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# ‘What a time to be birthing!’: Exploring Childbearing Experiences of Black Middle-Class Mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa

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## PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I Ziyanda Majombozi (Student No. 606885) am a student registered for a Doctorate in Philosophy (Anthropology) at the University of the Witwatersrand in the year 2020.

I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature:  Date: October 2021

## ABSTRACT

This ethnography is based on over a year of fieldwork with Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa (2017-2018). Employing ethnographic methodological techniques - including participant observation, interviews and digital ethnography, this thesis explores mothering experiences of Black middle-class mothers. Middle class black mothers are a unique group in South African Anthropology, one that is under-researched and whose stories of motherhood remain largely under explored. Using the South African 2015/2016 Fees Must Fall/Rhodes Must Fall student protests as well as the American Black Lives Matter movement as a backdrop, I explore the ways in which motherhood is shaped by the context it happens in, particularly in terms of race and politics of representation. I argue that political events, particularly the student protests and Black lives matter movements set in motion a space where the mothers who were my interlocutors formed a political and social consciousness that saw them seeking ways to affirm and instil a Black pride in their children. Thus, in this thesis, I show how themes of race, Blackness, Black pride and representation fold into the everyday practice of mothering for Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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*Iminqweno yethu ivakele*
*Intando anayo ingango lwandle*
*Ingomso lethu liyathembisa*
*Kumele sikwazi ukubekezela*

*Kwenzek' ismanga amaphupho afezeka*
*Kwavela kwalunga yonk' into*
*Ndancedwa yinkolo nentsebenzo*
*Noguqa ngedolo kuBawo*

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Above all, enkosi Yehova. My heart is filled with so much gratitude.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Caesarean Section (C-section)** - a surgical operation for delivering a baby by cutting through the wall of the mother's abdomen

**Contractions** - Tightening of uterine muscle fibres that occurs briefly and intermittently throughout pregnancy, and more regularly and forcefully during active labour.

**Epidural** - epidural anesthesia is a regional anesthesia that blocks pain in a particular region of the body. The goal of an epidural is to provide analgesia, or pain relief, rather than anesthesia, which leads to total lack of feeling. Epidurals block the nerve impulses from the lower spinal segments.

**Gestational sack** – The gestational sac is a fluid-filled structure surrounding an embryo during the first few weeks of embryonic development. It is the first structure seen in pregnancy by ultrasound as early as 4.5 to 5 weeks of gestational age and is 97.6% specific for the diagnosis of intrauterine pregnancy (IUP)

**Induction** - Contractions can be started by inserting a pessary or gel into the vagina, and sometimes both are used. Induction of labour may take a while, particularly if the cervix (the neck of the uterus) needs to be softened with pessaries or gels. Sometimes a hormone drip (Syntocinon/Pitocin) is needed to speed up the labour.

**Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** - The number of deaths of infants under one year old per 1,000 live births. This rate is often used as an indicator of the level of health in a country.

**Labour** – Active – the stage of labour in which the cervix is dilated to 5cm+ and contractions are approximately one minute long with three in ten minutes.

**Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)** - The annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes).

**Vaginal Birth after Caesarean Section (VBAC**) –A vaginal birth after one or more caesarean sections.

## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BCM | Black Consciousness Movement |
| BPC | Black People's Convention |
| EFF | Economic Freedom Fighters |
| FMF | Fees Must Fall |
| LSM | Living Standards Measure |
| NP | The National Party |
| RMF | Rhodes Must Fall |
| SA | South Africa |
| SASO | South African Students' Organisation |
| TRC | Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UCT | University of Cape Town |
| USA | United States |
| UWC | University of the Western Cape |
| WHO | World Health Organisation. |

# CHAPTER 1

## Reckoning with Race work and multiple stories of Black mothers

*"An old white man drove up and parked his car across the road. He sat, watching us for a while. There we were – mother and son, chatting and laughing and slurping our milkshakes – but I sensed his presence and looked up. I tried to make sure my son did not notice him, but I did. He was angry, and I could feel his rage rising. It was energetic. This game is hard. To be a Black mother is to manage the rage of others while growing joyous Black children. This is no easy task"* (Msimang, 2020).

Reading the words quoted above in an article by Sisonke Msimang where she writes about "paying attention in a painful world", I was transported to an evening in Chwayita's house back in 2017. Chwayita is hosting a couples' night - my husband and I as well as other couples from our local church have been invited. As we settle down at the dinner table with the smell of Nando's chicken and pizza lingering in the air, Chwayita and her husband welcome us and encourage the couples to have fun, especially those who have a nanny or some form of childcare for the night. It was a time when the news were saturated with stories about violence against Black people both in South Africa and the United States of America. We recounted stories of racist incidences from the media as well as stories from our own lives – especially moments where we 'let it [racist issue] go' to avoid conflict at work or in public. As we were shaking our heads and with a solemn atmosphere in the room, we unanimously agreed that we could not teach our children to 'keep their heads down' or 'let it go' as our parents had taught us.

With all of our parents having either been teenagers or adults during apartheid South Africa, we exchanged stories of how they felt that we should be grateful, as "Black people had come a long way since apartheid". During and after the two years of student protest against racism, my own mother would say, "what did these protesting children want to have happened, war?

It is easy for them to say because they do not know what raising children in apartheid was like… They should be grateful". But although we were grateful to freedom fighters and how far we had come as a country, we also wanted more than just to be grateful for an end to apartheid. We wanted to raise our children to be fearlessly Black and proud and to find different avenues to express this pride, be it music, playtime, church or language. And like Sisonke Msimang shielded her son from the piercing looks of the angry white man in the opening quote, we also wanted to protect our children from the painful racism we had experienced. Although we desired a country free of discrimination (as do many parents), we also knew that racism might still be there when our children grew up. Our (myself and the couples at the dinner) response had been to keep our heads down and be grateful. But now we had begun to want more and unlearn all that made us feel inferior and the need to "let things go" when racist incidents occur. There was an overarching desire in this particular conversation and one which mirrored social media calls at the time both in South Africa and in the USA - to confront racism, celebrate Black excellence and take pride in Blackness.

During the apartheid era, the concept of Black pride took most powerful form in the Pan Africanist Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement led by Steve Biko (BCM). During the SASO/BPC trial in 1976, Steve Biko spoke about the residue and social effects of colonisation in South Africa. In addition to the resources and infrastructural legacy of colonisation and apartheid that disadvantage and oppress Black people, he argues that there is also a psychological issue. He refers to this as the colonisation of the mind whereby Africans do not see themselves as worthy and continue to associate all things good with Whiteness and good leadership with Whiteness (Biko, 2002). Thus, Steve Biko advocates for Black pride, Black self-reliance and mental emancipation. He believes in the power of creating a society where Black people do not see themselves as less than White people. He believes in a society

where Black people come together and recognise their collective power. Through Black consciousness, Biko sought to provide hope in a defeated Black society. He saw Black Consciousness as a:

> Positive call to come from any group in the Black world for a long time… more than just a reactionary rejection of whites by Blacks. The quintessence of it is the realisation by the Blacks that, to feature well in this game of power politics, they have to use the concept of group power and to build a strong foundation for this... The philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self... (Biko, 2002: 68).

It is worth noting that, although popularised in South Africa by the Black Consciousness Movement, the concept of Black pride was also a response to racism during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America in the 1930s. The movement sought to celebrate Blackness and a call to Black people to embrace 'Black culture' and African heritage' in a context that saw Black people as less than white people (Massey, 2001). Other movements with a focus on antiracist struggles included Black Power, Black Nationalism, Black Panthers and the Negritude Movement which happened around the same time frame as the Civil Rights Movement. The Negritude Movement focused on Africa, particularly challenging French colonial rule and assimilation of Africans to Western standards. This movement emphasised Black pride and humanisation of Africans (Veriava and Naidoo, 2008). Biko draws from these various movements as he emphasises the ideals of Black pride, Black beauty and Black unity in the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. However, it is also important to note that both the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America have been critiqued for blatant sexism that was displayed in these movements where in addition to fighting racial injustice, women found themselves fighting patriarchy as well. The disregard of women's ideas within the movements, their erasure when the movements were written and spoken about and women's relegation to reproductive labour within the movement and not being considered

leaders has been significantly addressed by various scholars (*See* Ramphele, 1995; Evans, 1997; Yates and Gqola, 1998 and Gqola, 2001 for experiences in South Africa. *See* Rodriguez, 2001; Hill-Collins, 2002) for experiences in the United States of America.

One might ask, what does all this have to do with mothering? It became clear for me in reading the article by Sisonke Msimang and in the story, I opened this introduction with, that macro issues of race permeate mothering. As Collins (1991) has noted, context is critical in trying to understand motherhood and mothering. In my research, I use the South African 2015/2016 Fees Must Fall, and Rhodes Must Fall student protests[1] as a backdrop—both having characterised the political climate for my interlocutors at the time. I explore how motherhood is shaped by the context in which it happens, particularly in terms of race and politics of representation and language. I show how themes of race, Blackness, Black pride and representation fold into the everyday practice of mothering for Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa. I argue that the political events, particularly the student protests and Black Lives Matter movements set in motion a space where my interlocutors formed a political and social consciousness that saw them seeking ways to instil a Black pride in their children and wondering about their role in the "race project" as parents.

**Race, Representation and Mothering**

*"Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You [white women] fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you; we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs on the reasons they are dying" (* Lorde, 2020*).*

This quote was originally said by Audre Lorde in 1984 as she described how Black mothers feared for their children in a racist white supremacist American society (Lorde, 2020). A fear

[1] I provide more details on these protests in chapter 5.

that Black mothers continue to hold as seen in the recent/current Black lives matter movements in the United States of America that draw attention to murders of young Black children. This fear and anguish was shared by Black Mothers in Apartheid South Africa. It is displayed in Magona's *Mother to Mother* (1999), particularly in the powerful opening chapter, Mandisa's lament. In the opening chapter, Mandisa addresses Amy Biel's mother - the mother of the child her son, Boyboy had murdered describing the context under which Boyboy committed this murder.

> White people live in their own areas and mind their own business — period. We live here, fight and kill each other. That is our business. You don't see big words on every page of the newspapers because one of us kills somebody, here in the townships. But with this case of Boyboy's even the white woman I work for showed me. The story was all over the place. Pictures too.
>
> It's been a long, hard road, my son has travelled. Now your daughter has paid for the sins of the mothers and fathers who did not do their share of seeing that my son had a life worth living.
>
> […]Where was the government the day my son stole my neighbour's hen; wrung its neck and cooked it — feathers and all, because there was no food in the house and I was away, minding the children of the white family I worked for? […]I do not understand why it is that the government is giving him so much now when it has given him nothing at all, all his life, (Mangona, 1999: 3).

In both Lorde (2020) and Magona's (1999) writing above, there is a very clear fear of physical violence that the mothers had for their Black children in the racists contexts that they were raising them in. However, although they were worried about the physical violence that sometimes accompanies racism in post-apartheid South Africa, it was not the core concern for my Black middle class interlocutors. What is significant for me is their shared concern around race and representation and how it affects their children. Their considerations of race and culture in their mothering practice is evidenced by their engagement with issues of race in the South African context and their concerns about how to raise Black children in a racist country who are affirmed and proud to be Black. Their concerns resonate with those described in Black feminist studies, in Toni Morrison's novels, in American Women and

Gender studies and American studies of Black Motherhood which describe how mothers raise a racial consciousness in their children as well as cultivate a positive Black identity for their children. This is best described as what Collins (1994) calls "motherwork". Collins (1994) describes that motherwork goes beyond ensuring the physical survival of a child but is also to do with power and identity whereby mothers are intentional about raising prosperous children in a context of racial injustice, thus making mothering not just an individual maternal practice but a political and cultural task. Collins (1994) writes about Black Motherhood particularly on how it is shaped by a focus on survival of the Black collective in a context where Black lives are precarious. Her work echoes that of other Black feminists who write on the differences in the mothering experiences of Black and white mothers. For African American mothers, it was pertinent to nurture their children's intellectual capabilities and their confidence in their worth and contributions to society in a context that devalued not only lives but their intellectual capability as African Americans - a task that white women needed not to take on. In Toni Morrison's novels where motherhood is a central theme, we see what happens when this motherwork is not taken on. In The Bluest Eye, a story about Pecola, a young Black girl feels rejected and ugly and yearns for blue eyes (whiteness). Pecola's mother had her own insecurities about her Blackness and she herself desired whiteness and associated it with beauty and thus could not empower her daughter. Pecola inherits her mother's self-hate and desire for whiteness. Thus in this novel, although indirectly, Toni Morrison affirms the need for Black mothers to do the motherwork of empowering their Black children in her portrayal of the devastation that follows when the work is not done. In this case, Pecola goes mad.

The work of Collins (1994) and Morrison (1970) is useful for me in framing my discussions around why my interlocutors were worried about racism if not for fear of physical threat.

Morrison (1970) in particular shows the violence that can be done to the soul of a child in the absence of affirmation of their beauty and intellectual capabilities as a Black child. It shows how although stories of actual physical violence are useful, harm can also be done in the absence of this physical violence and those stories too are important in our understanding of the conditions under which Black mothers  mother.

**The stories I am telling**

My ethnographic research focusses on a small sample of Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa – a unique sample in its middle classness – employment, access to private health care and comfortable housing. I explore mothering through various context-specific issues that include the political climate, increasing technology, relationships, race, class, religion, as well as the medical experiences associated with childbearing. There are two essential contributions that I make in this thesis. Firstly , I highlight how mothers engage with knowledge, where it comes from, who it comes from and how mothers learn to know in a context of increasing technology. Secondly, I describe how the political climate at the time this research was conducted where issues of race, decolonisation and Blackness were brought to the fore, shaped the mothering practices and how my interlocutors conceptualised their role in race work as mothers.  Put together, the two key aspects that come through the multiple stories I tell in this ethnographic project contribute to anthropology literature on mothering by showing how for middle-class Black mothers in my study, mothering is about finding ways that will allow for their children to inhabit the world in a positive and energised way where they are represented and made to matter – where they are affirmed as Black children. This thesis is about how particular historical moments and in this case, the decolonisation, race and representation debates that came through the South African FMF and RMF protests  – set in motion a space within which my interlocutors could grapple with

what ideas they have inherited and what they wish to pass on. It is also about the formation of political and social consciousness.

Conceptually, this thesis contributes to an Anthropology of Black Motherhood. I take serious literature, hair, language, and children's toys and see these as critical and political sites in which mothers negotiate their role in race work and the decolonial project. They are also sites in which mothers form consciousness and imagine the consciousness of their children. These are also sites they use to hope for certain futures for their children. Thus, although the Anthropologies of Reproduction, Childhood/s and pregnancies exist, I argue for more careful attention to the nuances, complexities and diversity of experiences of being a Black middle class mother in post-apartheid South Africa.

**A note on terms**

In a thesis that draws significantly on the theme of blackness, it is important to note how I am using Black and blackness especially since depending on their context, people can define these terms differently. In my use of the term Black, I draw on Biko who was adamant that blackness was not a "matter of pigmentation" but "a mental attitude" and inclusive of all those were politically, economically and socially discriminated against in apartheid South Africa, Blacks, Coloured and Indians. For my interlocutors, it had become important to identify themselves as Black and their children as Black as they acknowledged the racial injustice that exists in South Africa and had started to consider ways to affirm and instil a black pride in their children – an intentionality that is key to Biko's definition of Black. The complexity defining blackness is best described by Asante and Pindi (2020) who write,

> Representations of Blackness do not inevitably connote the same meaning between Africans in the diaspora and those in continental Africa. However, transnational solidarity can be forged through cultural products that depict shared histories of resistance to colonialism and anti-Blackness… Blackness is a contested terrain of

> memory, identity, culture, and politics. Godfried Asante, Sachi Sekimoto, and Christopher Brown write, "Blackness is a space of transnational cultural construction, an ongoing formation with multiple axes/intersections in which historical narratives, local politics, and self-identifications are enunciated and debated". In this line of thought Blackness is inherently a hybridized space of ongoing cultural formation and construction… (Asante and Pindi, 2020: 221).

The way I use Blackness in this thesis is aligned with the ideas above. A blackness that draws from shared history of apartheid South Africa and experiences of growing up Black in South Africa. It is also emphasized by how my interlocutors draws from different parts of their identity- language and cultural identity. Lastly, it is one that recognises that despite shared history, language and cultural identity, each interlocutor has their own views of what constitutes blackness for them and their family. This understanding also resonates with Hooks (2013) who highlights that class differences, religious differences as well as racial integration have "created a cultural context where the very meaning of blackness and its impact on our lives differs greatly among black people. There is no longer a common notion of shared black identity. In other words, a sense of shared identity is no longer a platform that can draw folks together in meaningful solidarity". For this reason, Bell Hooks emphasises the need for a critical consciousness amongst black people. A consciousness that recognises the ways in which white supremacy is the foundation of racism. This recognition allows us to not only think of race and racism in terms of skin colour but to see how white supremacist thinking infiltrates our everyday mundane experiences, regardless of skin colour. Thus, this critical consciousness demands that Black people continue to challenge white supremacy.

When I use the term 'race work', I draw from Collins's (1994)concept of Motherwork to refer to the labour of conscientizing yourself and your children about the racial history of the country. This includes recognizing the ways in which the intellectual capacity of Black people is disregarded, and rendered unworthy in contexts of racial prejudice and institutional

racism. This recognition and acknowledgement is then followed by starting an intentional process of affirming and cultivating a confidence in one's Black children.

The work of Morrison (1970), Collins (1994), Biko (2002) and Hooks (2013) that I have drawn on thus far all speak to the ontological occupation of whiteness as it figures in the black mind. They all highlight that the violence of racism does not only happen on the black body but also works diligently on the black mind to oppress it and make Black people feel less than. Thus, Black people constantly must come up with strategies and tools, both of physical and ideological nature to humanise themselves in a world that constantly dehumanises them. Some earlier works on blackness whose ideas are aligned with those of the authors I have mentioned include Du Bois (1903) and Fanon (1967) which are indeed some key scholars who engage with blackness. For example, Biko (2002) borrowed major parts of his ideological stance from the writing of Frantz Fanon, particularly his ideas on Black Consciousness.

In his book 'Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon (1967) describes the Black man's reality as one who wears a mask in his efforts to be white. Through this book, Fanon (1967) aims to build a consciousness amongst Black people, make the Black man take off his mask and get rid of the white man's mental control. Fanon (1967) took issue with the legacy of colonialism that left Black people seeing themselves as inferior to white people – an inferiority complex that has continued to pervade the minds of Black people. One of his most important contributions was to explicate that the mind was crucial in obtaining freedom. Black people needed to free themselves from their fear of white people, eradicate the western values that were deeply entrenched in their minds due to colonisation and implanted the idea that Black people are inferior to whites and lastly, to be proud of their blackness and to diligently and relentlessly

pursue Black Consciousness. A key aspect of Black Consciousness as framed by both Biko (2002) and Fanon (1967) is that Black people need to realise that the liberation is in their hands and not something they could trust white colonial masters to put in place, black people needed to equip themselves and take charge of the black consciousness project. Most importantly, liberation had to start with the mind . About fifty years earlier than Frantz Fanon, W.E. B Du Bois wrote about what he termed 'double consciousness' to describe the mental conflict that occurs within people of African descent who stay in white dominated North America, thus, being Black whilst also being American. Both Fanon (1967) and Du Bois (1903) are critical in understanding the mental conflict that Black people face as they navigate living life in contexts that force them to seek approval of the white man whilst they also acknowledge the fact of their blackness.

