful and valuable to the society in which she lives (Kitzinger, 1978). Phoenix and Woollett (1991a) explain that mothers reproduce ethnic ideas and assist in creating distinctions between ethnic/national groups. Ideals, such as the number of children a mother should have, are even dictated to some degree by cultural norms (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a). Other ideals about motherhood, such as the age at which it is appropriate to become pregnant, and marital relationships also dictate to women what is expected of them in terms of motherhood. Many women in Western cultures are choosing to have children later on in life, thus decreasing the time period in which it is possible to conceive a child, whilst mothers in many non-Western cultures have children at an earlier age (Glenn, 1994). Women participate in the transmission of culture to their children as they often take on the major responsibility of raising children (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a).

Sudarkasa (2004) explains that African mothers have different ideas and concepts about mothering. She explores the notions of natural motherhood and cultural motherhood and explains that the biological aspect of being able to conceive and give birth derives from nature, however, in human societies the rules and expectations of mothers are culturally determined (Sudarkasa, 2004). Depending on the particular socio-economic or cultural group to which a mother belongs, motherhood practices may vary. Mothers may be responsible for mothering to varying degrees. Walker (1995) points out that in South Africa it is common for middle class working women to employ the services of a domestic worker or helper to assist with the physical care of their children, whereas working class women may rely more heavily on the assistance of family members. This is not only determined by the mother's socio-economic situation but also largely by culture. Western mothers tend to rely more on their nuclear family for assistance, while African mothers make use of extended family networks (Sudarkasa, 2004). In indigenous African societies, the responsibility for the care of children is often assumed by other relatives and women in the community and these women relate to these children as a mother would (Sudarkasa, 2004). Magwaza (2003) conducted research into the experience of motherhood for black and white mothers in South Africa. In doing this research she reflected on her own experiences as a mother and explained that the mothers in her community played an active role in her children's care. She discussed how in black

communities it was common practice for neighbours to collect the children from school and care for them until their mothers would return from work (Magwaza, 2003), thus explaining the collective responsibility that black mothers feel towards raising children. She contrasted this with her experience when she moved to a predominantly white suburb and was encouraged to work less and employ a domestic worker in order for her to spend more time with her children (Magwaza, 2003). These two different approaches to motherhood practices reflect not only how culture plays a role in mothering but also how a mother's socio-economic situation may impact on the resources drawn upon and the approach to raising children. Magwaza (2003) explains that black mothers have more support than white mothers due to communal mothering practices, however, this is slowly changing for middle class mothers who are living in integrated, multiracial neighbourhoods.

Historical studies that address the issue of culture and motherhood in South Africa have largely focused on the period from colonialism onward (Long, 2009). Both the Afrikaner mother and the African mother have been seen to be highly active in the constructions of mothering in their societies (McClintock, 1991 & Walker, 1995). Both Afrikaner mothers and African mothers operate within a nation that is generally a male one, yet politically they both played an active role (McClintock, 1991). On both sides of the Apartheid struggle motherhood has been idealised (Long, 2009). The Afrikaner mother was viewed as the mother of the nation (*Volksmoeder*) and black mothers were seen as taking a central role in the fight against Apartheid (Long, 2009, McClintock, 1991 & Walker, 1995).

McClintock (1991) states that motherhood is "less the universal and biological quintessence of womanhood than it is a social category under constant contest" (p. 116). In black communities motherhood involves far greater community sharing and responsibility than in white communities and the concept of mothering is much broader than the biological mother (Magwaza, 2003). This indicates the social expectations that differ across different cultures. In the past black women were not concerned with women's issues, rather they focused on issues of freedom from inequalities due to their race (McClintock, 1991). African mothers are now becoming more concerned with mothering issues and this has an impact on the mothering experience (McClintock, 1991). Daniels (2004) explains that "motherhood is contextualised by the interconnection of race, ethnicity, class and gender" (p. 1). In other words, when conceptualising motherhood it is important to consider the impact that these factors may have on various expressions and experiences of motherhood. It is problematic to isolate the mother from her cultural context.

2.3 Motherhood and the impact of race, class and socio-economic status

Just as culture may play a role in the way in which mothers structure narratives so too does class and socio-economic status. One's culture, class and socio-economic status may not be mutually exclusive in their impact on motherhood. Motherhood in South Africa is located within a unique socio-political history, which was characterised by discrimination and inequality which has a marked impact on the experience of mothering (Walker, 1995). There may be some overlap in terms of culture, class and socio-economic status, particularly within the South African context, due to South Africa's political history. Due to an individual's race and culture people were segregated and non-whites were left with increased socio-economic instability. Little research has explored exclusively and particularly on how class has an impact on the narratives that mothers construct, however, it is widely acknowledged that the experience is highly diverse and differences will emerge, particularly across different classes, races, sexual orientations and age (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004).

Jeannes and Shefer (2004) examined discourses on motherhood for white, middle class South African mothers. What was found in this study was that mothering occurs largely within a context of gender inequality (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). What this means is that in South Africa men still hold positions of power both economically and socially and this impacts on mothers and their experiences (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). Mothers are constructed as secondary to men and themes around "mother as primary caregivers, working mothers and mothers as co-parents, are created by and in turn maintain the discourse of inequality within the motherhood construct" (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004, p.13). Inherent in the assumption of inequality with regard to genders is that motherhood is biological and natural for women, whereas men are perceived as having limited capacities for nurturing (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). This serves to reinforce the notion that motherhood is a central aspect to being a woman or being feminine and that a woman only fully becomes a woman when she becomes a mother (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). While this study does not address broad concepts about race and class, it does consider the social factors that affect mothering. Women within white middle class environments are perceived as being secondary to men and in some ways are considered to occupy a class that is lower than men, despite the idea that they are from a middle class background. This study contributes to the general understanding of motherhood, however, it lacks insight into how inequality may affect other women from various racial or class designations. Jeannes and Shefer (2004) acknowledged that a limitation of their study is

that the sample that was chosen were women who were least affected by discourses on equality from an economic perspective. They also assert that it may be reductionistic to only consider inequality in terms of economic resources and that inequality needs to be explored from a number of perspectives (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). Magwaza (2003) also found that mothering is a gendered practice and that for black mothers parenting is largely the sole responsibility of the mother, thus suggesting that there may be some commonalities of mothering between different racial groups. However, it is still important to consider mothers who are oppressed across gender, class and race and what inequalities they may face in being a mother (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004).

In Frizelle and Hayes' (1999) study on the experiences of motherhood with white middle class South African mothers, they found that the experiences of mothers cannot be homogenised or generalised and they recognise that motherhood is multifaceted and complex and this needs to be acknowledged when studying mothers from all different backgrounds. From this statement it can be inferred that mothers of other racial or class groups would also have an experience of motherhood that is multifaceted and complex. Through a series of interviews, the personal experiences of four white middle class South African mothers were compared to the idealised images with which mothers are presented. What was found even within this seemingly homogeneous group of mothers, was that the mothers had divergent and different experiences that challenged the idealised notions of motherhood (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999).

Daniels (2004) speaks of the importance of representing African women appropriately. She explains that adult education feminists and critical theorists advocate the recognition and significance of race, gender, class and perceived blackness (Daniels, 2004). It is important to be careful of homogenising groups of people when it is really vital to acknowledge the individual and the interplay of other factors on their narrative construction.

Magwaza (2003) reflects on the contrasts she experienced as a black mother in her research on perceptions and experiences of motherhood for black and white mothers. When she moved from an exclusively black area to a predominantly white area post-Apartheid, she noted some differences in the class and socio-cultural environments of the two groups. Not only were there cultural differences in child rearing, but the economic resources that were available to the middle class mothers were striking when compared to her previous environment of working class mothers. Mothers from the predominantly white areas would pay for child-care

services, whereas mothers from the predominantly black areas would rely more on social support in their child rearing (Magwaza, 2003). Her study looked at the perceptions and experiences of motherhood for both black and white mothers. While she drew heavily on her own experiences, she also found that her personal experiences were mirrored in the results of her study. A significant finding was that race, political history, gender and class all have some impact on motherhood and she explains that the "life situations of black and white mothers are different" (Magwaza, 2003, p. 6). Black women's mothering was impacted on by Apartheid, even if the mothers in her study lived in the same areas as white mothers and received similar education because, while they may be financially secure, they may have had relatives who are not and thus they assist their family members with financial support (Magwaza, 2003).

Magwaza (2003) notes that there are some commonalities to black and white mothering. She explains that culture and socio-economic status plays a role in the way in which people think and behave (Magwaza, 2003). This has an impact on how mothers choose to raise their children or the decisions they make regarding whether or not to work outside the home, which all influences the experience of motherhood. Black women are seen as being responsible for their children's well-being and particularly anything that goes wrong if they are working outside the home (Magwaza, 2003). In black communities, there is, at times, the belief that the mother needs to be at home with her children in order to protect them, despite the family's economic situation (Magwaza, 2003) and, at times, these beliefs can lead to mothers being blamed unnecessarily for problems with their children as many women have no choice regarding whether or not to work. Magwaza (2003) explains that "societal expectations on mothers fail to take into account the changing statuses of mothers and different environments they find themselves" (Magwaza, 2003, p. 8).

Glenn (1994) asserts that historically class hierarchies have generated much conflict regarding mothering and the definitions of appropriate mothering. People from different class structures may have different practices that are imposed upon them through the society in which they live but also through economic or other restrictions placed upon them within their social status. Thus, women who fall in the lower class category may have to work and leave their children with alternate child-minders, whereas mothers with higher socio-economic standing may have broader choices regarding work that may impact on their experience of motherhood. Middle class women have attempted in the past to impose their models of family and motherhood on the lower class, or "inferior" mothers (Glenn, 1994, p.20).

Depending on the circumstances, mothers then had to adapt their models of mothering and were therefore not afforded the opportunity to express their own personal opinions regarding motherhood or what their experience of motherhood was. Mothers in the developing world were thought to be exotic and were under-researched as cultural, political and social factors rendered their practices of mothering to be very different to what is expected in the West (Long, 2009).

Phoenix and Woollett (1991a), in criticising ideologies and prescriptions for mothering, explain that these prescriptions generally take no account of structural differences between mothers. Mothers and children from working class environments are likely to differ from middle class mothers and children in that children may be denied various goods due to lack of material resources and less social power (Phoenix & Woollet, 1991a). "By failing to recognise such issues, current social constructions of normal motherhood do not reflect the realities of working class mothers and children's lives, and this results in any differences between them and middle class mothers and children being seen as pathological or deviant" (Phoenix & Woollet, 1991a, p. 18). Working class mothers' unique experiences are thus homogenised and left unexplored or misunderstood to a large degree.

2.4 Mothers in South Africa

Arendell (2000) states that mothering takes place within the historical contexts within which one is framed and therefore structures such as race, class and gender are important. Individual interpretations of these structures may have an impact on how mothers experience motherhood. Arendell (2000) reports that "mothering may hold even greater salience for women of colour, given racial and ethnic communities' extended family ties and loyalties" (p. 1196). This is an important question to explore highlighting the salience of culture in understanding the experience of South African mothers.

Walker (1995) asserts that the term 'motherhood' is a multilayered one and she criticises South African literature for failing to define this correctly. Motherhood embraces three broad areas, namely; the practice of motherhood, the discourse of motherhood and motherhood as a social identity (Walker, 1995). How these three aspects materialise in the life of the individual mother is determined by a variety of factors which need to be explored further, however, Walker (1995) found that the practices of motherhood, the discourse of motherhood and the social identity of motherhood had different meanings for mothers of different races

and different socio-economic circumstances. Exactly what those different meanings are needs more attention, particularly in the South African context where so many different cultures and beliefs interact.

Orderson (2011) presented a lecture entitled "Voices from the Margin". This lecture which explained her study addressed the experience of coloured, single mothers who live in Mitchell's Plain, a township in Cape Town. The plight of single mothers who received child support grants from the state was investigated. What she found were stories of women who rely largely on their support networks in order to survive and that women tend to rely heavily on other women as they are seen as being the primary providers for their family. Historically, coloured women in the Western Cape had better employment opportunities than their male counterparts and were thus placed in a position of elevated economic power over the men in their community (Orderson, 2011). This study also discussed the negative perception of mothers receiving child support grants (Orderson, 2011). Mothers were perceived as having babies only to be able to access the funds that the grants provided and were thus looked down upon in their communities, however, Orderson (2011) explains that these grants are not sufficient for the mothers to adequately feed and clothe their children. This study adds to the body of literature in South Africa as it provides an additional perspective on the lived experiences of motherhood, particularly for coloured mothers living in townships in the Western Cape. However, motherhood is not a homogeneous construct and in order to understand the uniqueness and complexities of this experience additional research is necessary and required.

Campbell (1990) found that black South African mothers, particularly in black townships, tend to head up the households and demand a high degree of respect, even though socially speaking women are regarded as lower in importance when compared to men. The respect that a mother receives however primarily falls within the household and not in the larger social context (Campbell, 1990). Twenty years have passed since these findings and cultural values and gender roles may have completely changed. Considering the massive restructuring of society since the 1994 elections, it may be interesting to explore whether or not cultural values are any different today when compared with the past. Magwaza (2003) states that one's culture plays a role in conceptualisations of motherhood and she explores how experiences from the past still impact in some way on current mothering experiences.

Little has been researched on the lived experience of black South African women in recent years. Van Doorene (2009) conducted a recent study in understanding the subjective, lived experience of South African working mothers. Her study explored whether or not South African mothers subscribe to Western ideologies of motherhood and her sample consisted of black, white, Indian and coloured mothers. She compared their experiences with the ideology of intensive mothering and considered whether these mothers adapted or rejected the ideology. Her study explored the binary dichotomies of motherhood. These dichotomies construct what it means to be a good mother or the opposite, a bad mother (Van Doorene, 2009). The findings were interesting in that the mothers that were interviewed identified with the dominant discourses of inherent mothering, child-centred motherhood and gendered parenting and aligned their mothering practices to this to varying degrees, however, they also reconstructed various ideals to suit their context (Van Doorene, 2009). Van Doorene (2009) also found that there was much ambivalence experienced in attempting to be a good mother. As mentioned, black mothers fulfilled one component of her study. She reported that the black mothers in her study felt that motherhood is synonymous with womanhood, and that to be considered a 'real' woman, one needs to be a mother (Van Doorene, 2009). While this is an interesting finding in this particular study, it is important to explore whether or not this same notion is expressed in other studies of black mothers.

Mamabolo (2009) looked solely at black working mothers within the South African context. The particular focus was on black mothers who occupy executive positions in business and how they manage and balance their roles as mothers and their working roles (Mamabolo, 2009). Some of the findings are consistent with what Van Doorene (2009) found. What was common was that motherhood is thought to be the ultimate expression of womanhood and that there are still very strong ideas around gender and how this impacts on the mothers' experiences (Mamabolo, 2009; Van Doorene, 2009). Women are seen as having the inherent capacity to be mothers because of their gender and they also still remain the primary caregivers for their children, despite also working (Mamabolo, 2009; Van Doorene, 2009). Ambivalence was also a feature as these working mothers felt like they were not doing as much as stay-at-home mothers (Mamabolo, 2009). Mamabolo's (2009) study also expanded on understandings of this particular role or identity for black working mothers. The mothers in this study felt that being a mother was equally important as the work they do and these mothers were able to achieve some sense of balance despite the difficulties involved which is contrary to much research on working mothers (Mamabolo, 2009).

Both Frizelle and Hayes (1999) and Jeannes and Shefer (2004) explored the experiences and discourses on motherhood. Both studies examine white mothers' experiences. Common in the findings is that while similarities of experiences emerged across the various participants, the experiences cannot easily be homogenised or generalised (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999 & Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). The circumstances and context under which they mother differ and thus the intensity and understanding of their experiences will differ (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999), however, despite this, what emerged in both studies was the notion that motherhood is natural and inherent (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). "Motherhood is a multifaceted phenomenon which needs to be recognised by those disciplines that theorise about it" (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999, p. 34). When studying mothers it is vital to recognise that while many mothers in South Africa share many experiences, regardless of their culture, race or socio-economic circumstances, the experiences are still subjective and deeply personal and care must be taken not to homogenise or generalise experiences as one then loses sight of the individual with her unique story to tell.

Magwaza (2003) seeks to reduce this gap in knowledge. Her study focused on understanding black and white South African mothers' experiences and perceptions and comparing them. She drew on some of her own experiences as a mother and reflected on some of the experiences that she observed. Some interesting findings emerged. What was quite distinct in the mothering practices of black and white women are women's social supports. Black mothers tend to view mothering as a collective experience while white mothers undertook the task much more independently (Magwaza, 2003). Black mothers tended to rely more on their extended family to provide alternate mothering for their children while white mothers relied more on paid services to fulfil that role (Magwaza, 2003).

While there has been some research, relatively little has been published on South African mothers (Kruger, 2006). Much of this research focuses on white, middle class motherhood (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999). When black mothers in South Africa are researched the focus tends to be on at-risk mothers and children, such as teenage mothers, single mothers and working mothers (Kruger, 2006). There is also a pervasive tendency when studying marginalised mothers to focus on the 'problems' associated with this situation rather than the subjective experiences of the mothers themselves (Kruger, 2006). There is little understanding of 'regular' mothers in South Africa and even less on 'regular' black mothers and their experiences. Following this is where this research is located. This research aims to close this gap in the literature and present the experiences of black working class mothers who are not

necessarily at-risk, but rather to understand their experiences and how the context within which they mother plays a role in their experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

3.1 Research approach

This is an exploratory study aimed at understanding black South African mothers' experiences. Because of its exploratory nature, this research study is located within a qualitative paradigm. A qualitative method was utilised in this research as the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding into a particular group of individuals, black working class mothers, and to understand their unique, lived experience. At the heart of qualitative research lies the notion of multiple realities; people, either individually or socio-culturally, understand the world in an idiosyncratic way and create meaning for themselves through their experiences (Nicholls, 2009). For mothers, their experience is unique and subjective. "The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations" (Elliot, Fisher & Rennie, 1999, p. 216). Being a mother is an experience that many women will have and it is important to understand their perspective on what it means to be a mother.

The overarching paradigm is interpretive as the aim is to understand mothers' experiences and subjective truths. This paradigm acknowledges that a definitive reality exists but that it will be interpreted idiosyncratically. "Interpretive methodologies focus primarily on understanding and accounting for the meaning of human experiences and actions" (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002, p. 720). While it is essential to understand how mothers' experiences converge to some degree, it is also prudent to be aware of the areas in which their narratives diverge and how mothers confer meaning through their storytelling. Denzin (1989, p. 25) argues that "every human action is novel, emergent and filled with multiple, often conflicting meanings and interpretations" (as cited in Frizelle & Hayes, 1999) and Frizelle and Hayes (1999) found that there are many commonalities in the descriptions that mothers give of motherhood, despite the descriptions being both multifaceted and complex.

In qualitative research, the participants' responses should direct the discussion and the researcher should avoid manipulating the participants' responses. Ambert et al. (1995) explain that the focus is shifted from what the researcher dictates to what the respondents find important. The researcher allows the participants to lead the study, however, it must also be acknowledged that to some extent the researcher influences the outcomes. Elliot et al. (1999)

explain that it is essential for researchers to own their own perspective and be aware of the effect that this may have on the research. Researchers conducting qualitative research have to therefore be transparent about any biases that they may bring to the data and they need to be reflexive throughout the analysis (Crabb & Chur-Hansen, 2009).

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of six mothers who accessed the Alexandra Health Centre in Alexandra township. The Alexandra Health Centre was selected as the facility through which to access mothers as they run a Well Baby Clinic every Thursday and mothers bring their infants and children to receive vitamins and other health care. It was therefore thought that a broad sample of mothers could be accessed through this clinic. In addition to attending the clinic on a Thursday the researcher also spent time in the paediatric ward of the hospital as many mothers were also present there. Permission was obtained from the Alexandra Health Centre in order to approach potential participants and the study began when ethical clearance had been obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Medical Ethics Committee.

The criteria for this study was broad as the aims were to gain an understanding into the unique experiences of black South African mothers. As discussed, it is important not to homogenise mothers as in homogenising one loses the unique stories and feel of the experiences that mothers have. Motherhood is multifaceted, idiosyncratic and unique, thus the sample has to be broad in order to prevent homogenisation in the sample. The criteria for participation was that the mothers were black, South African, have at least one biological child, live in an urban area and are over the age of 21. The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of black South African mothers, therefore, this was the central criterion that the participants had to fulfil. Following that, the mothers had to have at least one child. While it is acknowledged that maternal care can be provided by any person who provides primary care and therefore the maternal role can be performed by a number of people who are not the biological parent of the child, for this study, it was important to gain access to the experiences that mothers face and it was felt that the traditional definition of the biological mother would be upheld here. The scope of this research report is to address the experiences of mothers living in an urban context. In order to limit the focus Alexandra township was identified as the urban area of interest. The age criterion was to allow for legal consent to participate and to allow for an understanding of adult mothers' experiences of motherhood rather than a

specific focus on teenage mothers. An additional criterion for participation was that the mothers could converse in English as the researcher was English speaking. It was thought that including a translator in the research process may affect the narratives told and the interpretation of the data as language is a medium through which narratives are transmitted (Smith & Sparkes, 2006) and the researcher may overlook subtle nuances or metaphors in the speech in the translation. It is acknowledged that this is not ideal as it excludes many mothers who are not English speaking.

"Qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth" (Ambert et al., 1995, p. 879). Therefore, the researcher was concerned with understanding the way in which mothers gave meaning to their experiences and required a sample that would provide adequate insight, depth and richness into the experience of mothers (Crabb & Chur-Hansen, 2009; Nicholls, 2009). Rather than addressing a large portion of the population the researcher interviewed a small sample of mothers and attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. Qualitative researchers tend to use non-probability sampling methods due to practical and time constraints (Neuman, 2003). The aim was also not to generalise the findings to all mothers, thus the sample did not need to be representative and non-probability sampling was acceptable. The mothers were selected as they provided a unique perspective on their own individual experiences. The sample was collected using a purposive sampling method. This method tends to identify a particular group of people who share a common experience and then from that group, individuals who are willing to talk about their experiences become the sample (Nicholls, 2009). As mentioned, the Well Baby Clinic at the Alexandra Health Centre was identified as a place where a number of mothers would converge and thus share a similar experience. The potential participants were then approached by the researcher after being introduced by a social worker in the community and asked to volunteer, thereby fulfilling the requirements of the purposive sampling method. The aims of the research were also explained to the potential participants to ensure that they were informed about the research and could make a decision as to whether or not they would like to partake in the research. A social worker who attends the Well Baby Clinic every Thursday to offer therapeutic services to the community introduced the researcher to the mothers present at the clinic as it was thought that, as a trusted and visible member of the community, she may assist in helping the participants to feel more confident and be more willing to speak to the researcher. Mothers were also approached in the paediatric ward of the hospital and asked to volunteer.

Once participants volunteered to be interviewed, a time was scheduled in which to conduct the interview. Due to various factors, four mothers were interviewed on the day they accessed the clinic, on four separate days, and other mothers were offered the opportunity to return within a few days. While more than two mothers were scheduled to be interviewed on other days only two arrived for their interview. It was expected that there would be some drop-out as mothers were expected to travel back to the clinic.

The age range of the participants was from 22 years of age to 51 years of age. Three of the participants were in their early 20s, two were in their 30s and one was in her 50s. Four of the mothers had more than one child and two of the mothers had only one child. All of the mothers were black and five out of the six mothers currently live in Alexandra, while one lives on the outskirts of Alexandra with her employers but uses the services that are offered in Alexandra township. The participants' education ranged from some secondary education to diploma level and five out of the six mothers were employed.

3.3 Research questions

This study aims to explore black South African mothers' experiences of motherhood through their narratives. The central question that emerges is "what is the maternal experience of black South African mothers living in South Africa today?" Leading from this central question the following will also be explored:

- How do black mothers narrate motherhood?
- What are the individual stories told?
- What stories do mothers tell about being a mother in Alexandra?
- How do mothers' personal circumstances influence their experience?
- What is significant about being a mother?
- How does their context shape the stories that they tell?

The researcher would like to explore the black mothers' narratives within the broader discourse of South African motherhood and understand what mothers themselves believe to be important in shaping their experiences of mothering.

These research questions form the base of what this research study aims to achieve and provides the foundation for the interview structure that was developed in order to answer these questions. While these questions informed the interview process, it was also important to allow the mothers to tell their stories.

3.4 Interviews

3.4.1 Developing the research interview schedule

"Face-to-face interviews provide an excellent way of exploring complex feelings and attitudes" (Sommer & Sommer, p. 105). They offer the opportunity to gain rich information about a particular topic of interest. Semi-structured interviews are common in qualitative research as they allow the participants the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words, whilst allowing the researcher to be able to focus the discussion (Nicholls, 2009; Sommer & Sommer, 1997). Parker (2005) also explains that having a semi-structured interview schedule with appropriate questions allows the researcher and the participant to develop rapport in the interview. This assists the participant in developing her own narrative in a space which is felt to be secure and safe enough to share her thoughts and feelings.

The semi-structured interview format allows for deviations in the conversation, however, there is enough structure to ensure that all of the important topics are covered (Nicholls, 2009). During the interview the questions were not always followed in the same format and certain questions were revisited later on in the interview if they had not yet been sufficiently covered. The order of the questions was largely dependent on when it appeared appropriate to ask them. Despite the loose format of questioning, the researcher began each interview inviting the participants to begin with what they felt to be significant, allowing them to begin their narrative in whichever way they felt best. In addition each interview ended with the researcher asking each participant to reflect on how it felt to be interviewed. This question helped to terminate the interview, while allowing the researcher to assess the participants' levels of distress. There was also time set aside in the interview schedule to allow the researcher to probe further should the participant give an unclear or incomplete answer. Nicholls (2009) describes a probe as "a question or comment designed to keep the person talking or to obtain clarification" (p. 117). Questions were open-ended to allow participants to explore aspects that they choose to share and prompts and probes were used to ensure that the conversation continued smoothly.

The questions were structured through an extensive exploration of the literature on motherhood. The interview schedule is attached (Appendix 1). Van Doorene (2009) conducted a study on South African motherhood and whether or not their narratives subscribed to Western ideologies of motherhood and considered their experiences of motherhood. Some of the questions that she presented were pertinent to this study as they looked at mothers' feelings and thoughts on their own experiences. Other questions arose through reading other literature on South African motherhood and addressing the gaps in that literature (Daniels, 2004; Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004; Kruger, 2003; Mamabolo, 2009; Walker, 1995). In addition, the researcher considered her overall research questions that she aimed to answer and adapted questions around those broad topic areas. It was important to try to gain a sense of the core experience of motherhood for the various women, thus the mothers were initially asked to begin with what they felt to be significant about motherhood. Following this, questions around their culture, role in their family and other support structures that they have were asked to gain an understanding of contextual factors that may impact on their experiences of motherhood.

3.4.2 Interview procedure

The researcher attended the Alexandra Health Centre prior to the commencement of the data collection in order to familiarise herself with the environment and consider the best possible approach. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) explain that "it is through involvement in other communities that one establishes the kind of reputation and contacts necessary to meet and recruit ideal research partners" (p. 103). While it was not possible to meet with the mothers prior to the research as there was a constant influx of mothers attending the Alexandra Health Centre in both the paediatric ward and the Well Baby Clinic on a Thursday, it was felt that it was important to establish rapport and a good working alliance with the staff members of the clinic in order to facilitate immersion into the context in which the data was collected. Through rapport with staff members it was also hoped that the participants would consider the researcher to be trustworthy and unimposing.

The researcher attended the Alexandra Health Centre on many occasions and presented her research to the mothers who were waiting in the waiting area of the paediatric ward or the Well Baby Clinic on a Thursday morning. The participant information sheets were distributed

to those who requested additional information. Once the aim of the research was presented to the mothers present, they were invited to volunteer to be a part of the study.

The interviews were conducted either under a tree in the Alexandra Health Centre's gardens or, when available, in a cubicle in the paediatric ward. This was due to limited space available. This may have affected some of the participants' responses as there were distractions and possible concerns about privacy. At the time of the interview each participant was provided with a participant information sheet (See Appendix 2). The details of the study were clarified with each of the participants to ensure that they had fully understood what they were agreeing to and the aims of the study. Furthermore, they were provided with an explanation of the guarantees of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the participation. The researcher explained each of the forms with the participants and provided them with the opportunity to ask questions should they require any further clarification. It was explained to each participant that should they not wish to answer a question they did not have to and should any feelings of discomfort arise due to the content of the conversation, they would be assisted with obtaining counselling services if necessary. All of the participants signed consent to be interviewed (Appendix 3) and five participants signed consent for the interview to be audio-recorded (Appendix 4). One participant agreed to participate but did not want the interview to be recorded. In this case, extensive notes were made during the interview.

Each participant was interviewed individually. The interview was semi-structured to allow for flexibility (Kerlinger, 1986) and each interview ranged in duration from 45 minutes to an hour. Although a list of questions was prepared in order to stimulate conversation and address particular areas of interest, it was important for the participants to tell their own stories, therefore, wherever possible, the researcher attempted to remain flexible regarding the questions. Burman (1994) (as cited in Frizelle & Hayes, 1999) explains that it is important to allow for flexibility during interviewing "so as not to intimidate the mothers or interrupt their train of thought" (p. 21). However, having the list of questions available helped to focus the conversation so that the interview did not proceed aimlessly (Nicholls, 2009).