Put together, the works I have cited in this section show that the violence of racism does not only happen physical or just on the black body, and that an important aspect of the violence of racism is how it negatively affects the black mind. Some of the authors provide insight into the psychology or the mental state of Black people as well as how they navigate life in white dominated spaces where they are either not seen or seen as inferior as seen in Du Bois (1903), Fanon (1967) and Biko (2002). Furthermore, some of these works provide insight in the intentionality that Black people have had to exercise in building consciousness, particularly in Collins (1994) and her operationalisation of the term 'motherwork'. In Morrison, we also see the damage that occurs when Black people do not take on the project of building consciousness and doing the race work that continues to be necessary for Black people. As already seen in opening stories in this thesis, many years later, there continues to be a necessity for building consciousness and as you go through the ethnographic chapters of this thesis, particularly chapters 5 and 6 - I will present some of the tools and strategies that

my interlocutors employ as they go about doing race work and building consciousness in themselves and in their children in a context where although there might be no physical threat to their black bodies, there is a continued threat to the black mind.

**Thesis presentation:**

*Chapter 2*

*Towards an Anthropology of Mothering in South Africa*

This chapter discusses literature on reproduction and mothering in anthropology, some key themes in mothering that cut across different disciplines and race and representation in mothering. I suggest that even though there are some exceptions, shaped by the South African history of racism and enduring inequalities that has left Black women marginalised, the research on Black women and childbearing centres struggle, strategies of survival, trauma, poverty and pain. Although I sympathise with this narrative, I suggest it has produced a 'single story' (Adichie, 2009) about Black women's childbearing experiences. Drawing from Mkhwanazi's interventions in our understanding of early childbearing in South Africa and studies of Black mothering in the United States of America, I propose that there is room for complementary and alternative narratives of Black women's experiences of mothering that consider class, race, gender and representation.

*Chapter 3*

*Situating The Research – The People, Place, And Methods*

This chapter describes the ethics and methods applied in this research as well as some of the methodological and ethical limitations I encountered. In this chapter, I situate the research participants in Johannesburg and position my interlocutors as part of the Black middle-class and as a unique sample of Black mothers in anthropological literature. Drawing on Gusterson

(1997) writing about polymorphous engagement during fieldwork when studying up and Malkki's (2007) suggestion that ethnographic research requires improvisation, I describe the instances of improvisation, and polymorphous engagement and specifically, the use of social media in my attempts to find suitable methodologies for mothers with many demands on their times as career women.

The subsequent ethnographic chapters, 4, 5 and 6 are divided into two parts. The first part of this thesis which is made up of chapter 4 focuses on the knowledge seeking practices of the mothers in the prenatal and postnatal period, particularly pregnancy and childbirth. The second part focuses on the mothering practices. The way in which this thesis is organised is empirically influenced by how the data unfolded. During the pregnancy stage and later, the child rearing stage, the mothers focused on different issues. They were more concerned about the medical information they needed to consume and the need to know what was happening with their bodies biologically during pregnancy and birth. They were also in the initial stages of pregnancy where medical aids send pregnant women literature and suggestions on all that they need to learn about their pregnant bodies. It is for this reason that the first ethnographic chapter, chapter 4 of this thesis focuses on the first impressions and concerns surrounding pregnancy and child birth. In the following chapters, 5 and 6, the thesis shifts to child rearing, after the children were born as this was naturally the next focus in my conversations with the mothers. In these chapters, we see how now that they were slightly more in tune with what was happening with their bodies, and had gone through the process of building intuition and sorting the various sources of knowledge they were confronted with, they had moved from the concerns of biology, to those of sociality.

*Chapter 4*

*Ways Of Knowing: Exploring The Role Of Scientific Knowledge, Spirituality And Sociality In Childbearing*

This chapter considers the mothers' ways of knowing. Mothers often drown in a sea of expert advice and are confronted with relentless knowledge. There is always advice regarding how they behave, what they do during pregnancy, in childbirth and on how they care for their children. This chapter looks at how mothers engage with scientific knowledge, spiritual knowledge and how they tend to old relationships as they confront and engage new technologies and knowledge. Drawing on Mol *et al* (2015) concept, I show how the mothers 'tinker' with the advice from friends, colleagues, health professionals, grandmothers, mothers in law, books, social media, Apps.

The second section, which is made up of chapters 5 and 6, considers how the political context of 2015 – 2018 South Africa, particularly the student protests, shaped the experience of mothering. I look at how the micro-political issues shaped and informed some of the material decisions on how the mothers take care of their children and tending to family relationships in consideration of the relationships that came with a new life.

*Chapter 5*

*Mothering In The Decolonial Moment: Exploring Parenting In Context Of Social Transformation*

This chapter contextualises the political period in which my fieldwork took place. I show how processes of social change/transformation shape the experience of parenting and how macro-political issues impact intimate spaces. I argue that the period between 2015 and 2018 – which I call 'the decolonial moment' encouraged mothers to consider their role in race

work carefully and decolonial scheme as they raise "proudly Black", "affirmed" and "joyous" Black children.

*Chapter 6*

*'Decolonising' The Tongue: Thinking About Language, Identity and Belonging*

This chapter considers language as one of the practical ways mothers used to prepare their children for relations now and the future. Some of the mothers I interacted with had attended Model C schools[2] and received tertiary education. In the suburbs of Johannesburg where they lived, their social lives were primarily conducted in English. In thinking about their own experiences and in seeking to ensure a sense of belonging to wider networks, they grappled with the place of English and African languages in socialisation. I argue that ensuring that their children speak an African language served as one of the outward expressions of having instilled Black pride in their children. In addition, the mothers saw language as access to relationships that could only be richer when facilitated in an African language. Competency in African languages signalled the ability to access intimate relationships with family that do not speak English as well as other Africans in the diverse city.

*Chapter 7*

*Conclusions: #RepresentationMatters #YouWillBreathEasier #ProBlackAsAResponse #ChasingUhuru #Blackexcellence*

This chapter concludes my thesis. In it I provide a brief summary of the various chapters presented in the thesis as well as some of the limitations of the study. Engaging with the current anthropological literature on mothering in South Africa, I argue that there is a single story in how Black mothers are represented in literature – with poverty and socio-economic

[2] I describe Model C schools in detail in chapter 5

issues as the constant backdrop to their stories. In pursuit of other Black mothers' stories, I turn my attention to an underexplored group of Black middle-class mothers, decentred poverty and struggle. Drawing on Black feminist scholars, I show how I have centred issues of race, Blackness and representation and how these fold into intimate mothering practices. With the student protests - Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall, and Black Lives Matter movement as a backdrop, I show that political events created a space where Black middle-class mothers who were my interlocutors formed a political and social consciousness that saw them seek ways to affirm and instil a Black pride in their children.

**Conclusion**

By asking questions about what it means to be a Black middle-class mother in Johannesburg South Africa, I can see how macro issues, particularly racial dynamics of the country fold themselves into the daily intimate lives of my participants, such as how they mother. We see this in Motsemme (2011) as she reveals how macro issues such as inequality, poverty and unemployment work themselves into everyday lives of mothers and daughters in KZN as well as how these issues shape how people practice intimacy, desire and living. Thus, in this body of work, I excavate how mothers navigate the social relations and the new dimensions of the society that are brought to the fore by the prospect of a new life.

# CHAPTER 2

## Towards an Anthropology of Mothering in South Africa

In the *Encylopedia of Motherhood*, O'Reilly (2010) brings together interdisciplinary studies that centre motherhood and mothering. She draws from maternal scholarship from Patricia Hill Collins, Sharon Hays, and Alice Walker, among others to coin what she officially refers to as 'motherhood studies" - a banner under which studies of mothering and mothering can be carried. The encyclopaedia, does not provide a definition of mothering but instead, describes various ways of practicing mothering. Although carried out in different ways by different mothers, some of the key things that encompass mothering include but not limited to; care of children, nurturing children and taking care of their health and wellbeing. O'Reillly (2010) also notes that whilst the physical birthing of a child might involve mothering, studies on reproductive technologies, particularly surrogacy as well as kinship studies and community mothering have shown that the practice of mothering is a social one. Thus, one needs not to have physiologically given birth in order to practice mothering and a physiological birth of a child does not always lead to mothering of that child.

Motherhood studies also show that although interconnected, there is a distinction between mothering and motherhood. Drawing from this distinction first indicated by Rich (1995), O'Reilly (2010) posits that "In motherhood studies the term motherhood is used to signify the patriarchal institution of motherhood, while mothering refers to women's lived experiences of mothering as they seek to resist the patriarchal institution of motherhood and its oppressive ideology."(vii). A similar description to that of Walks and McPherson (2011) who describe motherhood as "an identity and an institution. In so being, it is certainly influenced by culture… Instead, mothering is about behaviour, practices and engagement. Undoubtedly,

part of mothering is engaging with motherhood, but mothering is more than that" (Walks and McPherson, 2011:19). Thus, mothering is about the practice of mothering, focusing on what mothers do and how mothers care for their children. Motherhood on the other hand is institutional, macro and can be about broader understandings of how people should mother from various institutions – governments, NGO's, scholars, and international organisations. Whilst conceptions of motherhood change over time, some of the ways in which motherhood is institutionalized and maintained include heteronormative family units, religion, schooling, popular culture and media among others. On the other hand, mothering is concerned with the personal and the practices of mothering (Rich, 1995; O'Reilly, 2010). Although important, a focus just on broader discourses of motherhood does not give us enough insight and stories of the practice of mothering or the ways in which broader discourses of motherhood may or may not translate into the practice of mothering. In this thesis, I adopt the definitions and conceptualisations of motherhood and mothering as described above but my focus is mainly on mothering rather than motherhood. However, where relevant, I will show how ideas of motherhood fold into the everyday practice of mothering as well as the ways in which mothering and motherhood experiences are shaped by social context, class, race and gender. No two experiences of mothering or motherhood are the same – thus providing room for different stories to be told and to give a glimpse of the various experiences.

**Mothering And Motherhood In Anthropology**

One of anthropology's first encounters with mothering is found in anthropologist, Margaret Mead's *Sex and Temperament* (1935) and *Male and Female* (1949) as well as her own experiences of mothering described in her biography *Blackberry winter: My earlier years* (1995). In her biography, Margaret Mead (1995) reflected on the ways in which her work and her mothering intersected, particularly what she learned from her daughter. However, as

influenced by the time she mothered in, Mead also held the patriarchal understanding of a self-sacrificial motherhood and a perception of mothering as a key calling of every woman so much that it would take not having a child for a woman to be devoted to her career. For example, Mead (1995) noted that "It was not that women have less impulse than men to be creative and productive. But through the ages having children, for women who wanted children, has been so satisfying that it has taken some special circumstance—spinsterhood, barrenness, or widowhood— to let women give their whole minds to their work" (O'Reilly, 2010: 744). Therefore, whilst she challenged assumption in her research on childhoods and sexuality, Mead also gave in to normative gender ideals when it came to her experiences of mothering. And yet, Mead also concurrently had an awareness of the ways in which race and class can shape one's experience of mothering which came across strongly when she wrote: "[f]or all the positive forces at one's disposal—I had enough money, I had knowledge, I had reputation and prestige... " (O'Reilly, 2010: 744).

Although Margaret Mead had written about it, motherhood and mothering were not the centre of analysis in anthropology. However, it had long been an interest of study in anthropology and featured in studies of kinship, childrearing and reproduction - particularly with regards to pregnancy and birth (*See* Jordan, 1978; Martin, 1987; Ginsburg and Rapp, 1991; Davis-Floyd, 1992; Ginsburg and Rapp, 1995). These anthropological studies emphasized that the process of reproduction was not only a biological event but also a cultural event that was filled with rituals and constructed differently in various cultural and historical contexts. In fact, Jordan (1978) proposed to talk about the childbirth process in what she terms a 'biosocial' framework, as a way to account for both the physiological function of childbirth and also the shaping and making of childbirth in various cultural contexts. Emphasizing the role of culture, in her ethnographic work, Quinn (2005) writes that although childrearing can

just be about practically taking care of a child, ensuring that they are safe and growing, it can also be about cultural values that the child carers deem as of importance and that they commit to instilling in the child for them to grow up to be the kind of child who will be of value in their society. Sometimes the practices that "child rearers" employ in their efforts to achieve this acceptable adult also then fold into the practicalities of child care. Thus Quinn (2005) argues that there are four universal features of childrearing and these include "constancy, emotional arousal, evaluation, and predispositional priming because these four features of experience are especially effective, psychologically, in imparting to children the values that their rearers desire to teach them, in motivating children to learn these lessons, and in making the lessons durable ones" (Quinn, 2005: 480). For Quinn (2005), these features – constantly teaching the child valued lessons in their society; making those lessons emotionally arousing; "attach [ing] these lessons to more global evaluations of the child's behaviour", and the child, as approved or disapproved and training children first in some emotional predisposition (Quinn, 2005: 480). Although they will differ in implementation in different cultural settings, these actions all show how childrearing is universally about turning children into valued adults. Although Quinn's idea that childrearing is about ensuring that one's child grows to become valuable in their society might be true, the assertion that it is a universal desire or practice is challenged by the various descriptions of childrearing that exists around the world. These include financial provision as the key aspect of childbearing, others emphasize the making of relationships, others focus on the nurturing aspects of childrearing and others insist children have agency and can prompt certain care practice from their carers – all these indicating a diversity in how childbearing is both understood and practised (Walks and McPherson, 2011).

**Centring Mothering and Motherhood in Anthropology**

It was after the publication of Sheila Kitzinger's *Women as Mothers* in 1978, that the practice of mothering was centred in anthropological studies. Anthropology of reproduction which offered alternative approaches to issues of kinship and gender through studies on new reproductive technologies and queer mothering (Ginsberg and Rapp, 1995; 1991) also aided the growing attention towards mothering in anthropology.

In their book, *An Anthropology of Mothering* (2011), Walks and McPherson (2011) make the first call for what they officially name as the *Anthropology of Mothering.* Walk and McPherson (2011) acknowledge that studies of mothers, mothering and motherhood have always been conducted by anthropologists although they were studied indirectly and only as they fit larger societal issues that anthropologists were interested in at the time. However, Walks and McPherson (2011) argue that there is a need for an anthropology of mothering that focuses on various experiences of mothering in the world, takes seriously the role of mothering in studies of culture kinship, gender as well as reproduction. They further argue that *Anthropology of Mothering* is relevant to how we study and understand culture. For example, one of the contributors, Ferguson (2011) argues that grandmothers play a crucial role as they pass on language and culture to their grandchildren and thus one way of showing some of the intersections between culture and mothering.

Following on the anthropology tradition of engaging different disciplines and considering that mothering and motherhood cut across disciplines, in this chapter, I draw from different disciplines and genres of writing, particularly in contemporary mothering research from gender studies, sociology, African studies and literature amongst others. In doing so, I am better able to highlight my contribution to an anthropology of mothering in South Africa.

Drawing from African American scholars' work on mothering, particularly experiences of African American mothering, I show how we can expand the lenses with which we look at experiences of Black mothers in South Africa. In South Africa, socio economic issues that shape experiences of Black mothers are indeed of concern but I suggest that there are other issues to consider – particularly class, race and representation. It is important to note here that, despite drawing from African American research on mothering experiences of Black mothers, I am aware that motherhood has always been an expressly political project in South Africa. This has been evidenced by the ways that Black women's supposed fecundity was represented in colonial times, to the ways that motherhood was framed under apartheid and to the forms of resistance that mothering offered Black women as they grappled with everyday life and political experience. I return to politicisation of motherhood in the South African context in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I continue to explore the American studies because although there is a strong sense of motherhood as a political project in South African literature, the literature does not consider mothering practice as a political project in the same rich, diverse and particular ways that it is articulated in the African American literature. In the following sections, I discuss dominant ideologies of motherhood and how these have played out in South Africa. Although there is rich literature in South Africa about politicizing motherhood which I discuss in chapter 5, there is not as much that focuses on politicising the mothering practice itself and how day to day racial politics fold into the mothering practice in the way that African American scholars have done. Towards the end of this chapter, I reflect on my theoretical and conceptual framework for this thesis.

## Dominant Ideologies Of Motherhood And South African Responses

### Intensive Mothering, Scientific Mothering and The Good Mother:

Intensive mothering, the concept of good/bad mother and the scientific mother are some of the key ideologies of motherhood. These all comprise of prescriptions of what mothering should contain and what mothers are ought to do, without centring the experiences of mothers. Intensive Mothering, a concept coined by Sharon Hays (1996) in her book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* is revisited by Arendell (2000) who describes the pervasive intensive mother ideology as follows: "This motherhood mandate declares that mothering is exclusive, wholly child centered, emotionally involving, and time-consuming ... The mother portrayed in this ideology is devoted to the care of others; she is self-sacrificing and ''not a subject with her own needs and interests'' ... She is the good mother…" (Arendell, 2000: 1194). Arendell (2000) asserts that this ideology is geared towards American white middle class mothers who are heterosexual and part of a nuclear family unit. This is evidenced by the ways in which in literature, films as well as other mediums portray images of this particular kind of family as an ideal family and family law and social policies are built around an assumption of a white middle class heterosexual nuclear family and affirms heteronormative gender roles. In this ideology, the mother is assumed to automatically be a nurturer and biological parent to the child. On the other hand, mothers who do not fit under this umbrella – single, queer, poor are then portrayed as deviant or bad mothers (Arendell, 2000: 1195). The idea of intensive mothering is preceded by Apple's (1995) notion of scientific motherhood which is based on the idea that in order for women to be responsible good mothers, they needed to seek out scientific, medical and expert advice. Only upon educating themselves and implementing scientific knowledge received from experts would they be mothering responsibly. Both the notion of scientific mothering and

intensive mothering put pressure on mothers to be self-sacrificial, be the primary care giver and failing that, they are bad mothers.

Although concepts discussed in the paragraph above were developed in the United States of America based on experiences of white middle class mothers in America, these ideologies have shown themselves to be global in their impact - albeit on different issues. This is not to say that the concepts themselves can simply be transferred to the South African context but to highlight that South African scholars have been using similar concepts and that how South African scholars think about mothering is not in a vacuum but happens in context of many conversations and debates are taking place around the world as we will see in the next paragraphs.

Walker (1995) highlights some of the intersection between race, class and the discourse of motherhood in the South African post-apartheid context and demonstrates that there are class and racial differences in the discourse of motherhood and how women conceptualise themselves as 'good' mothers. For example, she argues that white and middle-class women associate being a good mother with the ability to physically and emotionally nurture their children whilst for Black and working-class women, being a good mother is associated with the responsibility to financially support their children as well as disciplining them. Walker's (1995) argument goes hand in hand with Campbell's (1990) earlier observations on the experiences of Black working-class mothers in townships[3] where she emphasises the importance of financial provision by mothers and argues that the absence of fathers in South African townships has made it even more necessary for mothers to be financial providers and thus making the ability to provide financially a core indicator of good mothering.

[3] Townships refer to areas that previously housed people of colour racial groups under Apartheid rule in South Africa. Townships often lack resources and are underdeveloped. (Bond,2008)

Observations from Campbell (1990) and Walker (1995) still persist in the contemporary South African discourse on mothering, particularly with regards to what is regarded 'good mothering' by Black women. For example, elsewhere, I look at the ways in which illness disrupts ideals of motherhood (Majombozi, 2019). Documenting the stories of two Black women from Khayelitsha, a township in Cape Town , I argue that in a context where being a 'good mother' is measured by the woman's ability to provide for her child, a Tuberculosis diagnosis that renders one unable to work and earn a salary disrupts this ideal. Thus reinforcing ideas in Campbell (1995) and Walker (1995) on the importance of financial provision as a measure of good mothering for Black mothers. Thus, Campbell (1995), Walker (1995) and Majombozi (2019) show the enduring concept of a 'good mother' even though the prescriptions of how this mother is and acts are different for those in women described by Arendell (2000)

Rogerson (2016) also writes about the notion of 'good mothering' from the perspective of white middle class mothers who accessed and made use of an elite version of midwifery care in Cape Town, South Africa. Rogerson suggests that, as noted by Avishai (2007), the reproductive and parenting practices of middle-class parents are often shaped by 'expert advice' that they themselves seek out as adhering to such advice makes them good mothers. Rogerson (2016) argues that this kind of outlook on reproductive practices is very evident in how women in her research talked about natural birth 'as "achievements" and "accomplishments"'. Furthermore, once women fail not just at achieving a natural birth but also other maternal practices that fit expert advice, also meant that one had failed to be a 'good mother' as well as fail to be a "good woman". Rogerson (2016: 79) further argues that the women in her study thought of 'reproductive work' as a project which allowed for the women in her study - by virtue of adopting the 'universal feminine work of birthing and becoming' to be perceived as, good mothers. The pregnant women as well as their midwives

paid attention to the South African expert knowledge that has positioned the 'first 1000 days and vaginal birth for seeding a baby's microbiome and for infant brain development' as a result, 'natural birth was constituted as not just the "good" birth but the "best"' and women spent time managing their bodies in a way that would allow for the desired birth (Rogerson, 2016: 93). The experiences of the mothers in Rogerson (2016) are similar to those of white middle class mothers in Waltz (2014) who perceived good mothering as referring to mothers who are whole devoted to the project of mothering and seeking out expert advice on how to carry out this project and thus indicating ideals of intensive mothering. Rogerson (2016) and Waltz (2014) show how white middle class mothers choose certain services, birth options (vaginal birth) and feeding options (exclusive breastfeeding) in order to be in line with domineering ideas of good mothering.

Marais (2017) on the other hand shows how these ideas are enforced amongst poor and working class Black and coloured women. With her research also located in the Western Cape, South Africa, Marais (2017) argues that through health and developmental interventions and initiatives particularly in the public health care context, the state continues to normalise certain kinds of motherhood and maternal practices and portray these as good motherhood. Through initiatives such as the video card (which was the focus of Marais' (2017) research), information sessions and nurses, the state established the knowledge presented in public clinics to women as 'authoritative knowledge' and normalised being educated and learning from the information presented. In this way, the state was able to regulate the behaviour of working class women as well as their maternal practices and disregard any other beliefs, knowledge and practices related to pregnancy and childcare that were rooted in the women's contexts. Using the ideology of the 'good mother', the 'ideal mother' was produced. This was a mother who was educated and followed the prescriptions set by the nurses. An ideal mother would be one who follows the maternal practices

displayed in the video and women who did not were left feeling guilty and not good enough. The mothers in Marais (2017), are similar to those in Majombozi (2015) - where the mother's own views on what constitutes good mothering such as ability to afford complementary feeds and medicine contradicted those of the department of health, particularly on exclusive breastfeeding leaving some of those who could not exclusively breastfeed feeling like bad mothers.

The studies above show that although there are similarities, there also continues to be some differences in how Black and white women conceptualise good mothering and how they experience mothering. This is in spite of Walker's (1995) call to move away from the narrative of racial difference in documenting mothering experiences as early as 1995. In her attempts to highlight similarities in the mothering practice of Black and white mothers, Walker (1995) argues that the role of Christianity challenged the clear distinctions that had been made between Black and White motherhood. All drawing from a 'Euro-Christian' construction of the 'good mother', Black and white mothers took on the role of being "the emotional centre of the family and motherhood as women's destiny, the source of their deepest fulfilment" but Black women particularly infused the Christianity emphasis on having children with their own existing ideals, especially the importance placed on having children (Walker, 1995: 432). Christianity emphasised children within the context of marriage and provided another space for women to get together and offered a way of coping with stress brought by the challenges of motherhood in a volatile context (Walker, 1995: 433). However, this narrative of Christianity and mothering, as well as that of North American intensive mothering all seem to focus on patriarchal ideals of motherhood – motherhood seen as a key purpose of women and ideally as one that happens in the context of marriage (In both the American and South African context) and in a nuclear family (In the white middle class American context). In doing so, they do not thoroughly show the

intersections of class and race with mothering in intricate ways that they have been highlighted by feminist writers about mothering.

**Patriarchy and Mothering**

White Feminists in the West saw that the glorification of motherhood lead to women being confined to the home space with their sole purpose being to rear children and reproductive labour whilst being denied opportunities such as paid work outside of the home. The association of motherhood and patriarchy then became the subject of many feminists and many began to see motherhood as the 'motherhood cult', 'glorification of motherhood', 'product of patriarchy', 'male controlled' (Damaske and Gerson, 2008). However, for Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins- motherhood and its challenges were not the same for Black mothers. Unlike for white feminists where motherhood was saturated with the discourse of patriarchy and control that made it difficult for women to work and be in leadership, for Black women, the narrative of mothering was that of survival not just of the child and the mother but of the Black collective in racist, white supremacist America (Collins, 1990, 1991). Due to the need of survival, Black mothers were not confined to the home for reproductive labour as they needed to go out along with their partners and with or without their children in search for paid work in order to survive. Thus the idea of a nuclear family - a mother at home with the child doing reproductive labour whilst her husband was at work was not one shared by Black mothers. This reflects the reality of stratified reproduction, a concept coined by Colen (1995) and described as "the power relations by which some categories of people are empowered to nurture and reproduce, while others are disempowered" (Colen, 1995: 3).

In the South Africa context, Walker (1995) also challenges the idea that the desire to be a mother is influenced by patriarchal domination and women playing into patriarchal expectations to have children placed on them by man. She argues that fertility has always had a significant value in precolonial Africa and not necessarily one that hinges on patriarchal ideals of womanhood. She writes,

> The pre-colonial mother within southern Africa was located in a society in which, as Guy has argued, the production of people (rather than things) was central and an enormous significance attached to women's fertility as a result. The mother in this period is a shadowy figure, more a projection backwards of later anthropological work or 'reinvented tradition' than a clear subject in her own right. What we do know is that the practice of motherhood in precolonial society was very different from that operating in European society, the source of the dominant colonial discourse of motherhood - embedded in a very different economic and cultural universe, in which the responsibilities of childcare were dispersed across a number of female kin, and motherhood carried considerable social status. (Walker, 1995: 431).

Furthermore, women have long shown the desire to have children and be mothers and this desire did not hinge on whether or not they were wives. Thus Walker offers an 'uncoupling of marriage and motherhood', a project also undertaken by Oyewumi (2016) in her writing about the coupling of motherhood with leadership in Africa and women choosing motherhood for themselves and not necessarily within the confines of patriarchy. Contemporary literature on Motherhood in South Africa reiterates some of the arguments made by Walker (1995). For example, Similarly to Walker (1995), writing specifically about Black Motherhood, Motsemme rejects the ideological stance that motherhood mainly serve the purpose of upholding patriarchy. Moore (2013) looks at experiences of Black mothers in Gugulethu, a Cape Town township (South Africa) and particularly intergenerational motherhood. She observes that whilst for the older generation having a child in the context of marriage and upholding Christian and patriarchal ideals of motherhood was crucial, the younger generation did not place as much value in marriage and instead of seeing marriage as a necessity when one has a child, they felt it was more important to pursue education and

employment. Over the years, although women continue to desire marriage, they have also increasingly rejected marriage as a requirement to be a mother and being a married mother is no longer necessarily an essential aspect of good motherhood. Instead, women have seen employment and ability to financially provide for their children as more of an important marker of good motherhood (Mathis, 2011; Moore, 2013; Blake, 2015).

In earlier literature, challenging the association of patriarchy and mothering, African scholars such as Ifi Amadiume (1987) and Oyěwùmí (2016) have argued that in matrifocal African societies, mothers were not expected to abandon paid work but instead, showing an ability to contribute financial to the upkeep of their household was key, owing to a different conceptualisation of gender from that of the West. Oyewumi's (2016) argues that unlike in the West, where motherhood was seen as a hindrance for women to work and lead, in Africa, motherhood has in some contexts been associated with leadership. She uses the term '"matripotency"—supremacy of motherhood' (Oyewumi, 2016: 7) to first discuss how the dominant gendering of motherhood that has happened in the West and ended in the feminist demonising of motherhood does not apply to how gender is understood and experienced particularly in Nigeria and that motherhood in that context has a different powerful status. However, although Oyewumi's (2016) observation is important, it is also valuable to note that it does not address how women who then cannot birth children in such a context were perceived and how even when motherhood is given high status, it can be oppressive to those who cannot or choose not to mother. Although her framing of motherhood as not patriarchal sits in contrast with my earlier descriptions of motherhood as a patriarchal term, hence my choice to focus on mothering, her focus on outward perceptions of motherhood and leadership do mirror the description of motherhood as institutionalised whilst mothering deals with the personal practices.

More recently, Cupido (2020) recognises the critique levelled against the heteropatriarchal idea of the nuclear family. However, he also asserts that it is important to consider why such an idea still has an appeal for some mothers. He suggests that although the critique of the nuclear family is justified, it does put limitation on the kinds of intimacies and expressions of affection that people choose and enjoy. He suggests that we "hold off on that critique for a moment" and consider why people continue to desire and invest in these hegemonic entities such as heterosexual marriage, normative kinship structures and home. This pause would allow us to see the ways in which gender, sexuality and property intersect with survival in "precarious contexts" Cupido (2020: 40). To demonstrate this, he argues that for some, heterosexual marriage and children in such a context has not always been possible and thus for them, these institutions are not seen as oppressive but allow for an opportunity to do what he calls 'reparative work'. For his interlocutors, engaging in heteronormative family structures was a way to provide stable environment for their children that would lead to prosperous future – things that they were robbed of considering apartheid history of displacing and destabilising Black family life. This is a sentiment shared by my interlocutors who saw it as being important that they provided a loving family home for their children and this included having a partner (all my participants were married.) But for them, the stability in the environment that they wanted to create included that of extended family and fostering relationships with others – particularly their own mothers in order for their children to also have good relationships with their grandmothers and other extended family. I revisit how the mothers used language in their cultivation of such relationships in chapter 6.

**It takes A Village to raise a child – An African proverb**

*It takes a village by Sindiwe Magona*

*It takes a village*
*To raise a child*
*Mother to tomorrow's*
*Village.*

*It takes a village*
*To heal broken accord*
*Child to tomorrow's*
*War.*

*It takes a village*
*To plough the widow's field*
*So her children will not steal*
*To live.*

*It takes a village*
*To sow seeds of life*
*Cooperation, life-blood*
*To communal living.*

*It takes a village*
*To raise a standard,*
*Kill competition, father*
*Of greed and unending strife.*

The idea that it takes a village to raise a child communicated in Magona's (2009:12) poem above contributes to notions of other-mothering that are also found in the works of Oyeronke Oyewumi, Ifi Amadiume's Patricia Hill Collins and Toni Morrison – the idea that a child is not mothered by their parent alone but that this is a task shared by many. Whilst Black families were not empowered to nurture and reproduce in nuclear families as was the case for white middle class Americans that Arendell (2000) writes about , extended families and the sharing of mothering work with kin was a norm as mothers sometimes had to be far away from home for work in the South African apartheid context. This can be seen on writings on 'other mothers'- such as grandmothers, sisters, aunts, neighbours, other men and women who are not biological parents of the child but take part in the care work and thus mothering of a

child (Sudarkasa, 2004). This kind of mothering and family arrangement is shared by working class mothers, poor mothers and migrant mothers in different parts of the world- an indication that a discourse of motherhood should be intersectional by accounting for race, class, location and cultural considerations (Garey, 1999; Damaske and Gerson, 2008). The term "intersectionality" was coined in 1989 by American critical legal race scholar Crenshaw (1989) to emphasize the overlapping and intersecting factors that contribute to one's oppression. Thus, intersectionality is mainly concerned with the ways in which in a socially stratified society, one's race, sex, gender, sexuality, religion, age and economic status can all contribute in the ways in which one can be disadvantaged or oppressed. Particularly in this case, race, class, nationality and location has collectively negatively impacted on the experiences of mothering by Black mothers.

In South Africa, Magwaza (2003) writes about the differences between motherhood experiences of middle class Black and white mothers. She argues that there are not only cultural differences between the middle class Black and white mothers but also a difference in economic resources between the middle class Black and working class Black mothers which leads to different child rearing practices. Whilst the middle class women employ services of domestic workers and child minders, working class women enlist the assistance of female kin. She also argues that in working class Black communities, there is rapport that allows for communal mothering, where kin and neighbours assist with different aspects of child care ranging from babysitting, collecting children from school, etc. Reflecting on her experience, she compares the motherhood experience in a predominantly Black working class area and a predominantly white working class area where she had less communal support and had to employ a domestic worker. Magwaza (2003) further argues that white women have less communal support than Black working class women and that Black middle

class women who stay in multi-racial suburbs also have less support. This is echoed by Maqubela (2016) in her study of middle class Black mothers is Limpopo. She argues that although Black middle class mothers have enlisted the support of domestic workers and nannies to cope with intense demands of being in paid employment, kin continues to be a key resource and a large part of what she calls 'network-of-care' which includes both kin and paid domestic work. As Black middle class mothers try to find alternative strategies for care of their children, there is sometimes overlap in their 'network of care' where sometimes they will pay family members to do domestic duties and well as child care.

**SA Anthropology and Motherhood - Making room for other stories**

> *"All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience, and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single-story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." ( Adichie, 2009)*

With the exception of Magwaza (2003) and Maqubela (2016), what the South Africa studies I have cited thus far have in common is that they are mainly telling stories of working-class and poor Black women and mothers - both young and old. And although these stories are varied, and do not necessarily have poverty at the centre, it is clear how class and poverty have led to specific outcomes. Whether it is due to poor public health care or the lack of employment and the different ways in which political violence plays out in South Africa, particularly on poor Black bodies. Material realities of women and reports of maltreatment of women of colour in South Africa by nurses in public health facilities justifies the continued focus on medical experiences of pregnancy and mothering as well as the focus on ways in which poverty shapes childbearing and childrearing experiences of Black women (Pickles, 2015). However, in the thesis, I strategically avoid the prevalent pathologising ways in which Black women are written about by writing about Black women outside the context of health

concerns and socioeconomic issues. I write about Black mothers without poverty and socio-economic concerns as a key aspect of their experiences.

The socioeconomic concern narrative is most evident in the literature on early child bearing and what pregnancy means for the teenager's ability to go to school to secure a better future for herself, her child and her family, the challenges faced by teenage mothers. However, it is important to note that Mkhwanazi and Bhana (2017: 3) challenge the pathologising ways in which teenage pregnancy has been written about. They write that "the birth of a child that happens outside of a recognised union – be in marriage, customary union or other state legislated unions – and in the public imaginary, her pregnancy is associated with sexual licentiousness" (2017: 3). They show that whilst they get disappointed and angry at the beginning, families of the young women eventually provide them support in caring for the child and thus create young families. Although structural issues in South Africa render some teenage groups more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy than others, in their book, Mkhwanazi and Bhana (2017) focus on multiple stories of young families in different contexts (although predominantly working class Black families), and capture the various experiences in the making of young families. Whilst others continue to seek solutions in what they see as a 'risk' and a major social ill (Odimegwu and Mkwananzi, 2018; Monyai and Metsing, 2019).

There is also growing anthropological research on a range of childbearing topics. These include, experiences of mothers in public health facilities (Marais, 2017), interventions aimed at feeding practices, and pregnancies of women (Marais, 2017; Majombozi, 2015), experiences of mothers with chronic illnesses (Marshak, 2011; Blake, 2017; Majombozi, 2019) on intergenerational relationships and motherhood in context of poverty, crime and illness. There are also South African interdisciplinary studies that explore mothering in ways similar to Blake (2017), particularly with regards to early mothering, the intergenerational

relationships and networks of support for young mothers which often include the significant involvement of grandmothers (Swartz, 2017; Singh and Naicker, 2017; Ngabaza and Shefer, 2017; Pillay, 2020). All of these studies make significant contributions not just to knowledge but to policy and finding innovative ways of thinking, talking and addressing socioeconomic issues around pregnancy, childbirth and early childhood development as they critically evaluate the status quo in matters of reproduction in South Africa. Although it is noted in these studies that mothers experience mothering differently- based on race, class, age and political context, there is a tendency to tell the stories of Black working class and poor mothers with structural violence as a resounding backdrop to their stories. In attempts to bear witness to the challenges of Black mothers in a context of gross inequality, stories of endurance and survival against all odds- be it poverty, illness, inequality, discrimination, teenage mothers, poverty, and strife saturate literature on experiences of Black women and their motherhood inside and outside of anthropology. Although a necessary focus, the tendency in the South African anthropology to focus on some of the challenges that working class and poor Black mothers face means there is very little we get to learn about different demographics of Black mothers.

In this thesis, I offer a complementary narrative in the discourse on mothering experiences of Black mothers not to deny the reality of poverty, health and social concerns around reproduction. Instead, I do this to show that although childbearing experiences of Black women can be shaped by socioeconomic issues of poverty, ill-health, unemployment, there is a variety of mothering experiences of Black mothers and those stories too, should be told. As Mkhwanazi (2017) has argued, a focus on negative experiences and on poverty as the backdrop of narratives about African teenage mothers flattens the myriad complex experiences of young African mothers. In similar ways to Mkhwanazi (2017), I argue that a focus on experiences of Black mothers only in the contexts poverty, illness, inequality,

discrimination, teenage mothering, poverty, and strife, deprives us of explorations of these complex and varied experiences of motherhood that happen outside of such context, particularly stories of Black middle-class mothers which remain scarce in the literature. There is a missed an opportunity to access and tell different stories of Black mothers and thus always end, with stereotypes and a single story of Black mothers' experiences. And as Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche (2009) puts it, "The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete".