The researcher attempted to build rapport with the participants by showing her interest in their stories. The interview began with an invitation to participants to begin with what they felt to be significant about motherhood. This was to encourage mothers to explore their experiences (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999). Other questions asked were aimed at facilitating discussions around the central research questions and other topics the participants felt to be

important in their experience of motherhood. At the end of the interview participants were asked if there was anything more they would like to say and were asked to reflect on what the interview experience had felt like for them. They were encouraged to contact the researcher should they have any further questions and were provided with her contact details. It was felt that one of the participants would benefit from additional counselling services and the relevant contact numbers were supplied to her. Should she require further assistance in attaining counselling this participant was encouraged to contact the researcher. This participant was not interested in formal therapy so she was encouraged to attend the baby mat project that Ububele offers to all mothers at the Alexandra Health Centre every Thursday morning during the Baby Well Clinic.

On completion of the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim from the audio-recordings into a Word document. Relevant non-verbal communications and overall impressions were at times included. Whilst the transcribing process was time consuming it allowed for the beginning of the analysis to take place.

3.4.3 Position of the researcher

Frizelle and Hayes (1999) believe that it is impossible to be completely impartial when engaging in qualitative research. It is important to note that while I aimed to remain objective and as unobtrusive as possible during the research, I am aware that I did have an impact on the research process. Reflexivity can be defined as one critiquing or being actively aware of oneself as a person, a psychologist or a researcher (Gibson & Swartz, 2004 cited in Van Doorene, 2009). Qualitative research is generally reflexive in that the researcher is transparent about biases that he/she may bring to the data so that the reader can take this into consideration when understanding the analysis (Crabb & Chur-Hansen, 2009). Through human interactions people's responses do differ and I was sensitive to my influence on the participants. I am also aware that should a different researcher approach these same participants, they may be able to elicit different information in a different way and would relate to the participants in a different manner. During the interviews there were times when the participants referred directly to me and commented on my race as my race was different to that of the participants. It was important for me to be aware of my social-status, race and background as I was aware that this may impact on the interview process. Being white and middle class, I was initially concerned that the mothers may not be willing to trust me or be

able to open up and share their stories as they may have concerns that I would not understand their stories or would judge them, however, this did not appear to hamper the research process as the mothers who came forward were open and willing to share their stories and thoughts with me. When various attributes about me were raised in the interviews by the participants, I tried to reflect on what this may mean for the participant when conducting the analysis and attempted to consider this in an undefended and unbiased manner. For example, when some of the mothers spoke about how I was white and may have a different experience with raising children, I reflected how difficult it must have been for these mothers to share their stories knowing that I come from a different background to them. Another example was that some of the mothers felt that it was nice speaking to someone who really understood what they were experiencing. I reflected to myself that in reality I could not truly understand their experience but may have presented sufficient empathy in order for the mothers to feel understood.

At the end of the interviews I asked the participants to reflect on what their experiences were while being interviewed. Many of the participants communicated that it was helpful for them to speak to someone who understands their situation. It was important for me to reflect on this. Although I have a strong interest in motherhood and culture, I am not a mother and I do not share similar cultural histories with the participants and may not entirely understand their experiences even though I attempted to be empathetic and understanding. This also placed me in a position of authority as the knowing researcher. These mothers were aware that I was a psychology student and it was felt at times that they expected me to know more about their experiences than I should or be able to impart wisdom or advice. It was important to explain to the participants that as a researcher I was there to listen to their stories as they are the experts in their own lives and could refer them to counselors for further therapy should they feel that they require it or should they feel the need to talk to someone in a different context. I had to maintain a balance between becoming overly supportive in the interviews and remaining the interested listener. These mothers' stories were deeply moving and I found myself becoming very drawn into their stories and had to remain cognisant of the fact that in this context I was a researcher and not a therapist. There were times when participants asked me for advice, psychologically and medically. Again, it was important for me to reiterate and explain my position as a researcher to the participants.

Reflexivity is required to ensure that the researcher allows for the participants' stories to emerge rather than using incorrect assumptions about this particular population, therefore, I

had to pay particular attention to any biases or preconceptions that I had about black mothers living in townships. I was aware of my naïve knowledge of township life and motherhood and was careful to allow their stories to be told rather than to enforce my thinking regarding the issue. "The growing respectability of the study of women and gender has also seen a fierce challenge by black women to white researchers, to reflect more critically on their ethnocentric assumptions about gender relations and identity" (Walker, 1995, p. 420). I constantly challenged myself to think about the assumptions that I made when going to the Alexandra Health Centre and to critically reflect on why I was making those assumptions. What I realised was that I expected these mothers to speak about motherhood in the way that I have heard mothers in my community speak about it and was initially surprised that they did not speak about it in the same manner. I was not aware just how much their context played a role in their experiences and noticed that the way in which I had thought about motherhood was quite different to the way in which they thought about it. It is important to continually reflect on any interpretations or conclusions drawn when trying to understand the participants, particularly when making interpretations on their narratives. Acknowledging that the researcher occupies a particular position and that she can only therefore obtain a partial view was important, however, sensitivity and cultural awareness was maintained (Ambert et al, 1995). I attempted to listen to the stories that the participants told objectively, however, I acknowledge that there was subjectivity in some cases in that certain themes may have been concentrated on more from my side as subjectively these seemed important from my perspective.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis was conducted on the transcribed interviews. In using narrative analysis the researcher was able to identify, analyse and report the stories that were constructed around motherhood during the interview process. Narrative psychology attempts to understand and explore questions around the self and identity, and it also aims to look at the significant events that occur in people's lives (Crossley 2007). Motherhood has been theorised as being an important identity for most women (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991a) and therefore it is of interest to the researcher to explore black mothers' narratives about this particular experience. The act of telling stories is a universal human activity (Riessman,

1993). From this perspective the mothers' narratives of their experiences are the primary data. The researcher conducted the interviews and then interpreted the stories that emerged. The narrative approach allows the story to unfold and is used as it enables a richness and authenticity to the data being presented (Neuman, 2003). Narratives have been used extensively in psychology and this process allows the individual to make sense of his or her own stories (Riessman, 1993). It was therefore useful in understanding participants' experiences in this research and stories about motherhood became apparent. Stories play a central role in the process of identity construction and through making sense of these stories, one makes sense of their own experiences (Crossley, 2007).

3.5.2 Process of analysis

Within narrative psychological analysis is the assumption that there is an interest in learning about people's narratives and that some insight is gained upon psychological and social realities from those narratives (Crossley, 2007). This can be a complicated task as the meanings of others' narratives are not always explicitly evident in the transcript. In order to facilitate this, the data needed to be interpreted and analysed. There are three broad steps to completing a narrative analysis. The first step falls in both the category of data collection and data analysis and is the telling of the story (Riessman, 1993). The participants were asked open-ended questions that allowed them to construct their own story in collaboration with the researcher/listener in a way that they found meaningful (Riessman, 1993). Transcribing is the next step in the process of analysis. Everything that was exchanged during the interview was transcribed into text; this involved what had been said, in addition to any notes about non-verbal behaviour (Riessman, 1993). The final step in the process is analysing. Riessman (1993) explains that "analysis cannot be easily distinguished from transcription" (p. 60). Whilst transcribing, the researcher began to pay attention to themes in the interviews that could possibly be woven into a narrative. It is vital to look beyond content and to also understand the meanings in which the narratives are produced (Crossley, 2007 & Riessman, 1993), therefore, both the latent and manifest content of the interview were considered and thought of in terms of what stories were told and how they were told. What is important is to not only understand the words of each mother's story but to also recognise the unsaid or unsayable in their narratives (Thomas, 2007). Crossley (2007) outlines the following steps when analysing a narrative:

The first step involved *reading and familiarising.* This step involves repeatedly reading through the transcripts in order to familiarise oneself with the material and to begin to get a sense of emerging themes (Crossley, 2007). The researcher immersed herself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Through this, various overall themes and ideas began to emerge.

The following step involved *identifying important concepts*. Crossley (2007) explains that it is important to "develop a grasp of the principal elements of the personal narrative" (p. 140). The researcher read through the transcripts and paid attention to the narrative tone of the interviews, became aware of the imagery that the participants made use of when telling the story and began to identify important themes (Crossley, 2007).

In the next step, *identifying 'narrative tone',* the researcher paid careful attention to the tone that the participants used when telling their story and how their tone may have changed when talking about the past to talking about current feelings or events (Crossley, 2007).

The *narrative themes and images* were then identified (Crossley, 2007). The previous steps involved creating a foundation and framework from which to identify themes and images in the stories. The researcher then read through each transcript, highlighting with various colour pens the themes and images that appeared to be important in the participants' stories and paying attention when similar themes emerged across different transcripts.

Weaving all of this together into a coherent story constituted the next step in the analytic process (Crossley, 2007). The themes that had been identified by the researcher and her supervisor were considered and analysed in terms of how they contribute to participants' narratives and how and what the participants were saying through the themes that were presented. In this way the researcher was able to weave together various narratives that appear to be central to the stories that black South African mothers tell. It is important to note at this stage that the researcher became aware that while some of the stories shared similar narrative pathways, mothers also had unique stories to tell, thus it was noted that motherhood is not a homogeneous construct but rather an intensely personal experience that is constructed within a larger social and cultural context.

The final stage in the narrative analysis process is the *writing up of the research report* (Crossley, 2007). This document serves to fulfil this purpose.

While the analysis has been presented in a linear structure above it is important to recognise that this process did not always follow a linear pathway and at times the researcher would return to the first step in the analysis. Many of the steps presented above appear to be discrete, however, there was much overlapping between steps and no clear distinction between steps. This process can rather be thought of as a circular process. The aim was to understand the personal and cultural meanings that the participants were presenting in their narratives rather than rigidly adhering to the guidelines on narrative analysis as the aim was to weave together a coherent story (Crossley, 2007).

The analytic process was informed through the assistance of the researcher's supervisor who has extensive experience in working with mothers in the South African context. Elliot et al. (1999) explain that when analysing the data it is vital that the researcher provides credibility checks to her work. This entails consulting another individual who has experience in the particular field of study. Once the transcripts had been read through a number of times, the researcher met with her supervisor to discuss ideas and possible themes. Some themes were presented but then later discarded as they could be better accounted for in other themes or headings. For example, the environment was initially analysed in broad terms, however, upon further scrutiny, it was decided that it was important to rather speak about the actual place in which these mothers were mothering and thus the focus shifted from a broad overview on the environment to considering particular aspects of living in Alexandra as having an impact on their narratives. Another shift through supervision was analysing the mothers experiences in terms of ambivalence. Through discussion it became clear that what was initially though of as ambivalence in the narratives was not theoretically sound and could be better accounted for as a mother's need for admiration. Through supervision, the relevant narratives were extracted from the data and confirmed or further queried by the supervisor, thus allowing the researcher to feel more confident in the reporting of the results once the final results had been decided upon.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Researchers have two basic categories of ethical responsibility: responsibility to the individuals who participate in the research studies and responsibility to the discipline of science, to be accurate and honest in the reporting of their research (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003).

Ethics for this study was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Medical). Ethical considerations included the guarantee of confidentiality, issues around informed consent, voluntary nature of participation and consideration of potential benefits or risk of participating in this research.

Although anonymity cannot be ensured entirely due to the face-to-face interview format, all reasonable means were taken to ensure confidentiality. The participants were disguised and pseudonyms were used for participants and their family members when included in the dialogue of the transcripts and data presented in this report. Furthermore, participants were made aware that only sections of the transcripts would be used in the write-up of the analysis of this study. In order to further ensure confidentiality, only the researcher has access to the consent forms and audio-recordings of the interviews. However, in order for the analysis to be checked and verified the researcher's supervisor also had access to the verbatim transcripts. All of the data that was collected has been securely stored and will be destroyed at the completion of the research. If publications arise from this study, the raw data will be kept in a locked cupboard or on a password protected computer to which only the researcher will have access for two years. If no publications arise from the study, the raw data will be kept in the same manner for six years.

Participants were required to sign consent forms agreeing to participate in the study (Appendix 3). Informed consent was also required to audio-record the interviews (Appendix 4). One participant chose not to sign consent to be audio-recorded and therefore her interview was not recorded. Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any questions and could withdraw from the study at any point in time as their participation was voluntary.

Talking about mothering experiences may evoke emotional or psychological distress and at times the interviews elicited difficult emotions. Participants were made aware of this risk prior to participation and were provided with referral contact numbers for individual counselling. At the end of the interview participants were asked to reflect on how it felt to be interviewed and this question was utilised as an additional source through which to evaluate levels of distress.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The experience of motherhood is a deeply personal one that is located within a larger context. Kruger (2003) explains that motherhood has been invested with ideological meaning and cultural significance. All mothers' experiences are unique and what is of interest here is particularly how black working class mothers construct their narratives. Magwaza (2003) explains that "the social and cultural contexts in which mothers live shape their choices and perspectives about mothering" (p. 1). As discussed in the previous chapter, this study is exploratory in nature and aims to analyse the stories that black mothers tell about motherhood.

The first section of the Findings and Analysis chapter serves to introduce each of the narrators and present their uniquely authored stories. This serves to introduce the reader to each of the narrators and to offer an overall perspective into the participants' stories as told in the interviews. More than simply introducing the participants, this section allows the unique stories of each of the mothers to be heard and presents the differences and the similarities of the experiences. It also provides a holistic picture of the experience of motherhood as these individual mothers perceive it. These stories show that while there may be a similar thread to each of the stories that were told, there are also critical differences in each mother's experience of motherhood. There were also a number of similar features in the overall narratives. The stories follow a similar progression from how they became a mother, what their experience of motherhood has been thus far and the contexts in which mothers mother.

The next section addresses the start of each of the mothers' stories on motherhood. The beginning of a story is important as it provides an introduction to the narratives that are told. Important to any story is how it all began. The focus of this section is how the mothers adjusted to becoming a mother and the joys and challenges inherent to motherhood.

The following section seeks to analyse the overarching narrative that emerged around how the context within which each mother finds herself impacts on her experience of motherhood and the way in which she thinks and speaks about her experience of motherhood. Central to the contextual narrative were a number of sub-narratives that shape the stories, namely family influences, being a mother in a township, deprivation as a narrative and race and culture as

pervading influences. An analysis involved not only looking at the 'what' of the stories, i.e. the actual information the participants gave, but also the 'how' of the stories, i.e. how the mothers told their stories and how these stories combined to become part of the overall narrative of being a black South African mother living in an urban setting.

To protect the identity of the participants, the participants have been given pseudonyms and certain information that could identify them has been omitted or changed.

4.2 The stories

4.2.1 Mary's story

Mary is deeply ambivalent about motherhood. While she expresses her joy at being a mother, she also finds it challenging at times: "*we have our ups and downs*". She is a young, unmarried mother with a six month old baby. She found out she was pregnant when she was already three months in and the pregnancy was unplanned.

When asked to tell a story about when she felt like a good mother, this is what Mary, a 23 year old woman, had to say:

> *I feel that all the time in a way. Especially when I have to wake up at night or my goodness, I have to, I've learnt how to tell myself that I am a good mom and because I'm a good mom, I have to do this. I have to wake up at night and breastfeed - not be impatient, just be tolerant.*

Her description of being a good mother is about meeting the needs of her baby and learning to be patient and tolerant despite how hard it may feel at times.

She spoke about how the hardest part of being a young mother is how life changed so dramatically. She described herself as being "rebellious" in the past as she loved to go out with friends and to socialise but now she spends more time at home with her baby.