Mkhwanazi (2016) argues that published medical anthropology literature about sub- Saharan Africa tends to tell a 'singular story' of medicine, health and health seeking behaviour. Drawing on terminology used by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche (2009), Mkhwanazi (2016; 2017) further writes that the focus on a particular 'single story', other stories end up not being told or are given little exposure. This resonates with what I have found to be the case on the stories about Black women and their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood in South African anthropology - a focus on poor and working-class mothers has meant that other stories are left untold or provided little exposure. The experiences of my interlocutors show that racialised history of South Africa has had a role in shaping how they think about mothering. Their experiences also indicate the ways in which their mothering has been shaped by ideas of intensive and scientific mothering - evidenced by how they engaged with technology and medical professionals as well as how mothering for them, particularly during pregnancy and in anticipation of childbirth[4]. However, their race as Black women added another dimension where mothering was not just about using expert advice to ensure healthy children but also about doing what Patricia Hill Collins calls motherwork in order to raise racially empowered Black children. Working with Black middle-class women who are all

[4] I discuss the role of technology and expert knowledge in the experience of my interlocutors in chapter 4 of this thesis.

qualified professionals and who stay in some of the more affluent areas of Johannesburg gives me an opportunity to contribute to knowledge about Black mothers from a different demographic and highlighting different issues to those of socioeconomic concerns.

In his recent research on Black mothers and their hopes for their children as well as their attempts to create certain futures for their children, Shannon Cupido (2020) shows how having been raised in a context of apartheid as Black South Africa where they experiences injustice, lack and deprivation, the Black mothers in his study attempted to "craft more capacious, more just, and more materially abundant futures for their children". And thus, his research contributes to a much needed reflection on the ways in which class, representation and race folds into the personal mothering practice of Black mothers. There is room for more studies such as Cupido (2020) - studies of Black mothering in South African anthropology that considers different classes, locations and new areas of theorisation about mothering experiences of Black mothers which will provide us with a much richer understanding of the myriad realities of Black mothers. Furthermore, a focus on Black middle-class women's experiences of mothering also allows me to explore how historical processes such as the broad demands of a black consciousness-based imaginary) shape contemporary practice. Drawing on the studies of Black motherhood and representation my research fills this gap by offering stories of Black middle-class mothers and a focus on the race work that they do as they form a social and political consciousness both for themselves and their children. I argue for more careful attention to the nuances, complexities and multiplicity of experiences of being a Black middles class mother in post-apartheid South Africa.

**Theoretical And Conceptual Reflections**

I use Black Feminist Theory as a lense and a guiding framework to think with as I consider the process of consciousness that my interlocutors engaged in as well as their efforts to

conscientize themselves and affirm their children and to make sense of the race work they wanted to incorporate into their mothering practice. Emerging from the United States of America, some of the key scholars of Black Feminist Theory include Collins (1991) and Hooks (1984). This school of thought emerged out of Black feminists recognising that Black women faced multiple oppressions; wanting to shine a light on the ways in which Black women negotiated the intersections on issues of class, race, gender and sexual orientation; address the negative portrayals of Black women; raise consciousness and empower Black women. Another key aspect of Black feminism is its recognition of the shared struggles with Black men - particularly racism and classism and the acknowledgment of the need for Black men and women to work together, thus Black feminism is about both a gender and a racial consciousness. What is important for me in using this as a framework, is the ways in which BFT focuses on how Black men and women make lives/ living/worlds in a context of institutional racism and patriarchy. Although I draw significantly on US Black Feminist scholars, this thesis is equally shaped by Black/African/post-colonial feminist and scholars located in the African context as it is important to first see how these ideas play out in local contexts.

Desiree Lewis (2002) notes the importance of acknowledging the exchanges between African and Western feminisms particularly that of marginalised women located in the West such as African-American feminists. Both African-American feminists and African feminists have been intentional about ensuring that issues of race, class and imperialism are explored within feminism discourse. Furthermore, Lewis (2002: 11) notes that, a Black-American feminist, Alice Walker and a Nigerian feminist, Chikwenye Ogunyemi proposed the use of the term 'womanism', an alternative to feminism. This for Lewis (2002) showed that there is a shared experience of feminism and a connection and exchange of ideas between African-American feminists and African feminist. Womanism as an alternative to feminism comes from a

frustration of several African and African-American feminists who took issue with how feminist terminology does not account or sufficiently address experiences of women in Africa and African-American women. Abrahams (2000) indicates the vastness of womanism and argues that womanists draw from earlier works of Black feminist scholars who position themselves in the myriad feminist schools of thought – including African feminism, third world feminism, postcolonial feminism and Pan-African feminism. These feminist schools of thought focus on women in the African continent regardless of whether the feminist scholars are located in the African continent or in the diaspora.

Ultimately, African feminist, Black feminists and womanist have all continued to challenge the dominance of white feminism and have strived for theories rooted in experiences of African women within Africa and those located in the diaspora. In an earlier publication that also acknowledges the exchanges between African feminists and African-American feminist, Lewis (2001:4) suggests that given the exchanges and some of the shared experiences of African-American feminist and African feminist, it is not useful to evoke essentialist, geographical, national, and racial criteria in defining 'African feminism'. Lewis (2001) notes that these set of criteria are further complicated by the migration of African feminist scholars to the United States and the nature of globalisation that sees feminists share scholarship through conferences, publications which together allow for a "cross – fertilisation across national and continental boundaries. Trends such as these shape enormous geographical and political fluidity within 'African feminism'" (Lewis, 2001:4).

Similar to the scholars above and drawing on various scholars whom she calls 'Black women with a feminist and anti-racist consciousness' within the African continent and beyond, Gqola (2001) emphasises the multiplicity of Black women's experiences. She further notes that

although black women with a feminist and antiracist consciousness might be labelled differently based on their location, their commitment is to a common purpose which is to consistently challenge the meanings attached to being Black women. And whilst these feminist scholars might have differences in their different locations and brands of feminisms, they all centre and value that the everyday experiences of Black women. Thus, for Gqola (2001), Black feminism accounts for the diverse feminisms that black women practice which are particularly antiracist and postcolonial. Thus, when I draw from Black feminism in this thesis, it is with an acute awareness of the multiplicity of feminisms and the connection between African feminism and African-American feminism. Following a long standing tradition of how African scholars write about feminism, I embrace Black feminist scholars located within the African continent as well as those located in the United States of America and other parts of the west.

I believe BFT approach in mothering should be cultivated for its attentiveness towards the intersections between race, class and gender and the personal. As an approach, it allows me to centre Black women's experiences as well as their families whilst also developing an anthropology of Black mothering that shows us how mothers develop a racial and political consciousness and how they imagine they will pass it on to their children. It also allows me to show how historical events impact intimacies of current day whilst also recognising that Black women have diverse experiences based on their different 'social locations'.

The literature I draw on is located in novels, multiple fields within anthropology such as medical anthropology, political anthropology and cultural anthropology. Some of it is situated in African Studies, sociology, gender studies, psychology and Black American feminist literature, among others. I do this to add to a citational practice that prioritises what Judith Butler calls "epistemological inclusiveness" (Ahmed, 2016: 5). This kind of

inclusiveness acknowledges the importance of bringing various authors (in spite of discipline) into conversation with one another (Ahmed, 2016: 5). I also do it because I take seriously the importance of voices of Black women in a discipline that has colonial histories and agree with Irma McClaurin when she writes; "When we as Black feminist anthropologists prominently feature these non-anthropological works in our writing, we challenge conventional epistemological underpinnings of the discipline while engaging in the critical process of self-definition" McClaurin (2001: 236). Doing this also stays true to recognition of the importance of various lived experiences as a cite of knowledge production which is best articulated by a creative dialogue that took place between Sharlene Khan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Yvette Abrahams, Neelika Jayawardane and Betty Govinden who come from different disciplines and from inside and outside of academia. In this dialogue they highlight the value of the different ways in which they practice their feminisms and their shared emphasis on black women and agents of knowledge (Khan, 2018).

**Note on limitations**

I draw significantly from the literature on Black Motherhood, Black middle-class motherhood, anti-racist mothering and critical race parenting in the United States[5]. This literature has been useful as it shows the role of Blackness, and class in how mothers conceptualise their role as mothers, mainly because of some of the similarities in the racial dynamics in the US and South Africa. However, I also acknowledge that this literature has limitations in the South African context, primarily because, in South Africa, there are unique cultural identities that add to the rich and diverse experiences of being Black and which my some of my participants consider and which show that there is this no homogenous way of

[5] These studies discussed in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.

experiencing race (Zegeye and Motsemme, 2004). This is an important consideration because as noted by Erasmus and Pieterse (1999):

> We are never simply 'South Africans' and our South African identity cannot always be and is not always our primary identity … Instead, all our lives are gendered, racialised and classed…. Besides, processes of identity formation are hardly this clear cut. Finally, no identity is inherently progressive or reactionary.
>
> … we do not simply internalise what dominant ideologies say about us. Instead, in our struggles against various forms of domination including racism we define and redefine our own senses of self. It is this subjective aspect of the construction of coloured identities that makes it valid and worthy of exploration and examination. (Erasmus and Pieterse, 1999: 179).

Although speaking of coloured identities in the South African context, Erasmus and Pieterse's (1999) acknowledgement of the multiplicity and diversity of black people's experiences is important and allows us not to lose particular stories in the face of unified or collective experiences. Erasmus and Pieterse (1999: 181) also emphasize that "… all South Africans have multiple and often contradictory identities based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity among other factors". This is important for me, particularly because some of my participants were navigating their understandings their blackness in terms of race and alongside their understanding of their ethnic group identity.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed various literatures pertaining to childbearing and mothering. I show that Anthropology as a discipline is no stranger to motherhood even though it was only in the 2000's that some scholars recognised an Anthropology of Motherhood as deserving to be designated as its own area of study, considered for its contribution to our understanding of culture and care. I also show that within the South African anthropology context some scholars such as Mkhwanazi (2017) have critiqued the focus on poverty as backdrop of experiences of young black mothers in particular and have argued for research on early childbearing that does not centre poverty but explores the diverse experience. However, the

research on Black mothers, young and old continues to be done in contexts of poverty, low income, characterised by struggle, strategies of survival even when these are not centred. I argue that this produces a single story of child bearing experiences of Black mothers and leaves stories of Black Middle class mothers underexplored, stories that I zoom in on. Drawing from Black Feminist scholars , I argue for a consideration of experiences of Black mothers that considers the ways in which issues of race and politics of representation fold into the mothering practice of Black mothers.

As the thesis unfolds, I show that mothering is built on conviviality, joy, happiness, anticipation and effort whilst also built on uncertainty, fear and worry. This affirms other scholars as Nthabiseng Motsemme, who have argued for studying women not only through dysfunction but further looking into the pursuits of joy, desire and love (Motsemme, 2011). Although anthropology of reproduction exists and there is growing scholarship on care and childrearing, motherhood, in particular, there still is a need for a consideration of the Black middle-class mothers in anthropology as well as considering mothering as a political project. I argue for an anthropology of Black motherhood that is not centred on poverty or socio-economic issues but one that considers the middle-class mother, race, class, representation and thus offers a variety of experiences of Black motherhood.

# CHAPTER 3

## Situating The Research – The People, Place, And Methods

When I began my research in 2016, I sought to explore women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare outside of the narrative of health and socioeconomic concerns that dominate the literature on the childrearing of Black women. This dominance as evidenced by the wide range of literature in chapter 2 on pregnancy under special conditions, such as HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, psycho-social risks, poverty and women's negative experiences in public healthcare. Determined to show the diversity of experiences of Black mothers, I focused on the mundane childbearing experiences of Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa - a group that is under-researched and whose stories of motherhood are mostly unexplored in South African anthropology. Initially, I asked questions about family planning before the pregnancy, how they felt during their pregnancies, their information sources on what to eat and what to do or not do, decision making around birth options, feeding option, the role of their husbands in the decision making, birth stories. I asked questions about decision making around what to feed or not feed their children, breastfeeding experiences, social support from spouse, friends and family, financial circumstances as well as spiritual influences in their experience and what having a child has meant for the social lives and work. Although race and the mothering practice had not yet become a key aspect of my research, a focus on mundane experiences of Black mothers was a welcomed approach by my potential participants – "I like that she wants to focus on the good stories and change the usual Black motherhood narrative. I'm keen", said Zizile in an email to a family friend who had sent her the call for participants. Although my intention was not to just "focus on good stories" but to explore different parts of Black motherhood that are underrepresented in literature, I was very motivated by her enthusiasm.

As emphasised in chapter 2, this thesis aims to contribute specifically to the Anthropology of Mothering, particularly Black Mothering. This partly explains why the thesis does not address men's experiences of parenting or fatherhood, a topic in its own right that anthropologists such as Andile Mayekiso (2017) explore in great detail. I believe addressing men's experiences of parenting would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, The decision to only talk about women was also influenced by my desire to do research that foregrounds women and allows them to tell their stories. This is in line with the work of early feminist researchers who sought to highlight women's voices, their stories and experiences in a world that marginalised their voices and role in knowledge creation (Kiguwa, 2019). Moreover, I wanted to honour the desires of my participants who showed discomfort with their husbands being part of the research and being interviewed. They viewed the research as their own space and an opportunity to talk about their mothering experiences. I saw this as the women's way of reinforcing their own agency and I respected that. I am acutely aware of the fact that identities of mothering and fathering relate to each other and that there may be joint decisions around family planning, pregnancy experience and language choices for the children. I do highlight where this occurs in the thesis and I incorporate the role of men only as it relates to the stories of the mothers that I focus on which.

**The people**

I conducted my ethnographic research from April 2017 to December 2018, in Johannesburg and conducted follow up interviews between January and April 2019. In December 2016 and January 2017, I formally reached out to the women in my networks – in my doctoral programme, acquaintances at my local church and friends, - asking them if they knew Black women who might be potential research participants. I sent them an email that served as a research participant call to my networks, and they forwarded it to people they thought would

be interested[6] guided by a criterion I had set out which I had adapted from the Department of Health's descriptions of uncomplicated pregnancy. The requirements were that the women must be less than 37 years old, within the window scientifically described as first 1000 days of life- that is either pregnant or their child is less than two years. Department of Health (2015), the criteria for low-risk pregnancy includes that the mother be not less than 16 and not over 37 years of age and this was the motivation for the age parameters I set for choosing research participants.

The First Thousand Days of Life' - measured from conception to approximately two years of age has become a growing field of inquiry with direct implications for policy in both global and local governments (Pentecost, 2016). Findings in neurosciences and epigenetics propose that the material and emotional contexts of these early days are crucial in establishing well-being of the child which is what makes these first 1000 days an important area of research (Pentecost, 2016). Solutions to improve life in the first 1000 days of life window are widely available, and the various governments have engaged with some of these approaches in their maternity health programmes (Pentecost, 2016). According to the South African National

I had also put that they must be employed and lastly, that they are married or have a supportive life partner in my efforts to move away from the narrative of Black unemployed, single mothers. My friends, colleagues and close acquaintances referred me to pregnant women and mothers to young children that had shown interest. Within three months, I started receiving responses to my call via email and WhatsApp - from women who were interested in participating – friends of friends and family as well as women from my local church. For some of the women such as Zizile, my plans to move away from negative and sad narratives

[6] See email research participants call in appendix 1

of Black motherhood was what drew them to the research. Others like Zandile whom I had already had conversations about how Black mothers are portrayed in the media were looking forward to sharing their experiences, and other women were interested in contributing to what they felt was an important project on telling stories of Black mothers.

By March 2017, I had fourteen women, four of whom were from my church. Some were pregnant, and some had young babies at the time. However, for various reasons and at different points in the research, half of the women who had initially agreed to participate expressed that they would not be able to continue with the research. For example, soon after the birth of her child and agreeing to be part of the study, one of the women went through a divorce and could not continue to participate. Another woman was hospitalised and due to health reasons, decided not to go ahead with the research. Both women requested that I do not include their stories in this thesis and therefore, guided by the Anthropology of Southern Africa's Code of Ethics, I decide to exclude my conversations with these women in this thesis. Thandeka, who was pregnant with her first child at the beginning of my research, had planned to move to Johannesburg from Cape Town within the research period, but her plans changed, and she could no longer move and participate in the research. However, we continued to talk about her pregnancy, childbirth and mothering via phone calls and WhatsApp, and she eventually moved to Johannesburg late 2019. The last four women withdrew after a few conversations, informal interviews over the phone and a few cancelled meetings. They realised that they did not have time to commit to the research and set up face to face meetings with me. I shared mutual networks with two of the women (Sibongile and Rea) who withdrew but were willing to continue to have informal conversations when we saw each other, and their stories are included in this thesis. They were part of the local church I attended along with Zandile and Chwayita and thus, their contributions are reflected in the

Baby Zone conversations, the couples' night described in the introduction as well as Sibongile's baby shower.

I was thus left with seven key interlocutors between the ages of 26 and 36 when I began doing fieldwork– Chwayita, Thandi, Thembeka, Vuyiswa, Zandile, Zee and Zizile. All the mothers are married and based in Johannesburg. Furthermore, my interlocutors were children of mothers who were part of an emerging Black middle class who were able to take their children to either private schools or to model c[7] public schools. In chapter 5 and 6, I highlight some of the difference between the generation of Black middle class that my participants belonged to and the generation of middle class that their mothers belonged to. Many changes occurred in the lives of the participants during the research process - including job changes, while some bought homes in anticipation of the addition to their families. This led to my participants moving and being scattered over the different suburbs of Johannesburg including homes in Westdene, North Riding, Sundowner, Fourways, Honeydew, and later, moves to Cosmo City, Roodepoort, Bryanston, Midrand and Sandton. Their workplaces located in Midrand, Buccleuch, Fourways, Pretoria and Woodmead. These are the areas that I travelled around during the research. In the map below, I illustrate with pins the locations of my participants within the City of Johannesburg.

[7] I elaborate on model c schools in chapter 6.