> *When I became pregnant, I changed completely. I started staying indoors more and when he was born I started spending time with him, in a way that I never thought I'd be able to do. I quit a whole lot of things; I used to be a smoker and stuff.*

Mary speaks about how, as a mother, one cannot only think about oneself but one has to consider the needs of another person. Her life changed in many ways and she has had to adapt

to these changes in order to accommodate a new life which includes a baby. She finds that in order to maintain an identity she has to manage all of the different parts of herself.

> *With me being a mom now and a girlfriend and an employee, I look at things differently. It's no longer the same, it's like I have to divide myself into 3 or 4. I have different personas now coz when I'm a mom, I'm this, uh, very mature person, a person who can guide someone else, a person who's, uh, who I can be dependent on, a person who's trustworthy coz he trusts me. I need to be reliable and everything else that is all positive, and when it comes to being a girlfriend, I, I always need to recap on when we fell in love.*

Mary feels that it is vital that she does not neglect any of the parts of herself. As important as she feels being a mother is, she also feels that she needs to remain in contact with who she is as a girlfriend or employee. Part of being a mother, for Mary, is raising a child through guiding him or her. She explored this further when talking about her hopes for her baby:

> *It doesn't make sense forcing someone to do something they don't want to do and, coz at the end of the day they won't be happy. And they will only have me to resent for whatever they chose. So I wouldn't want my baby to feel that way about me. I want my baby to feel loved, to feel like his family will be behind him through anything and everything.*

She has many dreams for her baby but wants him to explore his own dreams and explains that as a mother it's always important to support your child.

4.2.2 Thandi's story

Thandi is a 31 year old mother of two. Her eldest child is 16 years old and was a result of an unplanned teenage pregnancy. Her relationship with the father of this child ended shortly after she discovered she was pregnant. Her last born child is a year old and was a planned pregnancy. Thandi is also no longer in a relationship with the father of this child as he left her shortly after the birth of their baby, when this baby was six months old. He was also abusive towards her and physically hurt her during her pregnancy. Thandi began by saying that being a mother is a good thing. However, before we began the interview she had been telling me how difficult things are for her as an HIV positive single mother.

Thandi's HIV positive status forms a large part of her identity as a mother.

> *And especially this disease. HIV and AIDS. All I need from these children, I don't want them to get infected with HIV. I am an HIV positive mom, but when it comes to my children I am very jealous of them. I don't want this disease to touch my children.*

She particularly wants to protect her children from becoming HIV positive. Her story is centred on providing her children with education and counselling with regards to HIV and AIDS but also around education as providing a better future for them:

> *All I need is education, for me, and my children so that we can live better lives. Ja, because I am being a, being a domestic worker is not what I want for the rest of my life. I need something better.*
>
> *I just need my children to go to school because I love them.*

The way Thandi would be able to show her children that she loves them and wants the best for them is through providing them with education so that they will be empowered sufficiently to create a positive life for themselves. Part of her story on mothering is focused on how important it is for her to grow as an individual and a person and through this growth she can be a better mother to her children. She wants something more for herself and in gaining something more for herself she will be able to provide more effectively for her children's needs.

When asked to tell me a story of when she felt like a good mother, this is what Thandi told me:

> *I remember, eh, in my community, I've got a lot of admiring people, they love me, they learn a lot from me. Ja sometimes they come to me and receive counselling, ja, especially my ages, ja, they need to come to me and tell me about how good I am.*

Being a good mother for Thandi is about being recognised by others in the community and being respected. It seems that while her role as a mother to her children is a very important one, she has some sense of being a mother to her larger community by providing them with counselling and education and sharing her story about being an HIV positive mother with them.

Some people came to me, why are you doing this? What, you are HIV positive, now you are appearing yourself to the public? Uh, ay, I said to them, you know what? This is a toolkit, this is a tool for people so that they can go to the clinic and know their status because now they are dying and leaving children alone.

She feels that it is vital to be an activist and educator to all mothers so that they too can raise their children in a positive way. Therefore, for Thandi, her narrative on mothering extends beyond being the biological mother to her two children, but also providing inspiration to her community.

4.2.3 Gladys's story

Gladys is a 51 year old mother and grandmother. Gladys's experience of motherhood is coloured by deprivation and illness.

I love my children, I love my children. But a problem, I'm not working alright and I don't have a home, I think there's, and the child don't have and maybe they ask me, it's because my room is like, maybe it's a water down, it's getting a water to my house, that's why I'm not ok and a sinus.

She really struggles to make sense of being a mother internally as she is constantly faced with the challenges of raising children while struggling financially. She is a mother of three children and is a grandmother. While her two eldest children are almost adults she still largely supports them. Her youngest son, 12 years old, is sickly and has to have regular hospital visits. While we spoke, it became clear that health issues are a particular concern for Gladys but despite struggling every day with being sickly herself she tries to do the best she can for her children.

Gladys's narrative on motherhood is about being a good mother to her children, instilling values in them and attempting to meet their emotional and physical needs despite her poverty.

They must sitting together and then they must share everything.

Here, Gladys explains that she wants her children to respect each other and share what they have. She also explains that, as a family, it is important for everyone to spend time together.

You didn't love the child with money, the child with your heart, if you sit down and then to share with your children.

Gladys stresses the importance of caring for her children and attempting to meet their emotional needs. While she may not always be able to provide for them financially she attempts to care for them in other ways, which she feels is just as important. Providing for her children is difficult for her because she is struggling financially which colours her narrative on what it means to be a mother.

Sometimes if maybe they want something at home, I say this is finished. I will start to be confused because I, I'm working but I'm not getting enough money. My salary is just only R2000.00 and then I will buy my electrics and food and everything. If maybe they don't have shoes I just want to go to my pocket and take this money, maybe I give this one, this one is crying, why'd you give this one? But now it's hard. It's hard.

4.2.4 Patricia's story

Patricia is 35 years old. Her narrative emerges around the fact that she has a physically disabled child. She is married with three children; her eldest is 11 years old and her last born is five years old. Her last born child is physically disabled. She does not work as she has to spend much of her day caring for her disabled son, attending to his medical needs and making sure that he attends physiotherapy at the Alexandra Health Centre. Despite the difficulties that she faces on a daily basis she enjoys being a mother to her three children

It's good because I'm getting to be a mother and, having children, you gain experience about how to bring a human into the world; you gain experience about how to care for a child.

Patricia enjoys being a mother and feels that having a child is a very important job. It's been an important experience for her learning to care for another person and being able to meet their needs.

For Patricia, motherhood is not just about physically giving birth but more about a life that is lived. She explained that motherhood is an incredibly important job and is vital for family life. To quote her, she feels that "*a house without a mother, it's not a house"*. This suggests how vital she perceives her role as a mother, not only for society in general but for her on a

personal level. A mother completes the story of a family; she is able to hold her family together and create a home for them.

She explains that the way in which she mothers has changed over the years as her different children have different needs.

> *Yes, for the first born, I gave that one love, but not as this one. This one, I have given all my love to him. I think of this one most of the time, I'm with Sipho because I have to help him so much; I have to give him extra love.*

She loves all of her children but feels that, because her youngest son is disabled, she has to provide additional care for him and offer him more love as he is less able to care for himself. She also acknowledges that as children grow up they have different needs: *"taking care of a child of 12 years is not like taking care of a little one...there are different challenges when they get older."* She has learnt to adapt the way in which she mothers not only towards the different children that she has but also as those children grow older.

When asked to reflect on how she experienced the interview she expressed how enjoyable it was to be able to talk to someone - to have the opportunity to share her story and possibly be able to teach others through her experiences.

> *It's been nice because I'm able to talk to a person or somebody about how to be a mother, particularly someone who isn't a mother, maybe because I can teach you things. It has been nice because I wouldn't have been able to talk to anyone. You have such a good thing, sometimes it's bad but it's very nice to be a mother, the good outweighs the bad. You can survive because it's very good to be a mother.*

4.2.5 Sophie's story

At the moment Sophie's context overwhelms her narrative of motherhood. She is a 22 year old unmarried mother of two who receives little emotional support from the father of her child.

> *Since I was pregnant he didn't want to be there and my pregnancy was too bad, you know, coz it didn't went well. And the thing that did affect me was he was not there but with the first child he was there, so this thing was affecting me a lot.*

She has very little space to focus on herself as her problems at present are her core focus. While she was able to speak about motherhood and how important it is for her, her concern over the breakdown of her relationship with her boyfriend overshadows her narrative. Sophie is a young mother with a six month old baby and another child who is three years old. Her boyfriend was described as being very caring and supportive during the first pregnancy and with their first child together; however, with the birth of her second baby, he seems to have become more distant which preoccupies a large portion of Sophie's thoughts.

Part of Sophie's understanding herself as a mother is how different it was before she had a baby and how it is after having children. She explains that before having children she did not have any worries and lived a carefree life. Now, however her life has changed and she finds that she worries about her children.

> *It is different coz before I had the babies, I was enjoying life, you know, not having the worries but now you do. I have the worries, I wonder where my kids are, like, are they happy, like if I just leave them at home going to work, I just wonder with my kids, are they happy? Are they giving them food? You know, those kind of things.*

As a mother Sophie has to keep her children in mind and make sure that all of their needs are met. Life before she became a mother appeared to be more carefree and less worrisome. Now, having the responsibility of caring for her children can feel like a burden but she does indeed care for her children and is genuinely concerned for their well-being. Part of her story on mothering is about providing adequately for their physical and emotional needs.

Sophie expressed gratitude for being able to share her story with me.

> *It feels good, other than keeping it to my heart, you know. I always tell people if you've got something that it it it... you have to find someone, talk to her, him or her, it doesn't matter, then after, after you're gonna feel better... I love to share my story because I feel better and I feel much stronger. Other than keeping it inside my heart.*

She may find it both joyful and challenging to be a mother and being able to share some of those joys and hopes with others appears to have provided Sophie with another dimension to her narrative on mothering and that motherhood can be a story shared with many.

4.2.6 Maria's story

Maria is a 25 year old mother with one child. She tells a happy and optimistic story of motherhood. She did not plan to become a mother at this stage of her life but she has chosen to focus on the positive aspects of being a mother as she wants to provide her daughter with a positive role model.

> *My mom and my sister, they were there for me. You see, now I'm proud to be a mother.*

Through the support of her family, Maria has become proud of her role as a mother. She feels that she has grown up and become a woman. She talked about how she was able to rise to the challenge of being a mother.

A large part of Maria's narrative is coloured by her idea that she wants to better her circumstances through education. Maria fell pregnant in the last year of her diploma and this influences the way in which she speaks about becoming a mother.

> *It was my third year, I fell pregnant on June, coz I even graduated my, I can show you, I even graduate on October, in December I was pregnant. I also have a photo here to show you the pregnant. I graduate when I was pregnant but I was not ashamed I was proud. If I was ashamed I wouldn't go to the school. I even go and finish my diploma there when I was pregnant.*

It was important for Maria to complete her diploma to ensure that she could find a job in order to provide for her child. Through her studies, she wants to be able to improve the way in which she lives and therefore provide a better life for her child. Even though she did not plan for this pregnancy she ensured that she still followed her dreams for herself and one of those dreams was completing her diploma. She recognises the importance of dreams, not only for herself but also for her baby

> *I do have dreams, lots of dreams. I wish he can be this, I wish he can be this, but the only person who can be that is the baby. You don't have to take a baby's dream and you give your baby a dream. Everyone has to have a dream, you see, we can dream for them, like our parents, they dream we should be a doctor but we end up being an advertiser, journalist, what it is you just have to accept that. Whatever my baby happens to be I will accept, but I will always encourage her to be this [sic].*

4.2.7 A comment on the stories

These stories provide a brief impression of the narratives that the mothers told in the interviews. The intention is to provide an overall understanding of their personal narratives on motherhood and how the research was experienced. While many of the stories shared some aspects, such as a similar plot regarding becoming a mother, how they are managing to cope with the changes and challenges of motherhood and how they think about their babies and their children's futures differ. Definite differences in the experience of motherhood emerge in these mothers' stories.

There is a certain degree of similarity in all of the mothers' stories. Each mother expressed her joy at being a mother and what an important role it is. Explicitly and implicitly, the mothers spoke about how becoming a mother is a life-changing event, one that shifts not only the daily activities of the women but also how they begin to think about themselves as women and mothers. Another similarity to the stories is that challenges are inherent to motherhood.

What is striking in the presentation of the stories is just how unique each mother's experience is, despite the similarities in the stories. Each mother faces challenges that are specific to her own circumstances. For Patricia, her central challenge is providing for a disabled baby. Gladys's core challenge is her deprived economic circumstances and illness that pervades her family and her experience of being a mother. Thandi's challenge is accepting her HIV positive status and having to learn to be a mother at such a young age. Maria accepts the challenges of motherhood but wants to retain some degree of independence, and, while this is shared with Mary, the way they in which they express their individuality is quite different. Finally, for Sophie, her greatest challenge at the moment is trying to be a mother while dealing with the rejection of her partner.

What is also interesting in the telling of these mothers' stories is that the concept of motherhood is not static, but rather ever changing and evolving. Patricia presents this directly by stating that the way she mothers her last born is quite different to how she mothers her older children. She also explains that the needs of children change as they grow older. From each of the stories, it is evident that the mothers, while doing so in unique ways, all attempt to meet the needs of their children in the best way they know how. Therefore, as those needs shift so will their maternal practices and thus their experiences of motherhood will shift,

indicating that motherhood is fluid and evolving. It also suggests that motherhood is highly influenced and dependent on the contexts in which mothers mother. Thus, should the context change, so too would their experiences of motherhood.

4.3. Stories about Becoming a Mother

In the telling of a story the start is very important. Kitzinger (1978) explains that the birth of a first child is invariably a point of crisis for any mother; it is also the point at which, developmentally, an individual experiences the transition from woman to mother. Interestingly, during the interviews, each mother presented an account of deciding to have a baby, getting pregnant and adjusting to the role of mother, despite not being asked to explain these aspects directly. Therefore, the point at which the participants became mothers (i.e. the starting point of their stories) is pivotal to their stories on motherhood. What is of interest in this section is not only how the participants talked about becoming mothers, i.e. their stories of pregnancy, but also how they came to think of themselves as mothers, exploring their mixed feelings towards motherhood and the idealisation of what it meant for them when they fell pregnant and how they adjusted to thinking about themselves as mothers and not just women.

The question regarding how the participants became pregnant was not asked to them directly but their stories around their pregnancy and becoming a mother emerged as a very important narrative for mothers in both the process of accepting their new identity as a mother and in the new roles that this identity required. The participants had different pathways that led them to becoming mothers. The most common path that emerged was that the pregnancies were unplanned. For both Maria and Mary, the pregnancy was unplanned.