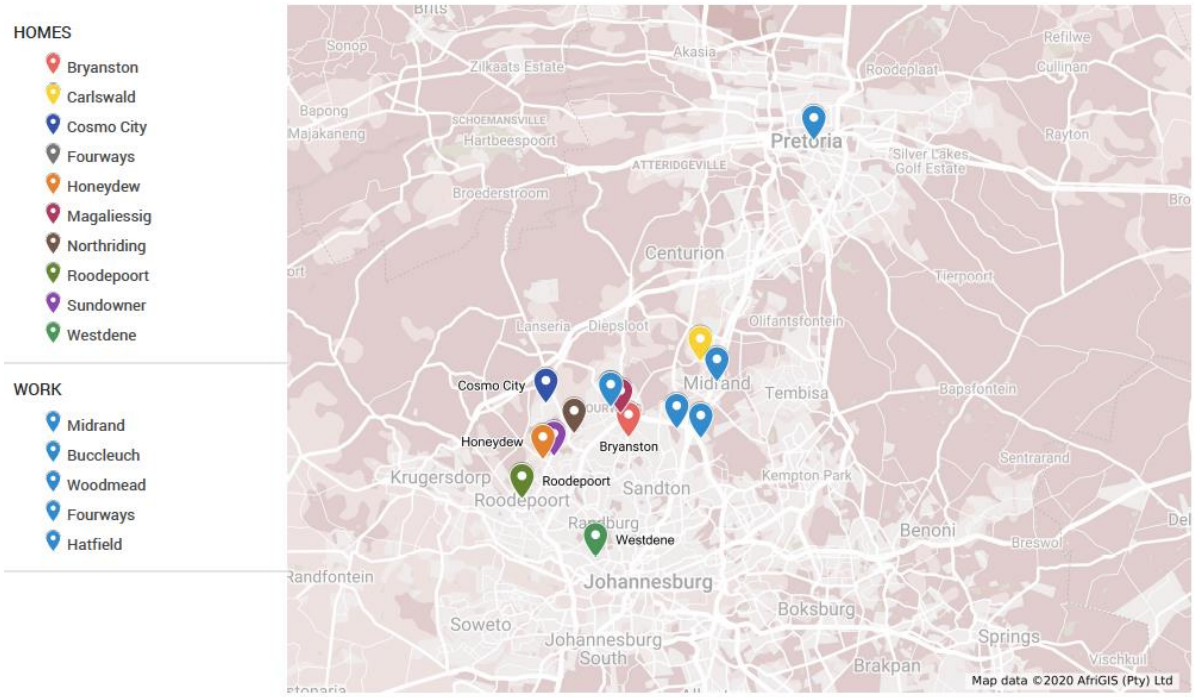


*Figure 1: Locations of Interlocutores. Map generated via Google Maps*

**Introduction to key interlocutors**

In the introduction of the key interlocutors in this research, I show that as true of any human experience, the mothers in my study were not a homogenous group of women. They had some shared joys and concerns, particularly on issues of the political context, finances and of course, motherhood. However, they also had different areas of concern and joy. They were different people with – with diverse aspirations for themselves and their children whilst they also had intersecting hopes and concerns. Thus, you will see in the rest of the thesis that at some points, I draw more on certain stories than others to illustrate the different points I make but this in itself also shows how this group of women had points of diversity. I also pay attention to the socioeconomic status and class, of my interlocutors as these had an impact on their experiences of motherhood and expressions of care – what they could buy and where they could give birth.

Johannesburg has over 20 different suburbs, but the women I worked with in my study only make up six main suburbs and during a particular period and political moment in 2017 and 2018. Thus, this study does not claim to offer insights on the entire population of Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg. It only focuses on views and lives of a limited number of mothers in a very particular moment – during the Fees Must Fall, and Rhodes Must Fall student protests. Although I do not claim to present a full and rounded experience that is representative of all Black mothers, I affirm that the narratives I present in this thesis offer "a synthesis of the diverse experiences" (Susser, 2009: xx) of Black middle-class mothers that are to be reckoned with in scholarship about the childbearing of Black women in South Africa. In the following pages, I introduce the women (in no particular order). I give a sense of their personalities, their passions and worries as they expressed them to me at the time, and my relationships with them. These descriptions will help contextualise their thoughts and actions that you will see unfold in the thesis. I also provide a table with more biographical information below, including their short descriptions. Please note that the biographical information is the most recent and thus, although I might have met some of the participants pregnant with their first child, the table indicates their current number of children. It also indicates current information with regards to age, education and occupation.

## Zandile

I met Zandile during my undergraduate years at the University of Cape Town when we stayed in the same residence. Before my relocation to Johannesburg, I was not familiar with the city, where I would need to stay to be close to the university and accommodation costs, so I contacted acquaintances that I knew from UCT and who currently stayed in Johannesburg through Facebook. Zandile is one of the people I contacted, and we kept in touch as she would send me information about available rentals. When I moved to Johannesburg in 2016,

she invited me to her church which I visited and ended up joining. The church also ended up being one of my key field sites during this research and a place where I met other potential participants. Zandile also invited me to a network of Christian married young women that she had established. The first three and only meetings of this network of women that took place were centred around being a good Christian wife – that is, as she expressed it, a praying wife and one who serves and submits to her husband first. The meetings were also centred around being happy young Christian wives in the context that Zandile felt marriage had a "bad reputation". She emphasised that unlike the generation of our parents, we should not have marriages characterised by *ukubekezela* (enduring) but that if we did the good Christian wife things mentioned, we could have fruitful happy marriages. In 2016 she also completed a short course on Africa and leadership, and three years later she participated in the Zanele Mbeki Fellowship on African feminist leadership. I enjoyed watching Zandile's views, and values on marriage, leadership, feminism and Christianity evolve. She is a passionate debater and also always willing to learn new things. She also loved sharing her views to open discussion at church and on her social media - particularly her passion for the African continent, it's development, representation and its people, Christianity, race and gender. I invited her to participate in the research at the end of 2016, when I noticed that she was pregnant with her first child. And of course, her views and values mentioned above also translated in how she thought about how she would raise her child. She often wondered about how she could raise a child who has a place and a sense of belonging in the African continent and one who was proud of his Blackness. And for her, representations of Blackness in the form of language, books, and seeing Black excellence were central in a preparing a child who would be able to enjoy being in Africa and being Black fully. She also connected her love for Africa, representation of Blackness with her Christianity and in her conversations, these topics intersected. Fieldwork with Zandile took place in restaurants, and her lovely home in the

Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg shared with her husband. We also interacted at church Baby Zone and tea and coffee station, on WhatsApp and on her Facebook timeline. Our meetings were often filled with a good balance of belly laughter and deep reflection on our families, our upbringing, the church, current politics and stories from her consulting projects. We often joked about my inability to do proper makeup and she promised to give me a tutorial. This was a welcome promise by me as Zandile was always put together, a made-up face, manicured nails, beautiful hair and very fancy as she drove off in her mini cooper.

**Chwayita**

I met Chwayita at my local church in early 2016, a few months after I had relocated to Johannesburg to pursue my PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand. The church consisted mainly of young students and only a handful of married couples with children and so on mine and my husband's first visit to the church we were introduced to the "families in the church". After it was announced in a church service in November 2016 that she and her husband were expecting their second baby, I approached her to congratulate her as well as to invite her to participate in my PhD research. Chwayita was born and raised in KwaZulu Natal and also did her primary and high schooling there before moving to Johannesburg to study at WITS. She had a very warm and welcoming personality, always with a smile on her face and never forgot to greet and check in. She was also easy to notice because as one of three mothers of toddlers at the church, she was often chasing around her bubbly and active toddler, Ntombi. Ntombi often threw a tantrum when it was time to go home, and I would watch as Chwayita negotiate with her daughter and on some Sundays, I would pick up her bag as she wrestled with Ntombi to her BMW. I loved watching how affectionate and patient she was with her daughter even when she was frustrated. I also admired how she negotiated with her as though she was an adult – something I did not often see in my home growing up. Chwayita was not shy to contribute to conversations about marriage and parenting when

people were making coffee after the service at the designated tea and coffee station and at Baby Zone, where children would be cared for during church service. She was also very 'cool' and trendy with her *afro chic* fashion sense - often adorned in beautiful 'African printed' skirts and dresses, beaded colourful earrings in different shapes and sizes, *doeks* (headwraps) and her short haircut that looked exactly like the one her husband had. She was very outspoken about the importance of expression and representation, particularly that of Blackness and her fashion sense was one way in which she outwardly expressed herself. I also saw a manifestation of her passion for the representation of Blackness when she organised and booked out Ster Kinekor Cinema Prestige for herself and close friends. It was at this time that my husband and I were invited to watch the Black Panther movie in 2018. Despite her passion for the representation of Blackness and her outward gestures to show to herself and others her Black pride, I learnt that she also struggled with shame and lots of concern about how her Black pride did not materialise in her household in the ways she had hoped. She would often get emotional when she talked about what she felt were her shortcomings, particularly that her daughter did not fluently speak an African language and seemed to enjoy *"into zabelungu"* (white people things). Chwayita's concerns and solutions and how they shaped her parenting experience unfold in this thesis. Fieldwork with Chwayita consisted of conversations with her after church at the tea and coffee station during the pregnancy; WhatsApp texts and calls, Baby Zone conversations with her as well as other moms and visits to her beautiful home in the west of Johannesburg that she shared with her husband, child and a live-in nanny. Our meetings were often filled with and thoughtful reflection on our families, our upbringing, and sometimes current politics.

## Thandi

Thandi was born and raised in Johannesburg and had been married for almost two years when we met. Her parents also stayed in Johannesburg, which is something she was very happy about, even more so after she found out she was pregnant. I met Thandi at a popular charismatic church Women's Conference in August 2016. I had been invited to this church conference by a friend who, however, could not make one of the sessions. So I ended up sitting uncomfortably by myself until a friendly, petite woman, Thandi approached, asking if the seat next to me was taken. During one of the breaks, we started chatting about the previous session. Organically, at a women's conference, we ended up talking about womanhood, marriage, and children and asked each other about whether about children—neither of us had any at the time. However, she mentioned that she and her husband were planning to have children "soon, *but basalungisa izinto*" (still making preparations) and I joked that maybe she could be my research participant and proceeded to tell her about my PhD topic. We had a few things in common but most importantly for me at the time was our plans to have children soon. At the end of that day, Thandi and I exchanged phone numbers to keep in touch and for us to chat with each other about our plans to have children and any relevant information. I also told her about the network I had been invited to by Zandile because she sounded like the kind of person who would enjoy content about being young Christian wives. I was correct in making that assumption because, for the following months, she would share a broadcast WhatsApp text of marriage-related Christian devotions every other morning. I was very excited and happy for her when she texted me that she was pregnant with her first child in 2017, and I immediately invited her to participate in the research. She did not describe herself as a woman of faith but definitely would be described as such in Christian circles. All conversations with her touched on God and how he had been faithful in her life, His blessings in her marriage and what she was praying for at that time.

Even when stressed, she displayed this same kind of faith and conversations with her left me uplifted and hopeful about whatever issue troubled or worried me at the time. One of the essential things to Thandi was raising a child who would know God and for her and husband to be good role models who display faith to their child from a young age. She often spoke about the importance of "training her tongue" and ensuring that she only speaks of positive outcomes when she talks about her pregnancy because her child "could hear". It was vital for her as a believer to trust that God would take care of everything. She also wished to continue with that mindset when talking to her child in the future so that she does not speak negatively to and about her child. Thandi was often hard to reach - in addition to their full-time jobs, she and her husband shared a love for theatre, and her husband was an art/creative directed for Christian plays. Between organising castings, rehearsals and being hands-on with everything related to the performances and their day jobs, Thandi was swamped and had rest and financial breakthrough to hire help for their theatre tasks as one of her consistent prayer requests. Fieldwork with Thandi consisted of meeting her when she had a break at her workplace in Woodmead and conversations on WhatsApp and over phone calls. Our discussions were often filled with serious talks about the Bible and raising children in faith and leading our lives with Christian principles. Thandi is a very serious person.

**Zee**

I met Zee through a friend who forwarded the email that I had initially sent out to my close networks as a call for participants, and she responded to that email[8]. Zee was very formal about the research; we were to meet to discuss the research and have formal interviews and not much else. Our first meeting in March 2017 was in a restaurant in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg near her home. In this first meeting, she told me about where she is from, her upbringing in KwaZulu Natal, her two children with the youngest being 12 months. She

[8] See appendix 1

also answered my questions on her experiences of pregnancy, telling me about her child but only concerning what I asked. Unlike the other participants, she would not randomly volunteer funny stories of her pregnancy or birth or her frustrations with work. It was only later in the research that she warmed up and would randomly text to ask how I am doing, even more so after I became pregnant later in the study. She would always preface these type of conversations with "on a personal note". I would later go to her during my pregnancy to discuss "practical" things and get "mommy wisdom" - thoughts on what to buy, what is necessary and what is just a waste of money and only good for Instagram pictures. One of the things that featured mainly in our conversations was the racial dynamics of the country. As someone married to a white man and with a mixed-race child, Zee often wondered about her child's sense of belonging. She worried about what she called "apartheid part 2" referring to racially motivated violent incidents that made the news often at the time. She also worried about how she could incorporate culture in the life of her mixed-race "Zulu princess". Fieldwork with Zee took place in restaurants, parks, WhatsApp and her Facebook timeline.

**Thembeka**

I met her for the first time during the research in March 2017. She heard about my research from a friend of mine based in Cape Town and expressed interest in participating. I emailed Thembi immediately after my friend had forwarded me her email address and she agreed to participate. We organised to meet at a coffee shop close to her home in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg –I walked up to her when I saw a beautiful tall pregnant lady walking in and looking around, and she smiled. I introduced myself, and she did the same and made jokes about how much younger I looked – she was just a warm, friendly person. Although we joked about me being much younger than she thought I would be, I was only seven years younger than her.

Nonetheless, she would later assume the role of a big sister to me. When I was having challenges with the research and my desire to have a child not happening as quickly as I thought it would, she is the person I had those kinds of deeply personal conversations with. As a person with Christianity as one of the critical aspects of her life, she would often encourage me to relax, pray and have hope. When we met, she had two children and was pregnant with her third. Having already raised two school-going children, she was adamant about changing a few things with how she raised her third child. With her first two children, she had been working as a project manager in her mother's construction company, and she felt that she did not spend as much time with her children as she would like. This time, she planned to take six months of maternity leave and work from home for as long as possible as she was in the process of launching her own interior design company. She was adamant to model faith for her children and also make sure she raised children who were proud of their cultures. Thembi is also a fierce debater and would often tell me about her disagreements with her friends during dinner dates and game nights and her friends who she felt were not thoughtful about society and how some things are socially constructed. There were often lots of hugs, tears and laughter in our meetings and fieldwork with her happened in restaurants, her home, WhatsApp and over the telephone.

**Vuyiswa**

I met Vuyiswa when I was still in Cape Town when she and my husband worked for the same company. I reconnected with her in Johannesburg after I heard that she had recently given birth to her first child, and I texted to congratulate her. A few weeks later, I emailed her my call for participants information sheet and asked if she would be interested in participating in the research, to which she agreed. Relebogile, Vuyiswa's daughter, was seven weeks old when I visited Vuyiswa for the first time and saw her for the first time in almost two years. Naturally, we used this time to catch up. She was asking about my move to

Johannesburg and telling me about her move back to Johannesburg after working in Cape Town for a few years. I loved conversations with Vuyi, in many ways it felt like we were old friends and she was a piece of Cape Town for me - she spoke my home language, IsiXhosa and we would spend time talking about life in Cape Town, what we miss and what we do not miss. We would later become good friends. A big part of her story about her move to Johannesburg had a lot to do with the pregnancy. She only had a few months left of her articles programme when she found out she was pregnant and at the time had no intentions of having a child or moving to Johannesburg. As a result, she was a bit indifferent about the pregnancy and what it would mean for her career, but her boyfriend was so excited, and that excitement rubbed off on Vuyiswa. Her pregnancy was a difficult one – she was always sick and could not continue working. And so when I saw her, even though her baby was only seven weeks old, she had been on leave for almost six months as she had to leave Cape Town to be with her boyfriend when she was four months pregnant. Staying alone in Cape Town was not working for her and flying in and out of Johannesburg had become expensive for her and her boyfriend. Despite the chaos of the illness during her pregnancy, Vuyiswa managed to write her qualifying board exams and passed as well as travel to Eastern Cape for her lobola negotiations which were some of the highlights or positive things that happened during the pregnancy that she describes as characterised by "On the couch chilling, trying not to throw up". She often joked that the couch had sunk-in on her favourite spot during the pregnancy because she was always on it. Because of her experience with the pregnancy – that is being ill for most of it and her baby being born and having to be in NICU, Vuyiswa was generally 'paranoid' about health and illness as she often described herself. She was a relentless researcher and reader of pregnancy and infant related material. Books, apps, articles, Dr's visits, all of it was a frequent thing in her life and her conversations with me. She was always quick to consult a specialist about her concerns and another one for second

opinions if not satisfied. Married to a Tswana man, she also often wondered about how she could teach her children about both cultures. Fieldwork with Vuyiswa happened at her house, in restaurants, at the gym as well as a lot of conversations on WhatsApp.

**Zizile**

Zizile heard about my research from friends and expressed interest in participating; she was so excited that I had said the research aims to explore different narratives of Black mothers and to avoid the one of poverty and "negative things". It was at her office in Pretoria when I met her for the first time. At the time, she was 21 weeks pregnant. I knew it was her when a tall lady in a Black dress and protruding bump walked into the boardroom she had booked for us. She asked for a very clear schedule and a formal interview which happened. In our first meeting, she told me about her surprise pregnancy, her honeymoon baby and as she told the story, she became more relaxed and giggled more and more and was that bubbly self for the rest of the research period. As a first time mother who liked to "plan things to the T", Zizile did not want any surprises and was determined to plan every single aspect of her pregnancy that she could. And so she was a rigorous researcher and reader. Always reading about what to do, about her options, what is safe on books, apps and articles online. Married to a mixed-race man who barely spoke an African language and she not being confident in how well she spoke IsiZulu having grown up speaking mainly English with her Tsonga speaking father and some IsiZulu with her mother, she often talked about issues of language and how it relates to the formation of relationships and culture. Fieldwork with Zizile occurred at her office, at her home and on WhatsApp. I also attended her baby launch/ sip and see when her baby was three months. A sip and see or baby launch is an event that one does for friends and family to come to meet their new baby.

| NAME | AGE | EDUCATION | OCCUPATION | MARITAL STATUS | NUMBER OF CHILDREN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chwayita | 35 | IT | Systems Analyst | Married | 2 |
| Thandi | 31 | Bachelor of Education (in progress) | | Married | 2 |
| Thembeka | 36 | | Project Manager | Married | 4 |
| Vuyiswa | 34 | BCom, BComHon(Economics); PosGDA | Financial Accountant | Married | 2 |
| Zandile | 30 | BCom | Director | Married | 2 |
| Zee | 38 | Matric | Customer Care Communications Specialist | Married | 3 |
| Zizile | 32 | BCom Marketing Management | General Manager | Married | 2 |

**The Place**

When I moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg in 2016 to commence my PhD at the University of Witwatersrand, I spent the first few months marvelling at the number of Black people I saw on campus, daily. "There are Black people everywhere, and they are doing everything. They are CEOs, gardeners, cleaners, nurses, doctors, business owners, they are staying in the burbs, in the townships, they are "fancy"[9]… I've never seen so many fancy looking Black people in my life" would be my response when friends who are in Cape Town asked me how Johannesburg is. My reaction or rather, my excitement about being in Johannesburg made me think seriously about the kind of 'Black' people I had studied in my Honours and Master's studies. There was a clear bias towards studying the poor Black people from the townships or rural areas.

However, being exposed to some wealthy and 'fancy' Black people (as I referred to Black people I encountered in Johannesburg), I wondered what research would look like with an educated, financially secure Black mother who never wonders where the next meal will come from. My interest in seeing a different narrative of Black mothers represented grew. As a young Black woman who was starting to see that she no longer just represented the poor and working-class that she once closely represented and who was once confined in the 'previously disadvantaged' identity throughout her undergraduate and part of her postgraduate studies. Alongside my identity as 'previously disadvantaged', from a working-class family and with a home and family in the townships of Cape Town, I also came to resemble the 'emerging middle-class' that economists were describing. To situate my

[9] I use the term "fancy" black people as part of my personal reflections and reactions on how I experienced the displays of wealth by Black people in Johannesburg as I had recently relocated from cape Town to Johannesburg. This is a term that I use regularly in my vocabulary and one that at the time, I saw fit to help me describe my experience in Johannesburg to others. This term does not to describe the criteria or positionality of the mothers I interviewed.

research and provide a backdrop for my methods and ethnographic chapters to follow, I give a description of contemporary Johannesburg as well as a brief history of Johannesburg.