> *Maria: Let me tell you like when I found out that I was pregnant, me and my boyfriend we use condoms, the condom bust, when the condom bust I menstruate the following day, I go to the college teacher, uh, she was my friend, I told her my story and she told me no, that thing was going to clean the womb, no you won't be pregnant. Couple of friends of mine tell me the same story, so, two months that I found out I was pregnant. How come? So I tell my mother and my mother told me that when that menstruation come, it was saying bye bye, I won't come, I will come back after 9 months. That's how I fell pregnant.*

Maria was not expecting to fall pregnant and was using precautions to prevent pregnancy. She had sought counsel from trusted friends who assured her that she would not be pregnant, so it was a shock and a surprise when, months later, she found out she was pregnant. Mary's pregnancy was also unplanned:

> *Mary: So when I found out, actually I was... I had no feelings towards my pregnancy at all, I wasn't surprised, I wasn't happy, I wasn't sad, I was just numb. If I can use that word. I didn't know what to feel.*

Mary explains that initially she did not know how to feel about her pregnancy. Motherhood was not something she was currently thinking about and the pregnancy was quite unexpected. Right from the start Mary begins to express some ambivalence in her narrative on motherhood. However, she also explains that, over time, she was able to accept her pregnancy.

> *Mary: His dad was excited. He was the one who was so looking forward to, ja, labour day and stuff. And then eventually I warmed into it. I was like, ok, I can actually be a mom. Maybe this is time for me to grow and stuff and we will have a great time and stuff. I always looked forward to being a great mom. Ja, I'm still practising that (laughs).*

Mary's story describes how, over time, she became used to the idea of pregnancy and began to enjoy the experience of becoming a mother. She used the opportunity to allow herself to grow as both a person and a mother and describes this time as one of excited expectancy.

Both Mary and Maria told stories of how once the initial surprise of finding out they were pregnant wore off they were able to begin talking and thinking about what it meant for them to become mothers.

> *Mary: Now I don't have words to describe it, what can I say? From the first day he was born we just connected, just like that, even before, while I was pregnant, we used to talk, ok I used to talk to him and stuff, but when he was born I couldn't take my eyes off him (laughs).*

> *Maria: A baby is a gift from God, you see, God saw that I am grown up now and this is a blessing, you see.*

Both of these mothers were able to create some meaning for themselves around becoming a mother and were able to find joy in their babies. In Mary's previous quote she links the idea that becoming a mother is synonymous with growth and therefore represents something about becoming an adult. Maria repeats this idea in the quote above by talking about the fact that she is *"grown up now*". Mary, during the interview, spoke with a smile on her face and appeared to be fascinated with her child. Even while the interview was being conducted she would regularly gaze at her baby. Despite the fact that she had not planned on becoming a mother at this particular time, her story describes how she came to love her baby and connect with him. Maria spoke about drawing on her faith to make sense of becoming a mother at this time and came to accept her child as someone important, a gift from God. She creates meaning around the idea that she was destined to become a mother through the wisdom of a higher power. The way in which these narratives took shape was through talking about how the pregnancies occurred and what sense was made of becoming a mother.

While Sophie shared a similar story with Mary and Maria regarding her pregnancy her notions on motherhood were largely influenced by the lack of support that she received from her boyfriend.

> *Sophie: I think to be a mom is not the problem, no, but the problem is the father of my child, coz he's not there and this thing is hard.*

Both her pregnancies were unplanned, but Sophie did not speak at length about her first pregnancy and her narrative around her second pregnancy was overwhelmed with feelings of sadness and loss at the breakdown of her relationship with her children's father. She struggled to reflect on her personal process of becoming a mother and how to make sense of becoming a mother.

Thandi's first pregnancy was also unplanned and came as a great shock to her. She was only thirteen when she fell pregnant with her first baby and describes the experience as follows:

> *Thandi: Yes, it was a shock. It was a disgrace, it was a disgrace and I remember mommy came to me and said, "Thandi, why are you so big these days? These days you are a big girl, what's the problem?" I said, "Mommy, I don't know." But now are you mens... and she said to me, "now are you menstruating?" I said, "No." Now it's three months. I never see any menstruation anymore in my life. And so she said, "Wow, you are pregnant. Which means you are pregnant." I said, "Mummy, how?"*

She said to me do you have a boyfriend?" I just keep quiet. And again, "Do you have a boyfriend?" I said, "Mummy, there is a man out there, we are learning in the same class, ja, it's my boyfriend. His name is Lucky. Every day he is coming here before 8pm to come and go with me in his house and sleep with me." That is how I get pregnant.

From this quote, Thandi's shock, fear and confusion around her pregnancy are evident. She was a young girl and lacked sexual education and awareness to know what was happening with her body. She also expresses disgrace at becoming pregnant at such a young age and there is pervading shame around her pregnancy in her narrative. This quotation illustrates her naïvety on becoming pregnant and what the future may hold for her as a mother. Her second pregnancy was as an adult and was planned. Thandi does not speak much about the second pregnancy and how this shaped her story on what it feels like to become a mother.

While much of the experience of becoming a mother was one about learning to accept an unexpected pregnancy, other mothers had different experiences. For both Patricia and Gladys their first pregnancies were planned and they were older than some of the other participants when they became mothers. Gladys explains:

Gladys: My first child I, my pregnancy was 27 years, ja I was 27 years and then I'm happy, I said, yo, also me I'm a mom because I'm going to get a child.

Gladys speaks about her happiness at becoming a mother because she was older, married and possibly more prepared at the thought of becoming a mother than some of the other mothers who were interviewed. She speaks about something important occurring - becoming a mother and having a child.

For Patricia the idea of becoming a mother was a joyful experience. Her expectations were possibly unrealistic, however and her experience of motherhood was not as easy as she had first thought or expected.

Patricia: I thought it would be nice, that I could wear high heels, nice clothes and fancy things, driving cars, being made up; I thought I would become a mother, be something special. Now being a mom is not as easy as I was thinking. I was 29 at the first child, it was special, beautiful.

She tells a story about the idealised aspects of motherhood. For her, the idea of becoming a mother represented something about improving her status in the world. She was going to be able to buy luxuries that she had possibly seen other mothers possessing. She also speaks about how special she imagined her role as a mother was going be. In her narrative, motherhood was about growing up, being mature and being someone who was looked up to and respected because she looked like a woman who was successful as she was able to buy fancy things like cars and clothing and dress smartly in heels.

The joys of motherhood are frequently referenced in popular television programs and literature today (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999). Mothers frequently speak to other mothers about how special it is to be a mother. This was present in most of the narratives that were told. Desire for admiration is a narrative that is interwoven in many of the stories of the mothers who were interviewed in this study. Mary expresses her joy at being a mother.

> *Mary: The good feelings is that you have somebody who you know loves you wholeheartedly, you have somebody who depends on you, you have somebody who looks up to you, just someone who's always there for you. Ja, or who needs you.*

Mary narrates how special it is to have someone in your life who completely loves and admires you as a mother. She implies that because the baby was once a part of the mother, their relationship is intertwined for life, based on mutual love and admiration. She also enjoys the fact that there is one person in the world who will always admire and respect her and this is unique to the parent-child relationship and is not present or anticipated in other relationships. Mary goes on to clarify:

> *Mary: It's a different bond. It's not the bond with your boyfriend or with your parent, it's just different. It feels like he's a part of you.*

She acknowledges and accepts that the bond with her baby is something altogether special and sacred and part of that reason is possibly because, as a mother, one carries the baby inside her body, which immediately sets up a different pattern of relating.

Patricia's narrative reflects a similar notion:

> *Patricia: You obtain someone who will call you mom and who will love you no matter what. You look after and care for a baby, having someone who will always love you*

and who you will always love, someone who shares things with you, who will give you relief, teaches you how to love and be happy, real happiness.

Patricia's story about mothering is a story about two central characters, the mother and her baby, and their mutual dependence and love. It is an unconditional perception of love in that because you are the mother the baby will love you regardless of circumstance or situation. She also reflects that other people respect and admire mothers: "*Others think it's important to be a mom, to be a mom you are a very strong*". She spoke about the idea that mothers have to be very strong, hold the family together and play an important role in the lives of their children. These mothers are speaking about motherhood as being special to someone and having someone special in your life to love.

While many mothers admire and appreciate what it may be like to be a mother, a corollary to this also emerged; a number of the participants also spoke about their fears of becoming a mother. When asked to reflect on what they thought it was going to be like to be a mother, Mary and Maria had the following to say:

Mary: I imagined it would be difficult because I didn't know anything at all about being a mom... I can't believe, like the fun we've had ever since he's been born. It, it's just great, it's amazing having him around.

Maria: When the baby came, it was so like, everything is going to change, like, you know, sometimes you have those feelings that I'm going to be a fat lazy mother who is going to be sitting at home, not going anywhere, you see? I thought maybe I'm going to change; I'm going to be big. I big, like a mother, maybe my boyfriend he's going to run away coz now I have changed...I thought everything was going to change, my friend is going to turn me on the back.

Both of these mothers discuss how afraid they were of becoming mothers and how difficult they thought motherhood was going to be but what they go on to speak about is how their narrative changed from one of fear to one of joy and appreciation. Through motherhood they were able to experience much happiness with their children and were able to mediate the process. Maria states: "*So things didn't change like that*." Through this statement she reveals that her fears of what would happen after she became a mother were not realised.

Many of the mothers expressed that before they experienced motherhood they thought that it was going to be easier than it actually is.

Sophie: I wanted to have a family and I didn't know it was going to be difficult. I wanted to have a family, to have kids, you know. I thought it was a good thing, you know...I didn't know it was gonna be so difficult, you know.

Patricia: Now being a mom is not as easy as I was thinking.

They had idealised notions of what mothering was. Alongside idealisation of motherhood another narrative emerges and that is one of ambivalence. Literature suggests that ambivalence is a necessary part of motherhood (Parker, 1995) and that it is interwoven into all of the mothers' stories in some way or another. Ambivalence is about having quite contradictory feelings towards a person. While these mothers did not actively speak about or express ambivalence about mothering or ambivalence towards their children, they did speak about motherhood being characterised by mixed feelings and mixed experiences.

Mary: To be a mother, it's a whole lot of things, hey. I just learn, for me, I just learn how to love someone else completely, my whole heart, and I'm forever thinking about my baby at all times. We have our ups and downs but it's more ups than downs, it's just great, it's just a great experience.

In this narrative it is clear that Mary experiences positive and negative feelings towards her child and around what it means to be a mother.

Mary: Ok, with the bad feelings, I don't have days a lot, they come occasionally when you just, I'm a first time mom so I'm not used to this whole thing of being a mom, sometimes you just need your own space and you can't have it anymore once you're a mom you know, coz your baby needs attention and stuff, so at times it's, ja, it's a bit hard when you feel like being, just being by yourself.

In accepting both the positive and negative aspects of mothering, mothers can begin to know their babies and know themselves as mothers. Mary's response suggests that she feels torn because she attempts to be a good mother by always being there for her child, yet she struggles because, at times, she has a need to feel like an individual and not just a mother - a person who is entitled to space and interests outside of being a mother.

Sophie: So sometimes I just ask myself why is he doing this or maybe he is not sure about the baby or he don't want me anymore coz it's all about the babies, ja to our side there's no like, you know like relationship, it's not happy, for when he come at

my home he just talk about the baby and that's it, so I'm confused with what's going on. And it's upsetting me a lot coz with the first child he was supporting in the, you know caring and all stuff, but with this baby, so sometimes I just feel like maybe I should have done the abortion, not to have this baby, to have him back.

Sophie was speaking about how hard it is for her to be a mother to her second baby because she receives less support from her children's father than she received during her first pregnancy and in the first few years of that baby's life. Because of the breakdown of her relationship with her boyfriend her narrative regarding her mothering of this baby is coloured with regret and ambivalent feelings towards her baby. There are times when she seems to hate her baby because this child has come to represent the difficulties that she is currently facing. Alternatively she also expresses her absolute love and protection towards this same child.

Sophie: I don't have a problem to be a mother. I love my child, I always want to be there and I make sure that when I'm there.

These two contradicting feelings of loving and hating her child were present in Sophie's narrative and in many of the other participants' stories. Ambivalent and mixed feelings are quite common to the experience of motherhood. It can, however, be difficult to express this at times.

Patricia uses a metaphor to explain the ambivalence that plays a role in her narrative of being a mother.

Patricia: But I think it, to be a mother, it's a very nice thing, you experience a lot, you're in the fire and then out of the fire. In the river, in the grass, a lot of things, good and bad.

This quotation illustrates the multiple experiences that mothers have, the challenges that mothers face and the juxtaposition of both good and bad in their stories.

For these participants the start of their story on becoming a mother played some part in their understanding of themselves as mothers. All of the narratives had a similar pathway yet each one was unique to some degree. Stories of motherhood take shape through the processing of how mothers become pregnant and the way in which they then make sense of this through their understandings of the idealised feelings of motherhood and the ambivalence that is

present in many stories. In the section to follow, how the contexts in which mothers mother shape the stories that they tell will be explored.

4.4 A narrative of motherhood in context

4.4.1 Stories about being a mother in the context of a family

This section examines the place of the family within mothers' narratives. Being or not being a part of a family plays some role in the experience of selves as mothers. People make sense of who they are in relation to other people and therefore share their stories in the context of those people who are a part of their lives. In all of the narratives, mothers' families are central characters in their stories of motherhood.

For Maria, her family, and particularly her parents, were vital in shaping how she came to think of herself as a mother and how she actually mothers her baby. She explained that initially becoming a mother was hard for her but with the help of her mother she was able to learn about motherhood.

> *Maria: It's been tough this time because I didn't know anything but my mother was there to help me start everything but, eish, it was hectic. But as time goes by, I learn, I learn, now everything is well, I know everything now.*

Maria seems to be saying that without her mother's help she may not have been able to learn the skills that are necessary to be an effective mother and this may have had an impact on her baby. Her mother was there to help her through an important, stressful and chaotic time in her life. She is also saying that she learnt how to mother directly from her own mother, through instruction but also possibly through observation.

Like Maria, Mary places a lot of emphasis on the support that she received from her family and, in particular, her mother. She initially struggled to understand what being a mother was going to be like and whether or not she was going to be able to become the mother that she thought she was supposed to be.

> *Mary: I imagined it would be difficult because I didn't know anything at all about being a mom. But I was, I was, I was grateful for having my mom there because she helped a lot. Like with the, in the first month, she was the one who taught me how to*

hold him, how to pick him up, how to bathe him, how to do everything basically. So, if she wasn't there, yo, I don't know what I would've done.

The notion of not being able to cope without a mother's help is again reflected in Mary's story. In these stories the maternal grandmother takes the role of the caring and instructive figure who not only supports but teaches her daughter, thereby helping her own daughter take on a new identity as a mother. It is clear that the participants' mothers are vital in shaping their concepts of becoming mothers and this illustrates the importance of intergenerational mothering which transmits ideals and knowledge of mothering from one generation to the next. This may also suggest some cultural implications to motherhood, however, this will be discussed in a subsequent section that addresses how race and culture are interwoven into mothers' narratives.

Sophie lost both of her parents when she was in her early adolescence and so she instead draws a lot of support from her grandmother

Sophie: I'm trying to be strong because I have my granny at home. She always supports me, I don't know, sometimes things they don't go well but she always supports me.

Sophie seems to be saying that sometimes it can be hard for her to be a mother, yet, with her grandmother's support, she feels that she is able to manage. Sophie's situation is unique when compared to the other mothers in this study. She explains that besides being a young mother to her two small children she also feels that she has to provide a maternal function to her younger sister as a result of her parents' death.

Sophie: Now I think it's, it's I'm a mom, how can I say, because I have to look after my kids, I have to look after my little sister, she, she's grown up, she's in high school, but my sister is, she want the clothes, I have to buy for her, I have to look after my kids, my granny, provide food at home. Sometimes it's... I've got to be a mom to my sister because, each and everything, when she wants something she comes to me.

Sophie's narrative includes being a mother to her younger sister and not just her two children. Sometimes mothers have to do so much more than just look after their own children which can be extremely challenging. In Sophie's story, she has to provide financial support for her sister and grandmother, but she copes through the emotional support that she receives from her grandmother.

It was interesting to note that the younger mothers appear to draw more on the support of their family of origin than the older mothers do. Sophie, Mary and Maria are all young, unmarried women who fell pregnant unexpectedly. Their narratives all include the support that they draw from their mothers or grandmothers. The roles of their boyfriends and/or fathers of their children did have a place in their stories but they appeared to play more a peripheral role and were only mentioned briefly. Conversely, older mothers spoke more about the family in terms of the new families that they created with their husbands and children and only briefly referenced their families of origin. Absent in both Gladys' and Patricia's narratives was the supportive and educational role that their mothers played which was so prevalent in Mary and Maria's narratives. However, Patricia spoke of the support that she received from her husband:

> *Patricia: I get lots of support from my family, from my husband, from my in-laws, lots of support. I am able to manage because there are people to help. If I have a problem I can ask my family and they will help.*

Patricia speaks about her family as playing an important supportive role in her ability to mother, yet does not delve deeply into the manner in which their support has helped to construct her narrative on motherhood.

Gladys's lack of support from family members is striking in her narrative.

> *Gladys: I don't have anybody supporting me... Actually, we are seven children but now we have four. My sister, the first born, she don't want to know about us.*

In her story she has to rely on herself, has to provide everything for her older children and she does not receive any assistance or understanding from her own family members. Her first husband left her when her children were small and her second husband passed away. Her eldest daughter is in her late teens and is also a mother. Gladys, as the grandmother, thus plays an important maternal role for both her eldest daughter and grandchildren. She speaks about the lack of support that she received from her partners and her siblings. The way in which families are interwoven in all of the mothers' narratives provides an indication of the importance that these characters play in the lives of mothers. Whether the characters are present or are absent, their influence shapes the stories that the mothers tell about their own sense of mothering and their ability to cope with all of the pressures that are inherent to motherhood.

4.4.2 Stories about being a mother in a black township

Throughout each narrative, the way in which the environment plays a role in how the participants mother emerged. This environment was understood as both empowering and thwarting to some degree. How these participants construct meaning around mothering within this world is vital in creating a story of what it's like to be a mother in an urban, black township in South Africa.

All of the participants were asked about the challenges that they, as mothers, faced living in an urban area. The responses varied but one of the central ways in which the women spoke about Alexandra township was as a dangerous or undesirable place to live. For example, Thandi speaks about Alexandra in the following way:

> *Thandi: I don't believe in this Alexandra. There is, what call, what can I say is, (laughs), this is not the right place for me and my children."*

In understanding Alexandra to be what she refers to as a *"dirty life"*, Thandi links it to her ability to be a good caregiver to her child. In such a dangerous and damaging environment, it can feel difficult, at times, to meet her children's needs. She became quite upset when telling her story of living in Alexandra and expressed a desire to provide a better environment for her children.

> *Thandi: You know there are children who doesn't care about themself; there is no counselling in this place. There is no counselling, there is no counselling. A dirty life, you know, things like that. Ja, so, and I need a better job, a better life for my children. I want, I want them grow the proper way.*

All of the participants spoke about providing good mothering through meeting the needs of their children and providing for them, both physically and emotionally. Thandi aims to provide well for her children and hopes to offer them with a good example of mothering which will help them to become responsible adults. In Thandi's comments the apparent fear and shame of living in an environment that does not provide her children with optimal experiences makes her feel more strongly that she needs to offer the appropriate role modelling for them. She feels shame at not being able to raise her children in a more facilitative environment and fears that they may be negatively influenced by this *"dirty life*" and thus become *"dirty"* themselves. In the way Thandi speaks about having to raise children

in a township environment, she expresses her dissatisfaction with this living environment and her desire to improve circumstances for her children. She strives to give them a better life than the one that she experienced. Speaking about mothering, Thandi aims to provide a better life for her children, therefore, for her being a mother is about thinking about the child's needs. She also attributes a better life to being one in which her children can receive counselling so so that they can make the right choices in life.

Gladys mirrors Thandi's sentiment that living in Alexandra does not provide sufficient care for raising children:

> *Gladys: I don't want the children...on the street I don't want. The second one I don't want a, my children to be a, to drink and smoke, I don't like it.*

Gladys's statement suggests that if she allows her children some independence in their living environment, they may be negatively influenced by *"the street";* that they may pick up bad habits. She spoke about having to work all day, leaving her children unsupervised for long periods of time. Her quote above reflects her concern that if children are left to experience township living then they will inevitably fall into behaviours that Gladys does not feel are appropriate or respectable.

Patricia explains:

> *The challenges are that the place that you live has crime, rape for children, lots of things, other children prostitutes. You worry about the safety of the children living here, you can't leave the children without supervision without worrying that something will happen to them.*

Patricia expresses her concern that life in a township is an unsuitable place to raise children and in order to protect them they need to be supervised at all times. This is not always possible for a mother as some mothers have to work and also look after other children. For these participants it is a real challenge to raise their children and provide for their needs despite the fear that they are living in a potentially dangerous and damaging environment. The way in which these real challenges took narrative form was through a juxtaposition between the dangers of the township and the corruptibility of their children. In this process, the women narrated themselves as fearful for their children's well-being but unable to protect them.

A less dominant counter-narrative was also found. In narrative analysis, it is important to consider both the stories that are told and the stories that are not told. The notion that Alexandra was experienced by mothers as a largely dangerous and destructive environment was prevalent, however, some mothers were not preoccupied with Alexandra being a dominantly negative influence in their story.

> *Mary: Obviously there are challenges, there can't not be challenges if you're living in Alex (laughs).*

She accepts that there are challenges to living in Alexandra, however, her narrative is preoccupied with her belief that she is somewhat more privileged than a number of other mothers.

> *So we have our own yard, we don't share with anybody, so it's, it's, it's, I feel free. Ja, so with my friends that stay this side, they're always complaining. Coz you can't now go next door and ask them turn your music down because my baby is sleeping, they don't care, they don't have a baby, why should they? You see, and you can't, you're forever sharing your, what do you call it. The lines where you put your laundry.*

In contrast to the above stories of perceiving Alexandra to be a dangerous place in which to raise children, Mary feels more positive about raising children there because she believes she is more privileged to some degree as she does not live in the 'bad' parts of Alexandra. She is aware that while she finds Alexandra to be an acceptable place to raise her child, other people have their own challenges to face

> *Mary: I feel privileged to have what I have. Coz I know some have it hard, harder than I do. Ja, I might not have it all but I am grateful for what I have.*

Here Mary's narrative is coloured by her perception of being privileged over a narrative of being fearful of living in a place like Alexandra and therefore she feels empowered by what she has to be able to provide a safe environment in which her child can be raised.

While mothers narrate a story of being fearful for their children's well-being in a perceived dangerous environment, there is the counter-narrative of being able to provide an empowering environment in which children can flourish despite perceived or real deprivations. The next section considers how deprivation acts as a backdrop in the stories that

women tell about being mothers and how, despite deprivation, they still attempt to meet the needs of their children.

4.4.3 Stories of deprivation

For these mothers, part of the narrative of being a good mother is being able to provide for their children. In a context in which deprivation is very real, mothers make personal sacrifices in order to meet the needs of their children despite difficult circumstances, as the children's needs are most important and central to narratives on motherhood.

For each of these mothers, the manner in which they provide for their children is central to their concept of mothering. They all express the importance of providing for their children's needs, yet many struggle on a daily basis to do so. They sometimes have to borrow from members of the community, however, this can be difficult for them. Gladys expressed being too proud to ask her neighbours for sugar and she feels strongly that each family should accept their circumstances and learn to live within those means. Sophie also expressed pride in the fact that she never asks her family members for money for, for example, disposable diapers (Pampers), even though she struggles at times:

> *Sophie: If something has finished, you never see me calling you, my Pampers are finished or the milk or something.*

It is vital that mothers feel that they are able to provide what their children need. What Sophie is expressing in the quotation above is that a mother has the responsibility of making sure that her children are well fed and cared for; it is not the larger community's problem. She expresses pride that, despite struggling at times, the basic needs of her baby are always met. Maria's narrative reflects a similar stream of thought:

> *Maria: Being a good mother is taking care of your child, buying clothes for her, food, you know, being a, sometimes I tell my boyfriend not to buy and then we bought so actually he was there for me from the start before I got a job, so sometimes I tell him now, maybe to buy my child clothes, Pampers, everything for the baby you see, coz she's also my baby, you see, that's what I'm proud of, yes*.

Again, the idea that mothers must ensure that their children's needs are met is central to the narrative on mothering. What was interesting to note was that the particular brand of diapers,

Pampers, repeatedly surfaced in each of the mothers' stories. Pampers is a particularly well-known brand and is also one of the more expensive brands of disposable diapers on the market. It may be that the mothers are using the name Pampers to refer to all brands of diapers in a broad way or that using the Pamper brand signifies that they are able to provide for their children in a meaningful and respectable way. In some way, by using Pampers rather than a cheaper brand of diapers, this may signify to the mothers that they are not only meeting the basic needs of their babies but are also able to provide more than a basic level and, through this, display their love and affection.

Both Maria and Sophie speak about making the necessary sacrifices to ensure that they meet their children's needs. In order to provide and care for their babies, mothers need to put their children first and their own needs may be secondary in comparison.

> *Maria: Now when I go to the shops I no longer go to my, I check for the baby first then for me.*
>
> *Sophie: because some of the things you have to feed them, if you wanted the things, you can't have them or some you can have.*

Almost every mother interviewed commented on some degree of poverty within which they live. They all mentioned the social grant that mothers are offered. Most of them, however, state that this grant is greatly insufficient when it comes to meeting their needs. Thandi, however, was more positive than the other participants and said that she can do amazing things with that money.

> *Thandi: For that R260, it's a little money, but I can do an amazing things with that. Amazing things with that. Ja, you know, I make sure my children's things is always planned.*

Thandi speaks about being able to provide for her baby despite her economic situation. She also spoke proudly about the fact that she has improved her circumstances. She spoke about how in the past she had to rely heavily on the charity of others and accept second hand clothing to clothe her first child.

> *Thandi: Especially to this child. It is my second baby, I can love him, I love him so much. Ja, you know, eh, you know when it comes to caring about my kids this one is better because the time I had my first born child, it was difficult, ja, my mom used to*

get nappies from neighbours, I used to get clothes from my friends, their babies are grown up, they used to give me clothes, like tops, scarves and all this and my mother was a domestic worker somewhere in the farm to a white man and his wife. She used to work there, she used to come with second hand clothes, ja, from her boss, and we used to wear it like this, ja, and my first born he used to wear it. So now, this one is best. I can go to the shop, open account, take clothes from Jet, Pep.

Thandi now prides herself as being a good mother because previously she was not able to meet the needs of her child; she had to rely on other people to clothe her child. It seems that this left her feeling inadequate as a mother. However, her experience with her second baby is one in which she feels more able to provide for him which has shifted her narrative on motherhood and has allowed her to conceptualise herself as a good mother.

Other mothers commented that the grant money that is paid out is not sufficient even buy Pampers and milk. Sophie explained:

Sophie: Coz the tin, the tin for milk, it's R200 and how's the Pampers? R150. So this money's too small.

There is often not enough money to adequately cover the costs of raising children, yet, despite this, mothers are able to manage their finances in order to ensure that the basic needs of their children are met. As Sophie commented earlier, she does not ask anyone else for milk or money for Pampers; she somehow finds a way to provide these necessities.

For Gladys, her poverty is something that she perceives to be potentially damaging to her children. She fears that they may try to find money in the wrong ways. For example, she speaks about how some girls seek boyfriends to support them and provide for them financially.

Gladys: And our problem to another mom, they want to tell the child, if maybe the child he's hungry, they say no, go and look a boyfriend; he must go and give you a money. And then, this is not ok.

She speaks about being afraid that if mothers cannot provide for their children they will have to seek financial assistance from boyfriends or others who may not have their best interests in mind. She also worries that if there is not enough money for her children that they may into enter a life of crime

Gladys: You must find the job and if somebody, they say no, come to our, make the washing to my room, go there to make the washing, after that she must give you something and then must go back home and then give your child. This is, I, I, I'm doing like this, maybe my child, she's coming with R20, she say no, somebody she gave me R20, I want to know, why is she giving you a R20.

Gladys is concerned about where her children get money if she has not given it them. Inherent in her above narrative is the fear that they may be making use of dishonest or criminal methods to make up for what she is unable to provide for them. Thandi also describes how financial deprivation can be dangerous and damaging to children.

Thandi: They sleep with sugar daddies coz of money... Because they give them money for lunch at school, so when the sugar daddies, they come again to your child, to your children.

Like Gladys, Thandi is concerned that if mothers do not provide sufficiently for their children, they will find other ways of meeting their financial means and this can often be destructive for the children.

There is a sense that mothers feel that, through deprivation, their children may be harmed or damaged in some way which makes it important for them to negate this by making sure that the needs of their children are met. If mothers can provide for their children adequately, the children are less likely to find themselves in situations in which they may be taken advantage of or injured, either physically or emotionally. Many mothers have to mother in particularly deprived economic conditions and despite these difficulties they are able to provide for their children and meet their needs appropriately.

4.4.4 Stories about culture, race and motherhood

The terms race and culture were used interchangeably by some participants while others made a distinction between the two. Some women spoke about culture with reference to the ethnic group to which they belonged, while others referred to culture as a term denoting their local environment. Either way, both constructs played a role in most of the stories that were told. Explicit questions about race and culture were included in the interview schedule. Most of the women who were interviewed gave relatively brief answers to these questions, sometimes expressing confusion about the question when asked about how her culture plays a

role in the way in which she mothers. Sophie responded with, *"Like?"* and below is a transcription of a conversation with Maria:

> *Researcher: Do you think your race has any impact on how you mother?*
>
> *Maria: Eh, what?*
>
> *Researcher: Your race, do you think that has any impact on being a mother?*
>
> *Maria: No.*

For the majority of the women in the study, their race and culture were so inextricably interwoven in their experience of motherhood that an explicit discussion of how they impact upon or affect the way in which they mother did not make sense to them.