**Current Statistics and Geography of the City**

According to the Community Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2016, despite being the smallest of the nine provinces in South Africa, Gauteng (which is where the City Of Johannesburg is located) accounts for 24% of the South African population. There are three Metropolitan Municipal Districts that make up the province, City of Ekurhuleni, City of Johannesburg and City of Tshwane, as well as two district municipalities - West Rand and Sedibeng that are further divided into local municipalities. The province is also the economic hub of South Africa, accounting for over 34,8% of the country's total gross domestic product.

With a population of 4,9 million people, Johannesburg is the provincial capital and largest Metropolitan Municipal Districts of Gauteng (StatsSA, 2016). In terms of racial distribution, the City of Johannesburg is comprised of 80.5% Black Africans, 9,8% white people, 5,3% coloured people, and 4,4% Indian/Asian people (StatsSA, 2016). Part of the diversity of the city comes from the fact that as one of the wealthiest cities and the economic and commercial hub of the country, Johannesburg attracts a lot of national and international migrants who come to the city looking for better economic opportunities and a better quality of life. Out of 798 905 people who migrated to the Gauteng from outside of South Africa, 385 288 resided in the City of Johannesburg (StatsSA, 2016). However, despite being a relatively advanced city in terms of economic, health and infrastructure, like many others, this city has inequalities. It is simultaneously home to some of the wealthiest and as well as the poorest people in the country. According to the Inequality Trends in South Africa report by Stats SA,

South Africa is as one of the most unequal countries in the world with a Gini coefficient of 0,67 in 2006, which went to 0,65 in 2015 (StatsSA, 2019).

Citing the economic activity, participation in the global markets, technology, wealth, a place of consumption and aesthetics, Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) describe Johannesburg as a "metropolis*"* (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004: 360). They further describe Johannesburg as,

> A magnet in terms of art, architecture, music, fashion, and multiple sites of invention, Johannesburg is peopled not just by workers, the poor, criminals, and illegal immigrants, but also by civic-minded public intellectuals of all races, as well as highly skilled migrants, jet-setters, and a new Black elite. It is home to corporate headquarters, finance houses, legal services, accounting firms, media outlets, entertainment industries, and information technology ventures" (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004: 360).

Mbembe and Nuttal (2004) refer to Johannesburg as 'The Elusive Metropolis'. This phrasing represents the multiple stories that Johannesburg city holds—stories of wealth, crime, securitisation, cosmopolitan culture, urbanity, survival, 'splendour', 'squalor', poverty, consumption, and some of the ways in which it can be African, European and American, (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004: 360).

Johannesburg is geographically divided into three sections – Johannesburg CBD, the Southern suburbs, and Northern suburbs[10]. Although there is a steady increase of Black, coloured and Indian middle-class professionals moving into the northern suburbs where most of my participants reside and work, these suburbs continue to be primarily occupied by White residents (Crankshaw, 2017: 101). This spatial organisation is a symptom of the enduring legacy of apartheid South Africa even after the Group Areas Act was repealed in 1991. Post-apartheid period, Black people were able to live in the northern suburbs, provided they could

[10]The Johannesburg CBD suburbs include CBD, Cyrildene Bruma, Emmarentia, Fordsburg, Greenside, Kensington, Melville, Newtown, Northcliff, Parkhurst, Roodepoort. The southern suburbs are comprised of Kliprivier Berg, Lenasia, Mondeor, Ormonde, Gold Reef, Soweto, Eldorado Park, Glenvista and Kibler Park. These suburbs mainly consist of Black and working-class. The northern suburbs which are comprised of Fourways, Hyde Park, Melrose Arch, Midrand, Norwood, Parktown North, Randburg, Rivonia, Rosebank, Sandton (CoJ, 2020).

afford to. Thus, a move to the northern suburbs is both an indication of the freedom and upward economic mobility of Black people (Crankshaw, 2008: 1694). However, although racial segregation has declined, the city is still unequal in racial, and class terms. White people are still concentrated in the northern suburbs where there is access to better resources, higher income, office spaces, jobs and shopping malls. The Black working class is still confined to the southern suburbs.

How then do the Black middle-class mothers in my study experience Johannesburg? Who is the middle class? Mashaba and Wiese (2016) suggest that the Black middle-class has grown significantly, making up over 50% of South African middle-income group since the end of apartheid in 1994. However, the term itself is highly contested and defined in various ways. Others have defined the middle-class as using income and locating people who have a monthly household income between R5,600 and R40,000 ($452 – $3229) per month (Mashaba and Wiese, 2016: 37).

Additionally, the South African Advertising Research Foundation defines the middle class as consumers who are on the 5 – 5 category on the Living Standards Measure (LSM), which looks at criteria items such as degree of urbanisation, ownership of cars, major household utilities and assets. Others such as Bisseker (2007) have problematised the measurements used to identify the middle-class and focus on the precarity of the Black middle-class. He argues that the Black middle-class face similar struggles to those of working-class Black South Africa due to enduring institutional and structural inequalities rooted in race. For this research, I use my participants' access to private health care, their occupation as well as their residence in affluent suburbs of Johannesburg as the criteria for middle-classness. Additionally, some of them comfortably identified as middle-class when asked, whilst some were indifferent – did not embrace nor reject the identification. Khunou (2015) notes that

"…we need to take into consideration that being middle class and Black is heterogeneously experienced and thus should be understood as such". As such, I recognise that my participants have different experiences of being Black middle class (Khunou, 2015: 101).

Class is an essential factor in my research for a few reasons. Firstly, it informs part of my aim to tell alternative and complementary stories of Black mothers, stories where the Black women are not poor and confined to the townships and in suffering. It also speaks to their access to education, that they either have a university qualification or are in pursuit of one, access to personal cars and ability to choose where to stay thus in this instance, class being about power through money. They are also not free from some of the complexities faced by Black middle-class people during apartheid who were constantly negotiating inclusion and exclusion in the different worlds they had access to such as the parents of my participants. However, their access to certain schools and areas that the Black middle-class did not have during apartheid because of the Group Areas Act presents a different context of raising children (Khunou, 2015). For example, due to apartheid segregation policies, the Black middle-class was still confined to areas where Black people were allowed to stay, unlike now in post-apartheid South Africa where the Black middle-class has been able to move into areas and enrol their children in schools that were previously reserved for White people such as the Northern Suburbs in the Johannesburg context. Thus, my interlocutors present us with a context different from that of their mothers who lived through apartheid and raised some of their children in apartheid South Africa and also different from those of poor and working-class Black South Africans confined to the townships.

**Methods on the field**

Picking her son up from the floor where he is lying on comfortable and colourful baby blankets, Zandile says, "Bandile, we didn't read today my boy" and proceeds to kiss him. I

ask what they are reading and in which language. She explains to me that she is planning to do one lesson per day and that her plan is to home-school with English as the medium of instruction. Should home-schooling not work as planned, then she will take him to a lady from church who has started a daycare centre. “I want him to be multilingual. He can learn English, but he will not be learning it from home. We speak to him in IsiZulu, and when people come over, they can speak to him in their languages. It means he will take a while to speak, but it is fine”, Zandile concluded. This, for me, was a pivotal reminder of the importance of employing participant observation when one carries out ethnographic research. In this instance, in Zandile’s open plan kitchen that allowed for me to watch her and her son whilst also making a cup of tea, participant observations as a methodological approach allowed me to get to know my interlocutors through experiencing what they experience. Additionally, participant observation allowed me to see the tensions between what people say they do, what they feel they should be doing, what they think they are doing, what they desire to be doing and what they actually do. Zandile proceeded to address her son in a mixture of English and IsiZulu throughout the day, despite having said that they will not be speaking to him in English in the home and that he would learn it but not from home, even though she also planned for the medium of instruction to be in English when she home-schools him.

Participant observation was crucial in experiencing and understanding the experiences of my participants and to be in the space where they did life and practised care. I was able to take note of not only what they prioritised in our interviews but the rhythm of their daily lives and taken for granted interactions with their children and spouses. Participant observation was well placed to assist in gaining insights on the experiences of the participants and those surrounding them as opposed to relying on just the questions and answers in an interview context (Bernard, 2017). The intimacy afforded by this method also allowed me to build friendships with my interlocutors that remained even after the fieldwork period. They became

people I could go to for advice after I gave birth to my daughter during the writing up of my thesis.

When I started the research, some of the women were still planning to conceive, some women were pregnant, others had recently given birth, and others had children, with the eldest being 14 months old. For those who were pregnant and employed when I started fieldwork – Zandile, Thembeka, and Zizile, the maternity leave period served as a very crucial time for data gathering and was the time, I engaged with the women the most. However, it was also their busiest time as they were occupied with nursery plans and spending time with their partners trying to maximise the last few months they had before the addition of a new-born in their families. As a result, my communication with them slowly moved online – WhatsApp and phone calls as due dates approached. In the homes of my participants, I burped babies after their feeds whilst the mother put in a load of laundry or took care of another task, held the baby whilst the mother prepared dinner or was helping the older children with homework and playing with them. The pre-birth visits to the homes were very useful in observing how the women prepared for the birth of their babies and also what they prepared for their unborn babies, the books they were to read to them and songs to sing to them and the required technological tools they purchased – breast pumps, monitors, as well as the books the mothers were reading for advice and information on pregnancy and birth.

**Interviews**

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants. These interviews also helped me gain more insight into how the women managed their day to day life, how they understood the conversation about Black women and issues of motherhood, discuss their experiences in-depth and discuss things observed and questions that were raised during the observations. The interviews were in English, sometimes mixed with IsiZulu and IsiXhosa -

there was a lot of code-switching in the conversations. With Thembeka, Zizile and Zee, we spoke in English. With Vuyiswa, Zandile and Chwayita, we switched between English, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu. Throughout the thesis, I reflect on mixing in the quotes where necessary. However, I typically started conversations in English because I did not want to make assumptions about which languages people speak for two reasons. Firstly, I was warned by my PhD colleagues that IsiXhosa speakers tend to assume that everyone will understand them, which many found to be irritating. The stereotype was that IsiXhosa speakers refuse to speak other people's language and so I was trying to be mindful of this in conversations with participants. Secondly, when I met Zizile for the first time, I made an assumption she would understand IsiXhosa because of her name. This name is common amongst IsiXhosa and IsiZulu speakers. After she responded with blank stares and nervous laughs followed by 'sorry what do you mean', I realised that she did not understand IsiXhosa. I learnt not to make language assumptions and start conversations with English and wait for cues from the participant before mixing languages.

**Engaging Pregnancy Literacies and Digital Ethnography**

Boellstorff *et al*. (2012) note the flexibility of ethnography and argue that "ethnography is a flexible, responsive methodology, sensitive to emergent phenomena and emergent research questions" (Boellstorff *et al*., 2012: 6). This resonates with how I conducted the research and the methods I used as it became clear that there is no one way of doing ethnography and that instead, there is a repertoire of techniques and strategies that one can draw as well as improvising along the way (Malkki, 2007: 179). The flexibility of ethnographic research allowed me as a researcher to follow my participants into the different spaces that they occupy and engage people on. Thus, the internet and particularly, social media – have introduced new ways of doing fieldwork, understanding the field and doing ethnographic

research. Digital ethnography has also introduced different spaces to do participant observation. To this end, I followed my participants onto Facebook and Twitter and followed their updates on WhatsApp, which is something I had discussed with the mothers and that they consented to. I spent time reading the mothers' Facebook and WhatsApp status updates and looking at how they are engaging with some of the discussions about motherhood on social media. In addition to following their personal posts, I also followed social media debates and discussions that they had shown interest in. These are mentioned in different parts of the thesis either by a description of certain events to provide context and not necessarily to provide a textual analysis of posts and tweets. Although some scholars perceive the use of social media as "lurking" (an issue I return to in the ethics section), it also allows researchers to see and be part of more aspects of the lives of their participants through their social media pages and combining physical ethnography in the form of interviews. Participant observation with digital ethnography allows researchers more creative methods (Murthy, 2008). Furthermore, as argued by Hallet and Barber (2014), "studying a group of people in their "natural habitat" now includes their "online habitat" and continue to show that online interactions can be an extension of physical interactions and an opportunity to take up new tools of data collection (Hallet and Barber, 2014: 306). All these authors emphasise seeking consent before moving into your participants' online world, which I did in this research.

Han (2013) argues that for middle-class women, pregnancy is a literacy event. By this, she refers to the engagement with different kinds of texts such as books, scans, baby charts that women participate in. When women present at a health facility, there is already a range of literature that they are confronted with, brochures on how to care for themselves during pregnancy and their infants when they are born. There are educational posters affixed on the walls that are on the subject of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. There is information on

the internet via social media in the form of blogs, vlogs and Facebook groups. Thus, I immersed myself fully in the different aspects of the lives of my participants, and this included engaging the literacies that my participants engaged with. I read Baby Magazines and the literature and information that my participants were engaging with on various platforms. I also downloaded and signed up on the pregnancy applications that the mothers were using, mainly The Bump, Baby Centre and What To Expect. These apps had advice, how-to tips and features that allowed the mothers to track their pregnancy, growth of their child until 12 months and the woman's body changes. I engaged with these literacy materials as an extension of my participant observation. Also, I used them as stimuli for the conversations with the mothers, and they also helped me understand the technical language mothers were using.

As you can see from the above detailed methodological approach, I employed Gusterson's (1997) concept of "polymorphous engagement." Polymorphous engagement entails interacting with participants in multiple sites. This means not relying solely on seeing participants in their communities but also engaging with them in virtual platforms and using various methods, sites and sources to do data collection in a world where participants are everywhere, and the nature of fieldwork has changed.

**Important places**

In addition to the personal homes of participants, a significant amount of my participant observation occurred at my local church where Zandile and Chwayita were members. It was a small church with no more than 50 people per service and consisted mainly of young students from the college where the church was renting a hall. Within the church, a significant site was the Baby Zone room. Soon after I confirmed with Zandile and Chwayita that they were going to participate in the research I volunteered at the Baby Zone in our church I spent time

with the babies and toddlers whilst the mothers enjoyed the church service. Sometimes mothers were anxious about leaving their child at Baby Zone and would sit in the room with the volunteers and assist in watching the other babies. What made Baby Zone incredibly exciting and a great source of data for this research was that in this room, pregnant women, mothers of infants and mothers of toddlers exchanged advice, concerns about current news, the church, politics, relationships, race, the church, and parenting. They also used the space to vent about unsolicited advice from strangers, mothers and mothers in law - the venting was always accompanied by nods and snapping of fingers in agreement or by sometime yelling "it happened to me too".

I attended a baby launch or a 'sip and see' (sip on alcoholic drinks as well as see or meet the baby). Parents usually organise this event when they did not have a baby shower, and this becomes the gift exchange moment. Others do it to avoid having too many visitors who want to meet the baby at different times, and so they organise an event for everyone to meet the baby at the same time. In this case, this event was hosted by Zizile and her spouse - to introduce their child to their friends and extended family over food and drinks. In this event, it was hard to count the number of times people asked Zizile if she could drink while breastfeeding and Zizile recounting stories of her breastfeeding experience. Lastly, I was an MC at a baby shower which also gave me more insight in the conversations that happen, and the advice exchanged—how to take care of your baby, yourself and your partner, similar conversations to those at Baby Zone. Spending time in the various spaces and making use of ethnographic methods assisted me in learning more about the experiences of childbearing and techniques women use in navigating everyday life in terms of their pregnancy, preparing for childbirth, childcare and motherhood practice. These methods also helped me observe how they engage with other people at family gatherings or at home with the husband or with other

children and how they consolidate the information received from health care providers, cell phone applications information from friends and family which are some of the things this research sought to explore.

**Religion and mothering**

The Baby Zone space at my local church was a key field site and my interlocutors identified as Christians who attended Pentecostal churches except for Vuyiswa. For these reasons, it is important to reflect on some of the ways in which Christianity might have shaped how my participants view mothering. Studies from different parts of the African continent have shown that Christianity has continued to influence and shape experiences of sexuality, reproduction, marriage, gender roles and parenting (Holness (1997); Delius and Glaser (2005); Pauli (2012); Bochow & van Dijk,2012).

Frahm-Arp (2016) offers an account of how ideal Christian motherhood is constructed in contemporary Pentecostal Charismatic Christian churches in Johannesburg, South Africa. The characteristics of her participants were similar to those of my participants – middle class, obtained higher education, worked in corporate Johannesburg, identified as Christians who attended Pentecostal Charismatic Christian churches and married. Frahm-Arp (2016)' s central argument is that Pentecostal Charismatic Christian churches adopt popular ideals of mothering, 'infuse' these with their own interpretation, incorporates scriptures and repackage these popular ideals of mothering with additional meanings and then promote them to their congregants. Frahm-Arp (2016) emphasises three discourses of mothering in the church which include the nurturing mother, the grooming mother, and the attentive mother all of which are rooted in intensive mothering as the pathway to being a good mother – an ideology which has already been unpacked in chapter 2 of this thesis. The church emphasises that

although intensive mothering is difficult to maintain, it is possible with prayer, Holy Spirit and the tools supplied by the church in the form of prayer groups, women's conferences, and support groups for mothers. Through these ideals, the church also emphasises the importance of a nuclear family and the church provides a message of hope to the women in the church who aspire to have a nuclear family and the married mothers who strive to maintain nuclear families (Frahm-Arp, 2016:152). The context and experiences described by Frahm-Arp (2016) resonate with the experiences of my interlocutors, particularly the notion that Christianity provides a sense of hope and peace when faced with uncertainties and difficult circumstances. In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I will show the ways in which the mothers in my study drew from their spirituality and their Christianity. I will particularly show how my participants used prayer and the message of hope and trusting in God to cope and make sense of the difficulties of mothering and pregnancy.

The churches Frahm-Arp (2016) describes also inherited colonial patriarchal Christianity where womanhood is incredibly linked to becoming a good Victorian Christian mother whose key role is to stay at home and take care of her nuclear family whilst her husband works to provide financial security. Christianity has a colonial history in the South African context and thus, writings about Christianity often emphasise its colonial patriarchal roots that came about through the missionary enterprise in the 19$^{th}$ century (Haddad, 2004:5). Others such as Cock (1990) and Labode (1993) have argued that mission education for young girls was intended to domesticate them in line with the Victorian ideals of motherhood (Haddad, 2004:6). Female missionaries encouraged African women to meet regularly to pray because "In the minds of women missionaries, 'the kraal' of the heathen African woman needed to be transformed into a home in which Christianity could flourish" and so they used these meetings as an opportunity to domesticate younger African women- preparing them for

marriage and teach them skills such as washing, sewing and so forth (Haddad, 2004:6). In Victorian conceptualisation of a good mother, she is portrayed as the "emotional centre of the family and motherhood as women's destiny, the source of their deepest fulfilment" (Walker, 1995: 432). Decades later, Frahm-Arp, (2016) expressed the same sentiment about the mothers in her study. She writes, "Motherhood was understood to be an act of piety, a powerful way for women to express and experience their own spiritual commitment" (Frahm-Arp,2016:161). Thus, Mothering, at least in Pentecostal Christianity continues to be seen as the highest calling of a woman and a role that requires self-sacrifice and is an opportunity for one to express their faith and commitment.