Most participants expressed pride in their racial group or cultural identity. When Maria was questioned about her culture she exclaimed, *"My culture is the best one!"* From many of the descriptions that were given, it is clear that culture plays a role in the way in which mothers are expected to mother their children and the importance of their role within the family setting. Patricia explains:

> *Patricia: First in our culture as a black person, you have to be a respected person; you have to respect your husband, respect your child.*

In this description, Patricia understands a black mother as someone who needs to be a role model to others and needs to show respect in order to gain respect.

> *Patricia: You also need to show your husband respect, you have to listen to your husband, do what he wants. You also have to have respect for your in-laws.*

This was Patricia's response when asked how her culture informs her behaviour or beliefs about mothering. One can see that, for Patricia, her cultural expectations of what it means to be a mother extends beyond the basic act of caring for the children; she also has to play a role as a wife and daughter-in-law. She has a role within the family that is greater than just providing care for the children. For her motherhood and her role as a mother means more than being just a mother to children but to also making sure that the family environment is one of reverence towards the father and respect towards others. It seems that it is the mother's role to transmit these values to her children.

Mary draws on the support that her culture offers. She speaks about the fact that when a woman becomes a mother for the first time an elder female in the community comes and assists the new mother and helps her to make sense of what she is experiencing and how she is expected to mother. She explains:

> *Mary: Well, in my culture you always, when you're a new mother you don't know anything at all, you don't know nothing about being a mother, so in my culture, what needs to happen there needs to be an elderly person who is always there with you to guide you through everything.*

Mary describes drawing strength from the support that her culture offered her. Through acknowledgement that an elder person should assist in providing mothering to the infant, Mary was able to gain a sense of what it means to be a mother.

With regard to their race, participants both expressed pride in being black but also spoke about the challenges and hardships that accompany being a black mother. Sophie spoke expressed that it is *"a good thing*" to be a mother, but that in and of itself, the fact that she is black makes it challenging for her. She explains:

> *Sophie: To be a black mom, I think that it's a good thing but we don't get that much help, like you guys. You guys, you hire a nanny to look after your kids and stuff. But we blacks, you know we can't afford to have a nanny or something like that, we have to, you know you have to do anything".*

She ties together being black as linked to some kind of material deprivation that also impacts on how she mothers. She explains that much of what she lacks, for example, a nanny to care for her children, is due to a lack of financial resources which may be due to her social status of being a black woman. She feels that white women have an easier time being mothers than black women do. Sophie then went on to say that as a black mother: "*You don't get a break."* For Sophie, her race is tied into the hardship that she faces as a mother as, for her, being black means having less financial security and resources than she would have if she were white.

When asked to tell stories about other mothers and what their thoughts are on motherhood, the overall narrative was overwhelmingly negative. Intrinsically woven into their stories about other mothers are perceptions about black mothers and mothers in their community.

Mary: When we talk about people in our community, yo, yo, you'll get different views. A lot of them negative, hey. Coz you'll find there's this chick in my road, the time she was pregnant, she used to smoke, she used to drink. She didn't care at all if it would harm her baby or anything. And having that in mind, when I was pregnant I was like, no, you, you can't do that. You can't harm your baby like that. You can't not care about someone who you made in a way. You know, so I was like, no, and then after giving birth she'd still continue with her bad habits and stuff. So, obviously some kids don't show early if, some show late, if they have probably, um, what do you call the illness, maybe if they will have illnesses and stuff. She doesn't know if what she did will affect her baby or not. But uh, I don't think it's right.

Mary narrates on how other mothers within her community are irresponsible, do not respect that they have a baby growing inside of them and refuse to change their habits which could have a very negative impact on their children. While she does not explicitly state this, she makes the assumption that other black mothers do not care for their children. She specifically mentions mothers in her community rather than referring to white mothers or mothers from other racial or cultural designations. Mary denigrates the way in which other mothers mother within her community and this suggests that she may think that black mothers do not have respect for their babies.

Maria's stories on other mothers also reveal some denigration. She does not openly speak about black mothers but, like Mary, she explains that mothers in her community do not present a positive narrative on motherhood.

Maria: That's the things that make a lot of poverty here because moms go to the taverns with the babies, especially here in Alexandra, they're still going to the party, especially, a mother who with a one year old child or a 6 months is leaving the child with the mother and go out party, she's going to do another baby with a different man, you see.

Here she speaks about how mothers refuse to change their behaviour when they become mothers and continue to socialise and drink which she feels does not present an ideal maternal figure. Again, she speaks about mothers in her community rather than mothers from other environments. She also links the negative behaviour of these mothers to Alexandra. She explains that mothers from her community in Alexandra are irresponsible and lack insight

into what is appropriate behaviour for mothers with small babies. She is negatively appraising black mothers from Alexandra.

While the impact of culture and race are difficult to measure when dealing with maternal practices, they are still inextricably linked to the way in which mothers behave and how they make sense of mothering. The participants found it difficult to think about the impact of race and culture as it may be woven into the very fabric of motherhood; that it is difficult to extract and examine its influence. The researcher also found it hard to ask the questions about culture as the questions seemed too broad to sufficiently tap into the experiences that mothers have. It was interesting that the most difficult points in the interviews came about when discussing race and culture as, in South Africa, this is so much a part of who people are and how they define themselves. For motherhood, it appears that the maternal experience is both influenced by culture but is also shaped in a very unique way by the individual. The merging of the individual's experiences with overarching cultural expectations creates a unique perspective on each mother's narrative. As Kruger (2006) explains, both mothers' own constructions of motherhood and the society's constructions shape the maternal experience and contribute to the various discourses on motherhood.

4.5 Conclusion

The stories that each mother told in this research were important, not only to introduce each participant, but also to locate the uniqueness of each of the narratives and where their narratives overlap or where common experiences of motherhood are presented. It is clear that how women become mothers is central to the stories on motherhood. The transition from womanhood to motherhood can be a rewarding but also challenging time for a mother and this was illustrated in each of the participants' narratives. Finally the context in which one mothers is a strong influence on the experiences that mothers have. Particular to these mothers' narratives is how various contextual factors, such as their families, Alexandra township, deprivation and their race and culture, impact on their maternal practices and experiences.

The narratives that have been presented in this chapter will be further discussed in the following chapter. The narratives will also be explored in relation to the current literature on motherhood in general and to motherhood in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to explore urban black South African mothers' experiences of motherhood through an interpretation of their narratives. This was achieved by interviewing six mothers who accessed the Alexandra Health Centre. The in-depth interviews which followed a semi-structured format focused on exploring their experiences and perceptions of motherhood. From these interviews the following questions were explored: How do black mothers narrate motherhood; what stories do mothers tell about being a mother; how do mothers' personal circumstances influence their experience; what is significant about being a mother; and how does their context shape the stories that they tell? The aims of this study are to consider the individual stories told by the mothers, to address how their narratives on motherhood began and what contextual factors play a role in their experiences of motherhood. Some of these questions overlapped and were answered in a number of different ways and therefore did not follow a linear pathway. The way in which mothers narrate motherhood is influenced by their personal circumstances and is shaped by the context in which they live. Due to this overlap, the discussion follows the narratives that were told, how they can or cannot be located in current literature and how, through these dominant narratives, an exploration of black South African motherhood can be understood.

What follows is a discussion of the results that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. The discussion aims to address how black mothers in Alexandra township in Johannesburg experience motherhood. Initially, the mothers' stories about becoming a mother are discussed and compared to literature on mothers' transitions into motherhood. Following that, the context in which mothers mother is discussed in relation to literature that explains that motherhood is embedded in a larger social and cultural context (Kruger, 2006) and meaning making is done within this broader context.

5.1 Transitions into motherhood

Many societies have various ways in which mothers prepare themselves to become mothers. Pregnancy plays a role as a ritual in preparing for the birth of the baby and preparing the expectant mother with a new sense of identity (Kitzinger, 1978). It provides the mother with the necessary time to mentally and physically prepare for the birth of a baby. In all of these

mothers' stories a narrative about how they became pregnant was important even though they were not directly asked this question. The birth of the first baby is invariably a crisis for a first time mother (Kitzinger, 1978). Each of these mothers managed this crisis in her own way. One of the participants managed to adjust to the transition of mothering through support and care from her family members and was able to describe her experience as a new mother as rewarding and satisfying. Another participant mediated this process smoothly with the birth of her first baby, however, with the arrival of her second baby and the relationship difficulties she is currently facing she is finding the adjustment to a new baby who demands so much very challenging. Other mothers were older and more carefully planned their transition into motherhood, however, there was a disjunction in what they thought the experience was going to be like and what the experience has actually been like for them.

The transition into motherhood is not always a smooth one, one in which mothers can predict the outcome or how they will respond to the new role as mother. For two of the mothers, their pregnancies were unplanned and the initial shock of finding out that they were pregnant dominated their initial narratives on motherhood. Neither woman was planning on becoming a mother at this particular point in her life and thus both women struggled to readjust their thinking around becoming a mother. Their decisions to keep their babies were fraught with fear and uncertainty. Both of these mothers considered an abortion as an option, however, both quickly dismissed this idea. Despite not dwelling on this particular point during the interview, it was evident that their decisions to keep their babies were difficult ones and both of these mothers spoke about gaining strength from God in order to cope during this difficult time.

One of the mothers discussed how her first pregnancy was extremely challenging as she was only 13 at the time and did not know what to expect with regard to the physical changes in her body and in the changes that were necessary for her to actually mother her child. She was still in school and becoming a mother at such a young age had a substantial impact on her education. She spoke in great detail about how she feels that if she could educate herself and her children she could then have a better life. For her, becoming a mother and transitioning into this new role was difficult. Many of the mothers discussed the challenges around becoming a mother and particularly about the sacrifices that are made when one becomes a mother. There was some agreement in all of the narratives about the importance of mothers making sacrifices for their children and providing for them, even if that meant their own needs had to be placed as secondary to their children's needs.

For two of the mothers, the idea of becoming a mother represented something about growing up and becoming a woman. Both of them awaited the birth of their first child with excitement and anticipation. In some ways their expectations about motherhood were met. In their children they found individuals who could love them unconditionally and admire them as parents. They were also able to experience some sort of intrapsychic growth in that they felt more mature and were proud of their own abilities to care for another person. However, there were also a number of disappointments that came with becoming a mother. For both of these mothers, motherhood was more challenging than expected and did not match up to the seemingly fairytale ideal that they held in their minds. For one mother, having to raise a disabled child has been particularly challenging as, instead of gaining respect from her community which she thought that she would get when she became a mother, her community judges her harshly and at times she feels as if they blame her for her child being the way he is. While she managed the earlier transition into motherhood with her eldest two children, she has struggled with her last born and making sense of herself as a mother of a disabled child. However, through the support that she receives from her family and friends she feels that she is able to manage. The other mother's challenges surface around medical concerns. From the birth of her first child she became ill and has struggled with her health ever since. This has led to her transition into motherhood being coloured by illness and hardship and motherhood, while being something that she expressed as wonderful and special, is also difficult and painful.

Psychoanalytic work on motherhood has attempted to explore the psychodynamic aspects of the subjectivity of becoming a mother (Long, 2009). There is an agreement among psychoanalytic writers that the period from pregnancy until shortly after birth is an important time in a mother's life and is marked by fantasy and conflict (Long, 2009; Parker, 1996). Motherhood is constructed as an opportunity for growth for the mother (Long, 2009). This was evident in the interviews that were conducted. Many of the mothers in this study expressed some shift in their consciousness around their womanhood and the transition to motherhood. As mentioned, they were not asked directly about their pregnancy, yet pregnancy stories entered into many of the mothers' narratives. Particularly with one mother, how she became pregnant was vital to her story and it was very important for her to share photos of herself during her pregnancy. What was important for this mother was that despite her having to shift from being a woman to a mother, she attempted to maintain some hold on her individual identity that was separate from that of mother. She communicated to the

researcher that despite becoming pregnant, she still has her own goals, ambitions and achievements outside of her role a mother.

What was prevalent in this study was the mothers need to be admired, not only by their children but also by their community. One of the mothers expressed a desire to be a role model for other mothers in the community, particularly mothers who are HIV positive. She also hopes that through being admired by her community that her children will have a strong, positive role model in their lives so that they can safely navigate their own transition into adulthood. Two of the younger, first time mothers expressed the desire to be unconditionally loved and adored by their babies and, in turn, they would constantly love and adore their own children. More than idealising their roles as mothers, the underlying notion was of being loved and admired by their children. Literature addresses the concepts of idealisation and denigration inherent to motherhood (Parker, 1995; Welldon, 1988). This was not clearly expressed in the mothers' narratives and, while they may be important to these mothers' experiences of motherhood, it was not central to the narrative that emerged in the interviews. Another overarching idea is that the mother should be all-giving and self-sacrificing (Badinter, 1981; Choi et al., 2005; Kruger, 2006). This theme frequently emerged in a number of the narratives. All of the mothers discussed the importance of placing the needs of their children above themselves despite the circumstances. The children's well-being is of utmost importance in the experience of motherhood and is expressed in a number of different contexts, such as where the mothers and their children live, the degree of support that they receive from their families, the deprivation that they experienced and the culture within which they mother.

5.2 Motherhood in context

Alexandra township is located in the northeastern suburbs of Johannesburg and is a neighbour to one of South Africa's wealthiest suburbs, Sandton. It has been described as an impoverished community in which there are approximately 350 000 people dwelling in a 7.6 square kilometre area which houses 20 000 shacks (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2006; Wilson, 2011). It is within this community that the mothers who were interviewed for this study reside and raise their children. The narratives that the mothers told were coloured by living in this environment.

From the reports that were given by the mothers, it is clear that they experience Alexandra to be a dangerous and fearful place in which to raise children. Their concern is that their children may be negatively influenced by their environment and get involved in risk-taking behaviour such as promiscuity, drug and alcohol use and criminal behaviour. They are also concerned for the safety of their children. While the predominant narrative was largely centred around Alexandra township as being a dangerous and damaging place in which to raise children, there was a counter-narrative that suggests that despite the environment the mothers are still able to raise their children with hope and positivity towards their future.

It was interesting to note that in a number of the stories that these mothers told about motherhood, there was an underlying negative conceptualisation of other mothers. Other mothers were largely denigrated and thought of as unfit or unworthy to be mothers as they were unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices that are required of mothers. A strong narrative of motherhood is that the mother considers her children's needs as most important. This emerged in the stories about deprivation, i.e. about being able to provide for children, despite the dire financial circumstances many mothers face. This also emerged in the stories about the context in which they mother.