It is important to note that although there has been an influence of Victorian ideals of Cristian mothering in the African context that came with colonisation, African mothers did not simply adopt Victorian and European ideals of mothering. Walker (1995) argues that these Victorian Christianity ideals got infused with indigenous ideals of mothering. Walker 1995) argues that although there were overlaps in the understanding of reproduction and the responsibility of mothering, African mothers "fashioned their own syncretic understanding and expression of motherhood out of an intermingling of African and European identities and practices. Motherhood was central to African women's personal and cultural identity as well as their social and economic roles long before the advent of Christian missions in South Africa" (Walker, 1995: 432). The church prayer groups some of which were later formalised such as Manyano women were established and encouraged by the Methodist church with the purpose of converting the African home through the mothers were partly used to teach Christian values around marriage, sexuality and motherhood but they were also used to "carry out practices of resistance…" (Haddad, 2004:4). Whilst these church groups were encouraged by female missionaries – a space to domesticate African women and emphasise role of women in a Victorian Christian patriarchal household, African women created for themselves a safe

space where they can escape the dominant colonial and patriarchal elements and developed a different form of Christianity for themselves where they resisted such ideals (Haddad, 2004:8). In contemporary South Africa, Manyano women continue to be key in constructions of Christian maternalism. Although some feminist scholars have taken issue with traditional notions of motherhood and the ways in which religion has been instrumental in oppression of women, it is important to note that spirituality can be a big part of black women's experiences (Holness (2004; Motsemme(2011). Thus, if we are to make sense of black women's life experiences, including mothering, then we are ought to take seriously how African mothers and women may desire to express themselves and filter their own experiences through the church and religion and not portray them as simply victims of patriarchal Christianity (Motsemme,2011). Ngcobozi (2020) does exactly this in her latest book titled "Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa'. In this book she positions Manyano women as key in the political fabric of the country and emphasises their efforts of resistance in Apartheid South Africa and their continued mobilisation in post-apartheid South Africa. Similar to Haddad (2004), Ngcobozi (2020) notes that black women within the church made use of their prayer groups as an entry point for political participation. Thus, in Manyano women, we see the intersections between politics, Christianity and Black mothering. Ngcobozi (2020) articulates this eloquently and writes this about Manyano women in apartheid South Africa,

> "The threat to the future of her child and of others like her required not only the spiritual form of resistance they used through prayer, but also the use of physical forms of resistance such as group protest. The protection of the future of her children was therefore not only a political act, but also a spiritual imperative, coming from her association with the Manyano organisation. Motherhood, read in this manner, shows that Manyano women locate themselves within the spiritual call from God to protect His children, which may be expressed in political ways" (Ngcobozi, 2020:80)

Unlike in Victorian ideals of mothering, Manyano women's understanding of mothering was not confined to the nuclear family as the women felt a spiritual imperative to protect and

mother all of God's children. They too relied on prayer and God to help them cope in difficult circumstances of mothering but for black mothers, some of these circumstances were uniquely shaped by the context of apartheid South Africa, poverty, and inequality. For Manyano women, their mothering practices drew from Christianity as well as long standing matriarchal traditions in the African continent and their mothering included intentional political engagement (Ngcobozi, 2020). The intersections of politics, Christianity in black mothering highlighted by Ngcobozi (2020) resonate with some of my interlocutors, particularly Zandile and in chapter 5 of this thesis, I show some of those intersections both in conversations in the Baby Zone space and also in interviews with Zandile.

**Formal Ethics**

In this research, I was guided by the Anthropology of Southern Africa's Code of Ethics (Anthropology Southern Africa, 2005) and Guidelines for Human Research Ethics Clearance, as outlined by the University of the Witwatersrand. I was granted ethics approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. In alignment with the ethical guidelines cited above, my participants, along with their partners, signed consent forms. These consent forms were accompanied by two different participant information sheets, one for a family member or partner and one for the actual participant. I have included the documents mentioned in the appendices (Appendix 2). I also wanted partners to know that I am conducting this research and to ensure that they were comfortable when I came over to their houses. I acknowledge that consent is an ongoing process. As such, in addition to the signed approval, I continuously asked for verbal consent throughout the research process, reminding mothers about their anonymity and what they had consented to.

I ensured the safety of the research participants by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity by omitting identifiable information such as names, surnames and addresses and I use pseudonyms throughout this thesis and will be doing so in any subsequent publications that stem from this research. As a result, I will not mention where each participant stays or works and instead, cite the general area. I also ensured that audio, transcriptions and note files are password protected.

**Ethical Care: Representation and Voice**

Kiguwa (2019) notes the work of early feminist researchers who sought to highlight women's voices, their stories and experiences in a world that marginalised their voices and role in knowledge creation. Feminist research not only included women's stories but also insisted on different ways of gathering knowledge and presenting it – ways that prioritise the lived experiences of women and their voices. Thus, to honour the women I worked with and their contributions and in alignment with the tradition of anthropology to centre conversations in efforts to produce ethnographic data that is in-depth, descriptive and rich, I intentionally share expansive abstracted quotes from my conversations with my interlocutors. Furthermore, Rachel Jones (2016) emphasises the use of excerpts from interviews as a "deliberate ethical and political gesture" (Jones, 2016: 114). In doing so, one acknowledges their reliance as a researcher on the stories women have chosen to share, and the women get to be present in the thesis. This approach to writing about women allows for their voices to be visible in the work they have contributed to and will enable women to "speak for themselves". By quoting significantly the words of the women I worked with in the language that they were spoken in, I do my part in taking seriously the voices of women, particularly the mothers I worked with. However, this approach is not without limitations. Ross (2003) observes, "The forms of communication that scholars take for granted – writing, for example –may perform an odd alienation: for some testifiers, seeing the self as though from the

outside can be disconcerting, even painful" (Ross, 2003: 335). Some have been angry at the ways in which, once uttered in public fora, their words circulate beyond their control, reported and repeated in the media, on the internet, reproduced and analysed by scholars and others". Ross (2003) writes this concerning persons who had testified during the Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa, whose testimonies, stories continued to be replicated and used in movies and books without their consent. Although the stories of my participants are not centred on suffering and vulnerability, these do feature in their stories, and I ought to think critically about how I present their voice and how I circulate their voices. Ross (2003) concludes by acknowledging that although giving testimonies were found useful by some people, others rejected it and that those who had already shared their testimonies "are alarmed at how their testimonies proliferate outside the contexts of individual control" (Ross, 2003: 325). However, I affirm that the women in my study gave their consent continually throughout the research process and that the anonymity afforded to them by giving them pseudonyms and omitting identifiable information from the thesis is an attempt to mitigate some of the issues discussed by Ross (2003). However, this issue is one that continues to warrant more critical thinking, care and caution from scholars, including myself.

Lastly, as a way to show my appreciation and to reciprocate the endless hours and attention that my interlocutors gifted me with, I gave them gifts at the end of fieldwork – a CD with nursery rhymes in the languages that my interlocutors wanted their children to learn, a photo frame and a height chart.

**Positionality**

As seen in the introduction of the interlocutors and the details of my methodological approach, I had different relationships with the interlocutors– some were acquaintances before the research, some developed into deep, meaningful friendships and some remained

professional. I have located myself at the various moments in this thesis as anthropologists do (Susser, 2009). I am aware that my personal history, identity as a Black woman, my experience of the country, its politics and my politics have all informed and shaped the lens with which I collected and interpreted the data I present in this thesis. I also practised reflexivity as I was conducting my fieldwork and reminded myself of my positionality. Thus, I know that despite my desire to offer a contribution to knowledge that does not rely on the personal, the process of creating knowledge is both personal and political as argued by Singer (1995). This is particularly essential to point out in my case as someone who had both an academic interest – to contribute to knowledge about politics of childrearing and Black middle-class motherhood, as well as a personal interest - a young Black woman who herself was trying to conceive at the time and also grappling with how Black mothers were portrayed in media and scholarship. Drawing from feminist scholarship as well as anthropology, I offer pieces of my life throughout this thesis and show the ways in which my life - aspirations and concerns and those of my participants intersected.

Conducting research in Johannesburg with Black middle-class mothers would in some ways fit the description of auto-ethnography due to my positionality and status as a young Black woman trying to conceive and become a mother in the same context as my participants. It also fits the description of doing anthropology at home as I was conducting research with mainly my peers and of the same class status. Although I was in a foreign city having just relocated to Johannesburg – a city I had only visited twice in my lifetime, the lifestyle and cultural setting of the women in Johannesburg had some familiar aspects. Anthropologist, Becker, Boonzaier and Owen (2005) note that there is "… unquestioned assumption that anthropologists who do not pack their bags and leave for some 'overseas' place at the end of a fieldwork period quasi-naturally engage in more equal and intersubjective relationships with the people studied" (Becker, Boonzaier and Owen, 2005: 123). However, considering

class and other variants, despite the shared aspects of our identity with the women I worked with, unlike them, I was also an unemployed PhD student amongst working women and also without a child, among women who are mothers or expectant mothers.

**Conclusion**

*"That when we reject the single-story, when we realise that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise" (Adichie, 2009).*

I began the first chapter of this thesis with extracts from Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's TED talk on the danger of a single story and in chapter 2, I presented the various single stories of Black mothers in scholarship. In this chapter, I also introduce my key interlocutors, their location and outline the various methods I have employed as I seek stories motherhood experiences of Black middle-class women in South Africa. I also reflect on the ways in which Christianity might have shaped the mothering experiences of my participants and my conversations with them at Baby Zone. My methods prioritised relationship, conversation and observations to obtain rich ethnographic data from my interlocutors. In this thesis, I piece together their stories to show that there is never a single story about any place and add to the various stories already told by other scholars as I demonstrated in chapter 2. I recognise that this study is not without limitations in terms of scope, size and representation. However, I believe that it is an essential contribution to how we understand the experiences of motherhood for Black women, particularly Black middle-class women and how they engage race, gender and representation in their mothering.

As we delve into the ethnographic chapters of this thesis, I will demonstrate the similarities and differences and the broader context of the maternal worlds in which my participants locate themselves and their day to day experiences in how they approached childrearing as

well as their concerns about health, race, identity and politics. Whilst others seemed to be in what novelist Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) best describes as a "nervous condition" – trying to hold on to what they understand as their culture and defining of their Blackness whilst also embracing the changes that come with their class status and a diverse social network. Others seemed to embrace the opportunities that came with the class status and the diverse society as well as continually looking for ways to creatively instil a holistic 'Blackness' that is not bound by perspectives of what is traditional but with the belief that modern things too could and should be part of the Black experience.

In the following first ethnographic chapter, I focus on the prenatal period, pregnancy and childbirth. I particularly explore how mothers navigated knowledge in a context of increasing technology – where the knowledge came from and how mothers maintained the sociality of mothering and tended to old relationships whilst also welcoming new technologies and sources of information.

# CHAPTER 4

## "I Know My Child": Scientific Knowledge, Spirituality, Sociality and The Making Of Intuition

> *Today at church, in the Baby Zone room, the mothers talked about all things baby, as usual. Sibongile, who is currently pregnant, talked to Chwayita and Zandile who already have children about her pregnancy experiences. They [Chwayita and Zandile] got so excited when Sibongile's baby started kicking. Smiling, giggling and a lot of 'ncoah', 'oh man', 'wow' and other expressions of excitement, joy and love followed as the moms in the room moved towards Sibongile's belly asking if they can touch. They talked about how amazing it is when you feel the baby move for the first time and how it makes the baby 'more real'. They then started talking about baby apps. Sibongile talked about how crazy it is that the app tells her how the baby should be developing and what order. She complained that the information comes across as if it means that something is wrong with the baby or the baby might die if things do not go the way indicated in the app. "You start to wonder if having that avocado or that salmon is going to kill your baby and reading and knowing all the stuff that the app says is stressful," said one of the moms. They (mothers present) wondered what it must be like when someone does not read all this stuff on pregnancy and how free they [a person who does not read pregnancy literature] must be (Fieldnotes, October 2017).*

People tend to give unsolicited advice to pregnant women and mothers with young children. Doctors, nurses, midwives, mothers in law, mothers, grandmothers, friends and strangers seem to always have a comment either about what a pregnant woman drinks or eats or what mothers feed their children. Thus, for my interlocutors, pregnancy included seeking and receiving excess information. I already knew this from the experiences of my participants when I got pregnant, but I still never expected the number of times I heard the disapproving; "Should you be drinking that", "I am not sure you should be eating that", "Is that coffee? -" from friends, colleagues and sometimes, strangers. Before my pregnancy, I had already been exposed to pregnancy advice from older people in my family who gave me unsolicited advice on the right time to have a baby and older aunts who thought weight gain meant I was pregnant. I had also read extensively on pregnancy advice for research purposes and my plans to conceive. It was no surprise to me then that I got a bit anxious when I found out that I was pregnant mid-January 2018. I was worried because I had consumed alcohol in December

2017. I had already read about how pregnant women should not drink alcohol because of its adverse effects on the unborn baby. This is an experience I shared with my participants from when they were pregnant. Thandi was worried about the sushi she had before finding out that she was pregnant and Zizile was concerned about the alcohol she consumed before she found out that she was pregnant. Although worried because of what the information suggests could go wrong, our response to the fears of what alcohol and sushi can do to an unborn baby was to go online and read more on what we can do and find women with similar stories and who still had healthy babies. A lot of what the mothers read medical information about what they should expect, what they should do and should not do during pregnancy. The articles they read as they explained to me emphasised the importance of consulting one's obstetrician which highlights the ways in which pregnancy and childbirth have been medicalised.

From the 1980s to the beginning of the twenty first century, medicalisation which Conrad 1975:12) described as 'defining behaviour as a medical problem or illness and mandating or licensing the medical profession to provide some type of treatment for it' became a focus of many studies of childbirth in the west (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Davis-Floyd 2004; Gelis 1991; Inhorn 2007; Martin (1987). These studies showed that, in Europe and the United States, the growing medical gaze on pregnancy was a consequence of Enlightenment where reproductive processes came to be seen as simultaneously something that can be managed by people but also outside of human control but could be controlled and managed through scientific interventions. This Enlightenment thinking evident in the Industrial Revolution further medicalised women's bodies and also increasingly saw women's bodies as machines that should be controlled and standardised (Rothman 1982; Oakley 1984; Martin 1987; Davis-Floyd 2004). The doctor was seen as the mechanic or the technician who "fixes" this machine and ensures that it is efficient (Martin, 1987: 54). Many scholars argue that birth has

been medicalised as evident in the high number of caesarean sections, fetal monitoring and women being treated with drugs and a general view of pregnancy as a medical process that needed state involvement. This is a process that gives the medical profession monopoly over childbirth whilst leaving parents in a state of confusion about alternatives to a medicalised birth and little control over their pregnancy and childbirth experience (Jordan 1978; Entwisle and Doering 1981; Romalis 1981). Young (1984) argues that the use of medical equipment and drugs in obstetrics or in medicalised childbirth contributes to feelings of alienation for the pregnant woman. She suggests that the woman feels alienated because the use of medical equipment renders her pregnancy and childbirth experience as a disorder and in this way; her own bodily experiences are devalued. In the heigh of medicalisation described by the authors cited here, midwives and homebirths became less popular as the hospitalised birthing process that focused on the 'efficient' use of biomedical professionals such as obstetricians took dominance. Midwives were portrayed as dangerous and biomedicine was framed as the only sensible and safe way for pregnancy and childbirth. Midwives became demonised and delegitimised as the biomedical profession had monopoly of pregnancy and childbirth and the knowledge of biomedical professionals became authoritative knowledge (Browner & Press 1995; Davis-Floyd 1992; Davis-Floyd & Sargent 1997; Duden 1993; Jordan 1997)

Early research on pregnancy and childbirth in South Africa mirrors research from the United States as it explores the medicalisation of pregnancy and childbirth in colonial South Africa. However, in the South African context, issue of race and class were key in how the medicalisation of childbirth occurred. Deacon (1998) focuses on the medicalisation of childbirth by discussing emergence of male midwives who gained popularity with their use of forceps and other medical tools that resulted in more live births. Male midwives and other doctors coming from Europe and Germany quickly monopolised the birth industry that was

until their arrival populated by Khoisan women (Deacon, 1998). Khoisan women were then portrayed as having unclean lifestyles, unworthy of being midwives and as wild savage women whilst white women were seen as moral women deserving of healthy pregnancies and childbirth supervised by doctors (Deacon, 1998; McLeod and Durrheim, 2002). In this context, childbirth was portrayed as dangerous and could only be safe through medicalised process where medical doctors took charge and ensured health and safety (Chadwick 2007). However, there was still a racialised and class dependent outlook on childbirth experiences that portrayed the birth of upper middle class white women who birthed in hospitals as modern, clean and civilised whilst the birth of Black and Afrikaaner women through the use of traditional midwives as primitive was portrayed unsanitary and unsafe (Lapperman 2011). Thus, in South Africa, medicalisaton of birth and the view of hospitals as clean and safe spaces to birth emerged.

This chapter explores my interlocutors' ways of knowing, considering that mothers are often confronted with significant expert advice and relentless advice and information from friends and family. In this chapter, I show how my interlocutors engaged with the different sources and types of knowledge they were confronted with - scientific information, spiritual knowledge, and advice from family and friends. I further show how they tended to old relationships as they engaged new technologies and knowledge. Drawing on Ann-Marie Moll's concept, I show that the mothers 'tinker' with the knowledge and information from friends, colleagues, health professionals, grandmothers, mothers in law, books, social media, Apps.

Building on the extensive critique of 'too much information', and Han's (2013) assertion that women can 'shop around' and critically engage with pregnancy advice literature, I assert that

the women in my study found ways to navigate the information. I argue that the reading materials in apps, books, magazines and online articles did two things. Firstly, pregnancy and mothering information and advice produced feelings of anxiety even as it was sought to curb feelings of anxiety. The knowledge was not only overwhelming, but it was burdensome and fear-inducing. Knowing meant that you needed to do something and do the right thing and make the 'right choices. Although middle-class mothers knew that the volume of information they were exposing themselves to could overwhelm them, they continued to do so because of the ritual of obtaining as much maternal knowledge as possible in the interests of becoming 'good mothers'. Secondly, the resources the mothers read, watched and listened to armed them with information and gave them a language to engage with their midwives, doctors, mothers and friends. I conclude by arguing that, when faced with overwhelming and fear-inducing information, the mothers were guided by their growing intuition to make the final decisions about what information to apply - even if it sometimes went against the biomedical information they had read and advice from loved ones. This growing intuition was shaped by the technical information the mothers had learnt, their spirituality, and their experiences and that of others around them. This chapter mainly focuses on the prenatal period, childbirth and the infant stages. I address the mothering practice in subsequent chapters.

**The internet, cell phones and pregnancy information**

In her exploration of pregnant women's information practices in the North of England, Papen (2013) argues that women are often confronted with advice from friends and family, midwives and doctors. In addition to these sources, there is also significant information available through books and the internet. As a result, women spend a lot of time researching and comparing information on a range of topics - development, labour or breastfeeding. Although the 'overload of information' is a concern, some scholars have viewed the

availability of information online as a positive development. Papen (2013) suggests that women would determine which of these is authoritative knowledge based on their assessment and evaluation of the information. Ultimately, the authoritative and trustworthy knowledge would be one that is corroborated by different sources and by advice from friend and family.