A strong narrative emerged about other mothers abusing the child care grants for their own needs, which negatively impacts on children's welfare. Orderson (2011) found similar issues in her studies on motherhood. While her study focused on a completely different population of mothers from a different context, she looked at coloured mothers from Mitchell's Plain, what also emerged in her study was the predominantly negative way in which women who do receive the Childcare Social Grant are perceived. Her study revealed that these women are viewed as opportunistic, lazy and desperate (Orderson, 2011). This deprivation that many mothers face impacts on how they mother. All of the mothers in this study spoke about how insufficient the grant is to provide for their children sufficiently and many spoke about how other mothers abuse the Childcare Social Grant they receive and have babies in order to receive this money. The mothers spoke about their ability or struggle to provide the best care necessary for their children. Pampers appeared to be a symbol that represented being able to care for their babies. All of the mothers in this study who have infants and toddlers still in diapers spoke about the importance of making sure that they had Pampers for their children. There were other ways in which deprivation became apparent in the mothers' various narratives. One of the mothers spoke about how important it is to instil values in her children so that they would not steal. She spoke about not always having enough money for rice or

other items, sometimes struggling to feed her children and how important it is for her children to understand that even if they see other people eating rice that they still need to be grateful for the fact that they have mielie meal to fill their stomachs.

Social and community networks are viewed as vital for mothering (Orderson 2011). In American studies there is a contrast between Western concepts of mothering, in which the nuclear family is responsible for the upbringing of children, and African American mothering in which shared mothering is characteristic (Glenn, 1994). This is also typically seen in African communities. Magwaza (2003) discusses the concept of collective mothering, whereby a number of women take on the responsibility of mothering the children in the communities. Grandmothers and great grandmothers also play a vital role in assisting with the parenting in many African communities (Magwaza, 2003). This emerged in a number of the mothers' narratives in this study. The family was a very important place in which the mother learned, not only her identity of becoming a mother but also shared responsibility. Many of the mothers spoke about the difficulties of becoming a mother and not having as much autonomy as they possibly had when they were not mothers. They relied heavily on their mothers and other family members to assist with baby sitting or caring in order to allow themselves time to shop or spend some time alone. The nuclear family provides the primary unit in which a child is socialised and mothers will often draw on what they learned about the mother role from when they were children (Kitzinger, 1978). In the extended family where there are a number of aunts, uncles, cousins and grandchildren, the mothering role is shared amongst the family and the mother shares her influential role with a number of people, in addition to sharing the responsibility (Kitzinger, 1978).

While this support is often felt as something positive, at times the mothers expressed their desires to be more in control of the mothering. One mother spoke of how her mother helps so much with the caregiving but she wishes she could have more time alone with her baby. Despite sometimes wishing her mother would allow her some space to mother independently, this mother expressed her gratitude for the assistance that her mother was able to provide and felt thankful that she did not have to do all of the mothering by herself. Another mother in the study expressed that the support of her family and the community are vital in helping her with her disabled son. She spoke about how challenging it can be being a mother to a disabled child but through the support of her family she is able to manage. Some of the other mothers in the study felt that they received little support from both their family members and the broader community and this had a strong impact on how they mother. The responsibility of

being a mother was felt to be challenging and burdensome at times. One of the mothers spends much of her time worrying about her children living in a negative community and she feels that she is not able to protect them adequately as she has to go to work, leaving them largely unsupervised and thus vulnerable to outside negative influences. She has a lack of family and support structures to assist her with the task of mothering. Another mother, while expressing a lack of support from family members both in raising a child as a teenager and currently, says that she draws on the support and assistance that her employer provides. From these examples, it is evident that the idea of collective mothering that has been written about is present in these mothers' narratives, through the actual care of children and in the support that the mothers received from their families.

Family and support networks appear to be vital for motherhood and have an impact on the way in which mothers experience motherhood and how they mother their children. Through the support of the family and the community, or lack thereof, the experience of motherhood is located and defined to some degree.

One's culture or race also plays a role in the experience of motherhood. Research has explored the impact that culture plays in the experience of motherhood. "Motherhood occurs in specific historical situations framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender" (Collins, 1994, p. 45). This also applies to culture. Many authors have stressed the importance of culture playing some role in maternal practices (Kruger, 2006; Magwaza, 2003). What was interesting to note in this study was that while it was evident that the mothers' cultural backgrounds impacted on their practices and experiences of motherhood, it was difficult to locate the specific point at which culture has an impact. It was also difficult to speak about how their culture influences their experience of motherhood as it was intrinsic to who they are as people and as mothers.

In most cultures, mothers have a different role to play than do women without children (Leira & Krips, 1993). In some cultures, getting pregnant and becoming a mother affords the woman an elevated position in her society and she is, at that time, considered more beautiful and valuable to the society in which she lives (Kitzinger, 1978). In some African cultures, unmarried mothers are judged harshly, looked down upon and are treated differently to married mothers (Kitzinger, 1978). The majority of the mothers in this study spoke about the importance, in their culture, of mothers being adult and married before they begin to have children, yet many were unmarried and some even had children during their teenage years.

While there was concern that the members of their community and their families would ostracise them for not conforming to cultural expectations, what they actually found was something different. While many parents expressed their disappointment, they also offered much support. Some of the mothers, however, discussed the following of the other required traditions, such as not living with the father of their child until they were traditionally and legally married.

5.3 Limitations of the current research

The first limitation to this study is the small sample size that was used. Despite the fact that it was felt by the researcher that the data for this study was in-depth and rich enough to provide valuable understanding into the experience of motherhood, the small sample size provides a limited amount of information. While generalisability was not an aim of this study, it was more important in this study to gain an understanding into the dynamics of motherhood that are idiosyncratic and unique, generalisability is limited.

The data was limited in terms of the self report nature of the interviews. When providing a self report of an experience, the actual experience does not always emerge. Due to a number of circumstances, such as noise in the clinic or feeling the need to please the researcher, the mothers may not have fully explored their personal narratives or considered the questions carefully, or may have presented narratives that are slightly altered from their true experiences. However, interviews were considered to be the most useful method in accessing the participants' experiences around mothering and motherhood.

Nnoromele (2002) expressed concern that that despite feminist research making ground in the researching of the experiences of women, Western researchers are still unclear on African women's experiences. Tied to this concern is the ability of white researchers, when studying black women, to reflect more critically on their ethnocentric assumptions about gender relations and identity (Walker, 1995) and to be aware of their differences and how this may impact upon the research process. Being a researcher whose background is different to that of the participants in terms of race, culture and class, it is vital to understand that this limited this study. As an 'outsider' to this community the participants may have told their story in a particular way or adapted it to suit the researcher, a white middle class woman. Therefore, it is possible that the stories do not represent their actual experience but rather a version of that

experience. Had these same participants been interviewed by someone who they perceived as belonging to their community or sharing in their cultural background, it is possible that other stories may have emerged.

Narratives are mediated through language (Smith & Sparkes, 2006). Unfortunately, this research study was conducted in a language that was not the participants' first language. There is a concern that subtleties and nuances in descriptions may have been overlooked due to the participants' difficulty in conversing in a second and possibly third language. While these narratives aim to represent the subjective truths of the mothers participating in this study, it is possible that the researcher was not able to fully access their narratives as these were translated into English before being expressed.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Topics of motherhood and the experience of mothering require attention, particularly from within the South African context. While possibilities for further research in this area are extensive, the following recommendations are made:

The methodology of this study is limited in that it had a relatively small sample size and therefore lacks generalisability. The aim of this research was to understand the unique aspects of mothers' experiences, however, it may also be necessary to study mothers in order to assess the aspects that can be generalised across the motherhood experience. Thus, a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods may be utilised in order to address the many different facets of motherhood.

As motherhood is not a static concept but rather one that shifts and changes over time, a longitudinal study is recommended. Understanding how mothers experience their children growing up and adapting to the various developmental challenges that their children face will shed light on how they experience motherhood over time.

While this study aims to increase the body of literature and information on motherhood, there are limitations to this study which provide an opportunity for further research. An exploration into the unique experiences of these six black South African mothers living in a township was achieved, however, it is recommended that further interest in this particular area is explored. It is recommended to study other mothers living in Alexandra township and to ascertain

whether or not their experiences match those reported in this study. Furthermore, research on other cultural or racial designations is necessary, for example, studying the experiences of coloured or Indian South Africans. Because motherhood is not a homogenous, generalised experience, it will be important in any research study to acknowledge the uniqueness of the experiences that mothers have. Further research into mothers from all different backgrounds, socio-economic statuses and classes is necessary in order to gain an understanding of the unique lived experiences of mothers. It is important to acknowledge the diversity in the experiences of motherhood.

Feminism has increased the awareness of women's experiences and an interest in motherhood is becoming an increasingly important focus area for research. Research that addresses the unique and diverse aspects of mothering is required in order to understand the experiences that mothers have. Following on from this, it may be vital to research mothering in a number of contexts, such as lesbian mothering, mothering of an adopted child, mothering in the context of poverty and other contexts which have been typically under-researched in South Africa.

5.5 Conclusion

This research report explored the maternal experience of black South African mothers living in Alexandra township. It made use of individual in-depth interviews that followed a semi-structured format in order to elicit the narratives of the six participants. This study highlights that motherhood is not a homogenous experience but rather one which is deeply personal and idiosyncratic.

It was important in the analysis to initially locate the individual stories that mothers tell. While many of the stories share similar features each mother has a unique experience to share. Commonalities emerged in the various stories and many differences were presented in the contexts in which these mothers mother.

Central to the narratives on motherhood was the stories on becoming a mother. Various cultures present different rituals in preparing for the birth of a baby. Each of the mothers presented narratives on how they transitioned from being a woman to identifying themselves as mothers and they presented both the joys and the challenges that were brought about from this transition.

What was interesting in this study was the importance of the context in which mothers mother. So much of these mothers' experiences of motherhood were shaped by the context in which they find themselves. Mothering in the context of a family was evident in all the participants' stories. How they began to know themselves as mothers and the support and assistance they did or did not receive from their family members largely shaped their narratives and their experiences. The context of living in a black township was also central to their narratives on motherhood. This particular environment was perceived as both and empowering and thwarting environment in which to raise children. The narratives could not be extrapolated from the actual place in which these mothers and their children live and this place plays a role in shaping their experiences. Another common narrative that was present in all the participants' stories was being a mother in the context of deprivation. Each mother in this study felt the challenge of deprivation in some way or another and attempted to provide for their children as best they could despite the circumstances. Finally, one's race and culture plays an intrinsic role in the experience of motherhood, however an explicit discussion of just how these concepts impact on the experience of mothering was challenging.

By allowing these six mothers to present their narratives on their experiences of motherhood a broader understanding of motherhood can be achieved, however it is vital that further research explore mothers' experiences. Research of this nature is at present still limited and in order to fully appreciate the multi-faceted and unique experiences that mothers have further exploration is necessary.

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APPENDIX A: Interview schedule:

1. Tell me about your experience of motherhood. Begin with something you feel is significant.
2. What does it feel like to be a mother, tell me about the 'good' and 'bad' feelings?
3. What does mothering mean to you?
4. Tell me a story about when you felt like a good mother.
5. Tell me a story about when you felt like a bad mother.
6. What did you imagine it would be like when you became a mother?
7. Do you ever dream about your baby? What are those dreams about?
8. Have your dreams about mothering changed from your first child to this child?
9. Do you feel the way you mother now is different from the way you mothered before? (if this child is not the first one).
10. Do you remember a specific fear you have had recently about being a mother?
11. What do others think mothering is?
12. Tell me a story about some of the challenges you, as a mother, have faced living in an urban area?
13. What supports do you have in your family?
14. How do you think your culture informs your behaviour/beliefs around being a mother?
15. What does motherhood mean in your cultural group?
16. How do you live up to those meanings?
17. How do you feel your race has an impact on being a mother?
18. How does your role as a mother interact with the other roles you play, i.e. wife or worker?
19. Tell me about how your position in your family has an impact on how you mother?
20. Tell me about how your position in your culture has an impact on how you mother?
21. Tell me a story that shows what mothering means to you within your culture.
22. Tell me how you think your socio-economic situation may affect how you mother.

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APPENDIX B: Subject Information Sheet

Dear Mother,

My name is Lindsay Dale. I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting a study on black South African mothers' experiences of motherhood. This study aims to explore all the aspects involved in being a mother and what you think are the important aspects around being a mother in South Africa today. This research forms part of the degree. I, under the supervision of Prof. Carol Long (clinical psychologist), would like to invite you to participate in this study.

If you would like to participate it will involve being interviewed about your experiences as a mother and the questions asked will be focused around this topic. The interview will be organized at The Alexandra Health Centre at a time that is suitable to you. The interview will last about one hour. With your permission this interview will be audio recorded, and these recordings will be saved onto a CD and stored in a locked cabinet that only the researcher has access to. Once the study has been completed and written up these CD's will be destroyed. If publications arise from this study, the raw data will be kept for two years, if no publications arise from the study, then raw data will then be kept for six years.

Taking part in this study is voluntary, this means that you can choose to be a part of this study or choose not to. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, that means that as far as is possible anything you tell me will be kept private, but the stories you tell will be used in the study. No information that could identify you would be included in the research report, e.g. your name, names of family members or where you live and other pretend names will be used. The interview materials (CDs and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person other than the researcher (me) and my supervisor. Although direct quotes will be used in the final report, any information that may identify you will be left out. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. Should during the research the researcher find out something which is harmful to you or to your child/children or that there may be some indication of child abuse the researcher is ethically and legally obligated to report this to the necessary person or legal authority that can help you.

After the study has been completed and results obtained, you will be invited to attend a feedback session in which the findings will be discussed. Talking about your experiences may bring out some feelings in you, should any emotional or psychological distress arise, the

researcher will assist you in obtaining free psychological counselling telephonically or face-to-face through Life Line (011) 728 1347 or through the Emthonjeni Centre (Community Psychological Clinic) at Wits University (011) 717 4513. Should you feel particularly distressed immediate debriefing will also be conducted after the interview.

Volunteers interested in participating in the study are requested to either phone me or to please fill out the slip below. I would like to invite all mothers, who a have at least one child under the age of three, to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study would be appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on understanding South African mothers.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Dale (Researcher) Prof. Carol Long (Supervisor)

082 325 0167 or lindsay_dalton@hotmail.com (011) 717 4510

I wish to participate in the motherhood study.

Name: _____

Contact number(s) :_____

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

APPENDIX C: Consent to be interviewed

I, _____ consent to being interviewed by Lindsay Dale for her exploratory study on black South African mothers' experiences of motherhood.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time without personal consequence.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential and private.
- The researcher is permitted to include direct quotes as long as no identifying information is revealed.
- If during the research the researcher finds out something about me which is harmful to me or to my child/children she has the responsibility and permission to report this to the necessary person or legal authority that can help me.
- I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way by taking part in this study.
- There are no anticipated risks for me participating in this study, but if I feel upset at any time from talking about my mothering experiences I can be referred for individual counselling.

Signature of interviewee Signature of researcher

_____ _____

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
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APPENDIX D: Consent for the interview to be audio-taped

I, _____ consent to have my interview with Lindsay Dale for her exploratory study on black South African mothers' experiences of motherhood.

I understand that:

- The CDs and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any other person at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher and her supervisor.
- CDs will be kept in a locked cupboard that only the researcher has access to.
- All recordings will be securely kept and destroyed at a later stage. If publications arise from this study, the raw data will be kept for two years, if no publications arise from the study, then raw data will then be kept for six years and then destroyed.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signature of interviewee Signature of researcher

_____ _____