Similarly, McKenzie (2003) suggests that pregnant women desire to acquire as much information as possible and actively seek information about pregnancy's various aspects. To then decide what is authoritative knowledge, women compared the multiple sources of information – health professionals, previous experience and from their networks (on and offline). The women in McKenzie (2003) did not confine themselves within the boundaries of scientific knowledge and paid attention to how the information they read made them feel. The researching often led to being overwhelmed by too much information. Additionally, women's pursuit of knowledge was not always practical or rational but sometimes was for women to find reassurance from other women's experiences (McKenzie, 2003). Thembeka's views were similar to those of women in McKenzie (2003). She explained that although health professionals' scientific information was important, she preferred stories from other mothers to 'scientific knowledge'. This was because she felt that pregnancy was not a "one size fits all" and in some ways, when she engaged with scientific information, it felt like she was being told that "This and that is going to happen as if it was the case for everyone".

Similarly to Thembeka, the availability of information online, particularly stories of other pregnant women who have had similar experiences was useful for my interlocutors and me. It reminded us that we were not alone in our feelings of guilt and anxiety. This is in line with scholars who argue that social networking in the form of blogs, motherhood forums on apps and Facebook groups may reduce feelings of isolation and help mothers feel less alone in their journey, showing them that others have similar experiences and thus boosting maternal wellbeing (McDaniel, Coyne and Holmes, 2012; Lupton, Pedersen and Thomas, 2016).

Plantin and Daneback (2009) argue that more health professionals seek to provide information online with the decreasing class divide in access to the internet. More mothers consult the internet with their concerns, regardless of class. This has been the case in South Africa as well. For example, in 2014, based on evidence that 90% of the population has access to a mobile phone, the South African National Department of Health launched the first national-level mHealth (mobile health) initiative, MomConnect (Pillay et al. (2016). MomConnect uses weekly text messaging to support pregnant women by giving them information relevant to the different stages of their pregnancy. Women can subscribe for themselves when they dial *150*550# (Pillay et al., 2016). Pillay (2018:1) notes that "Since its inception, MomConnect has grown to become one of the largest mHealth initiatives globally. By December 2017, it had cumulatively registered over 1.7 million pregnant women in over 95% (3300) of public health facilities nationally to receive short messaging service health information messages…"

This initiative also aimed to allow South Africa to build a national pregnancy register, send messages that will promote behavioural changes in women and thus, lead to improved clinical outcomes and identify high-risk behaviour and lastly, it allowed for women who use public clinics to be able to rate the services, lodge questions and complaints (Pillay et al., 2016; Waldman and Stevens, 2015). This initiative is based on the success of Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA), an m-health programme that was introduced in 2013, also targeted at sending women text messages relevant to their stage of pregnancy and information about HIV and antiretroviral drugs (ARV).

These initiatives form part of a global and national move by South Africa to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile technology, via mHealth initiatives to address sexual and reproductive health challenges. They are targeted at low income and poor women and girls who may not have access to health information and thus make health decisions that lead to 'unfavourable' outcomes. They are also innovative attempts at tackling South Africa's challenges regarding maternal health - teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality (Waldman and Stevens, 2015; Pillay et al., 2016). Besides government-led interventions, other free mobile services such as the Vodacom's Mum and Baby are available to people who use the Vodacom cell phone network. Similarly to MomConnect, the platform offers stage based support to pregnant women. Through videos and SMS, Mum and Baby provide information on sexual and reproductive health, pregnancy information, breastfeeding, immunisation, mother-child bonding, early childhood development, nutrition and HIV/AIDS.

All these innovations show how technology can and has been used to distribute information to pregnant women, adding to the many different information sources. Furthermore, these innovations demonstrate that a significant aspect of mothering is learning to mother and consuming knowledge that serves that purpose. Marais (2017:29) puts it this way, "Not only does mothering entail learning *how* to mother (gaining maternal knowledge) or *how not* to mother, but it also involves decision-making on different levels, for different reasons, and involving different actors and resources..." When women present at a health facility, there is already a range of literature that they are confronted with – posters affixed to the walls and multiple brochures to choose from on how to care for themselves and their infants. There is the widely available information on the internet via social media in blogs, Facebook groups and the National Department of Health programmes. Working-class women and women who

do not have access to medical aid can choose from various free state-provided pamphlets and the free *Mother, Child Health and Nutrition* booklet that pregnant women receive in their first antenatal visit in government health facilities and the ICT services outlines above. Middle-class women and those with access to medical aid like my interlocutors (except for Thandi who had recently cancelled her medical aid) also have a wide range of free magazines, brochures and newsletter from their gynaecologists, baby expos and baby shops. They purchase for themselves and receive books as gifts from their medical aid, friends and colleagues. The underlying assumption in the production of advice literature for mothers and the publicly available advice via mobile technologies is that if women obtain 'maternal knowledge', they will make 'informed decisions' and stand a better chance of caring for themselves as well as their children (Carolan, 2007; Babalola, 2015). It is also the idea that for mothers to know what to do and produce healthy babies, they need to be taught – they need to be educated and learn from the provided 'scientific health information'. This feeds into the notion that if the country educates women, they will make better decisions and obtain better outcomes in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates. Thus in some ways, the goal of this information that is easily accessible online is to educate mothers with the hopes that they will be knowledgeable and mother better (depending on what the maternity and infant current trends and policies are at the time) (Marais, 2017).

However, there has been critique directed towards pregnancy and mothering advice literature. It is documented in academic literature and in blogs and newspaper articles that pregnant women and new parents worldwide are often confronted with an overload of information and are often overwhelmed (Carolan, 2007; Han, 2013). Furthermore, the advice given polices women. It reproduces and affirms caregiving's gendering as the advice is geared towards creating a moral or good mother as conceptualised in the different context from which the books are written. For example, it is evident in Marais (2017) that government interventions

that provide information about pregnancy, child development and childcare tend to be explicitly aimed at women and portray mothers as primary caregivers. In the information provided, they are taught how to be good mothers.

Similarly, Han (2013:39) notes that until recently, the bulk of pregnancy advice books were targeted at women and polices women's decisions. Han notes "Even in its friendliest guise, however, advice literature promulgates particular ideas and practices concerning women and especially mothers that effectively police their behaviours. Pregnant women become advised on what to eat, whether to exercise, how much to sleep…" (2013:37). Furthermore, the literature relegates the role of the primary caregiver to the woman and affirms the heteronormative gendering of parenting. Han (2013) shows that although some of the authors in advice literature say they target parents, they tend to direct the advice to and about mothers in the actual body of the work.

Despite these critiques levelled against pregnancy literature from academics and mothers themselves whom Han (2013:40) refers to as 'pregnancy book critics', middle-class women continue to consume advice literature. Han (2013) and Rogerson (2016) both suggest that the consumption of literature, researching, reading and keeping up with information on pregnancy, birth and childcare constitutes a big part of being a good mother, particularly a good middle-class mother. Furthermore, Han (2013) and Rogerson (2016), argue that middle-class women critically engage with the information they consume. They question and compare as opposed to passively reading and implementing advice literature.

**Pregnancy as a Literacy Event**

Using Shirley Brice Heath's definition of literacy events as "occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes

and strategies" (2001[1982]: 319), Han (2013) who researched with middle-class white women in the United States of America suggests that pregnancy is shaped by literacy events beyond just the act of reading and writing but includes interpretations of different kinds of texts such as books, scans, baby charts, etc. Han (2013) extends this argument and suggests that in addition to reading being a class behaviour, women also chose reading materials as a means of gathering information. The information reassures pregnant women and provides words, images, and metaphors to describe their thoughts and feelings about being pregnant. Thus, the advice literature and other resources give mothers a language to talk about their childbearing care experiences. Han (2013: 32) argues that literacies

> **"**mediate the experience of ordinary pregnancy for American middle-class women, shaping and influencing especially their feelings toward an expected or imagined child… Pregnancy tests, fertility charts, books, magazines, brochures, Web sites, medical files, PowerPoint presentations, and videos—the texts of ordinary pregnancy—offer descriptions and definitions that women draw upon when they talk and think about their bodies, the bodily signs that they associated with fertility and the sensations that they associate with the fetus, and the sentiments that they attach to the baby…".

Armed with the information and language, my interlocutors could negotiate where possible, reject where necessary and had both the technical and emotive language that they were exposed to in the advice literature and apps and discussion forums with other mothers. For example, Zee said "I researched quite a bit and gave advice and reasoning about how I did things. It was well received and even taught mother and mother-in-law things that they thought they knew. My husband always looks to me on what to do as he knows that I've done my research. If I don't know something, I will research it – ensuring that my children get the best possible care…I would respectfully thank them [mother and mother in-law] for their advice, and also let them see or read the research that I have to let them know that it's not because I'm being difficult and blatantly not taking their advice, just that these were my preferences, because of this and that". The mothers in my study 'tinkered' with the

information they had, experimenting with it and adapting it to suit their lives (Mol et al., 2010). In this case, Zee weighed information from scientific sources with input from her mother and her mother in law and made a judgment on which to follow. It is important to note that the mothers did not have a singular response to scientific information and lay advice from loved ones. They approached it in different ways but for Zizile, Zee, Thandi, Vuyiswa and to a limited extent, Thembeka, Chwayita and Zandile – there was a heavy reliance on searching for scientific information on the web and obtaining 'accurate' information from a health professional.

'Google babies': Seeking knowledge




*Figure 2: My collection of pregnancy-related magazines and books*




*Figure 3: Apps that my interlocutors had advised that I join when I was pregnant*

Books, cell phone apps, baby magazines, email newsletters, articles from the internet, and YouTube videos were a permanent feature in my interlocutors' hands, phones, and houses (as well as mine). They all had baby apps on their phones always within reach when they needed to check or confirm something about their pregnancy. Whenever I asked, "how far along?", the mothers would often reference what the app said, what size the app says the baby was now, and what fruit size they were likened to, whether they were now sucking their thumb or if their limbs were developing. For example, whenever I asked Thandi and Zizile about how the baby is doing, they would either check the app and give me the number of weeks or use that time to describe the height, size and developmental milestone the baby was on. The most popular app that all the mothers had was Baby Centre which allowed you to create a profile. Using the expected due date that you have recorded, the app would trace your pregnancy, sending you relevant updates specific to the stage of your pregnancy – baby's length and weight, what symptoms the mother might be dealing with, some tips and advice on how to relieve those symptoms and information on birthing options and much more. The app also continues with the updates until the child is a year old. Depending on the child's age, there is

information and tips on feeding, dealing with constipation, homemade purees, decisions around formula, burping, small baby accidents, and information about breastfeeding and the post-partum body. The app also has an option to join baby groups/discussion forums with people who are expecting to give birth around the same time as you and the mothers can communicate, share information, concerns and advice. Although the mothers I worked with (except Vuyiswa) did not prefer to post or advise others on the discussions, they still visited them to see if someone had already asked a question they wanted answers to. Other apps that served similar purposes and were popular with my participants included *The Bump* and *What to Expect*. Although the apps were targeted at the 'expecting mom', her pregnancy, her postpartum body and her infant and a few targeted at the 'expecting dad', my participants and their spouses would email each other articles of interest that they would later discuss at home. These ranged from birth decisions, tips on sex during pregnancy and what to do when the baby is born. In addition to the apps, the other thing that all the mothers had in common was reading books, magazines and articles on the internet. The mothers who were on medical aid all got a book as part of the medical's aid's maternity programme. Zizile first mentioned this in an interview and said:

> Discovery Health sent me this fantastic pregnancy bible. So, I finally picked it up at Toys R Us, and it's like this box, it has a baby blanket, the windshield [windshield cover], a pacifier, there are like a few essentials, and they had baby toiletries in there and then it has a whole lot of information in there. But what they've done is, it's like a Bible that takes you through your pregnancy and then once the baby is here and all the different topics, so that's been very uhm, insightful. Obviously, I've just skimmed through the post stuff because it means nothing to me now, but the pregnancy stuff has been very relatable, so I can imagine that stuff will be very relatable. So that's been helping as well.

Some magazines came with baby toiletries and nappies from hospitals, baby shops and baby expos. The mothers consumed all this information from the books, the apps, newsletters, magazines and the apps evidenced by their reference to information in these resources during our conversations. There was also a lot of record-keeping and capturing memories in various

ways. For example, Zandile kept a journal, Thandi always took pictures of herself during the pregnancy. Zizile's husband loved to document moments by taking videos of her and the baby during scans at her gynaecologist, and Zee kept a digital journal. As explained by Han (2013), pregnancy for my participants was a life event filled with literacies. It was a lot about research, recording and writing. Chwayita also read Discovery's, *The Pregnancy and Baby Book,* and was also happy with it. Talking about the reading of more books, in one of our interviews, Chwayita said:

> We also read a book called *Baby Sense*. It's a South African book, and it was very good. It was very good in that it's not one of those strict, you know, "time your feeds", and "put your baby on a schedule immediately" kind of thing. It does, you know, suggest what a schedule should look like. But it's very forgiving. It allows you to have some room. I know that there's a book called...[she does not remember the book title] it has a similar name to this one. But that one is very strict in terms of what you do with the baby.

We can already see the searching and assessing of different literature and making decisions on which works for you. Chwayita's mention of the book as 'forgiving' shows the overwhelming nature of the information she was receiving and the guilt and fear of making the wrong 'choice' and its consequences. She was anxious about how it, the unforgiving book would make her feel like she is not a good mother if she does not take on the timing and scheduling of feeds, naps and sleep training. This also shows that authors of the advice books are not homogenous in their writing but instead advocate for different and sometimes contrasting approaches. Some authors write from a very 'rule book 'orientation, where it lists what mothers can do and not do, whilst others emphasize looking to your baby for cues.

*The Bump, What to Expect* and *Baby Centre* which are the apps that my interlocutors used are based in the United States of America, with What to Expect and Baby Centre both owned by the Everyday Health Group (Everyday Health Group, 2018). This US-based corporation provides health education. As seen on its website, the group prides itself in its mission - "to

drive better clinical and health outcomes through decision-making informed by highly relevant information, data, and analytics". Although the apps recognise that they are used by women in different parts of the world and state that there is no one way of doing things as policies and women's experiences differ in the different countries they operate in, they still emphasise the reliability of their information on 'expert advice'. For example, Baby Centre has various country-specific websites, and they have content specific to the policies of a country. Still, even on those websites, the reliance is on medical professionals. With that said, the apps also claim not to pressure mothers into following specific advice. For example, the Baby Centre website states that; "We don't push you toward breastfeeding or formula, working or staying home, or pain meds for labour or unmedicated birth. Instead, we pull together the evidence and expert opinions, mix in the real-life experiences of other parents or parents-to-be, and serve it up to you. These are your factors to weigh and your decisions to make." However, in the same breath, the website states that; "The scientific *[referring to recommendations by medical doctors and scientists]* [11]method isn't perfect, but it's still the most reliable way we have to determine what works and what doesn't." Thus, what women see on the apps is presented as scientific expert knowledge and the most reliable knowledge.

Because of the positioning of health professionals and 'scientific expert knowledge' in the apps, some of the books and their gynaecologists, mothers saw it essential to always confirm with a health professional. This could be confirming how to feed, and how much, what to do with colic, how to handle the umbilical cord, especially at the beginning of the pregnancy and the new born stage. On wrestling with the need to check and confirm with her doctor, Zandile said: "You know sometimes even if you know, and you can feel it in your gut, you still want to make sure because you don't want to do something that could harm your child when you

[11] My own addition

had access to all this information". Zandile's words reveal two things, the value the mother placed on biomedical knowledge, at least earlier in their experience as a mother. Secondly, it resonates with Chwayita and the women in Rogerson (2016) in that, knowing the information and having the opportunity to make choices with regards to your pregnancy, childbirth and childcare meant that mothers are often worried about failing at 'birthing right', 'feeding right' and so forth. The choices and knowing came at a cost. Next, I turn to look at how fear was produced by the knowledge that the mothers had acquired and demonstrate the burden that came with 'knowing' and making choices.

Part of my participants' motivation to participate in this knowledge acquisition process even though their pregnancies were relatively low risk was due to the desire to be and to be seen as a 'good mother'. From an American perspective, Lee (2008:469) writes that a pregnant woman or the "good mother in waiting" is expected by health professionals, family and friends to be excited about the coming baby and aware of the range of risks awaiting the baby. A good mother is seen as one who continually finds ways to manage and mitigate the risks and threats to the baby's life such as alcohol, unhealthy food and stress. The mother must discipline her body and her desires and make lifestyle adjustments to manage these risks effectively during pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare (Lupton, 2011). Furthermore, the belief that once mothers are 'educated' about their pregnancies, their bodies and how to care for their children will lead to them making informed decisions and managing risk around reproduction better means that a lot of time, energy and money is spent mothers in efforts to educate themselves (see also Rogerson, 2016 and Marais, 2017). A phrase that I heard quite often in all of the interviews was a variation of "I did my research", "I did a lot of reading and watching stuff". Imaging technologies also provided new ways to see the unborn baby, which was an enjoyable part for my participants. For example, after the 4D scan, mothers

could now have conversations with their partners about who the child looks like and in a sense, 'made the pregnancy real' as they could see a real person in a picture. Lastly, the information and the technologies gave the mothers ideas on how to reckon with the knowledge they were receiving from their mothers.

**Knowledge Practices and Knowledge rituals**

> *I am a bit worried because I ate an apple today and I forgot to wash it before I ate it. I also went to Starbucks; I didn't have coffee because I am not sure how much caffeine is too much yet, but I read that I should avoid it. My biggest concern, though is that I had a ham and cheese sandwich. When I was looking at Baby Centre on foods to avoid tonight, ham was on the list. I hope the fact that it was warmed up will kill whatever it is that makes ham bad for baby* (Field notes, January 2018).

> *Today was Sibongile's baby shower. I saw Tinashe eat all the stuff that the apps and books say that you should not eat. It was so freeing. Tinashe is three months pregnant. She ate everything – the fish, the cold meat, the salad, the chicken (and it looked a bit red) … I was eating the pastries because I was scared to touch the meats and the raw veggies, dips, salads and fruits (I don't know how long they were out in the open for). Today I remembered the conversation Zandile, Chwayita and Sibongile were having last year about how free you must be when you are not always reading all these books and apps. Tinashe was really free… I want that. I wish I was that free (*Field notes, February 2018).

I opened this chapter and this section of the chapter with some of my moments of "feeling bad" or like I had done something wrong after I learnt that I was pregnant and realised that there multiple 'rules' of pregnancy that I had not adhered to. I had witnessed this guilt and worry from my participants as well. For example, Zizile was very stressed and said she felt guilty about the alcohol she had consumed before knowing she was pregnant. Thandi was extremely anxious about the sushi she ate and the fact that she kept up with her rigorous running plan before discovering the pregnancy. The mothers tried to avoid any further mistakes by reading a lot and implementing all the necessary things advised by their midwives, gynaecologists, and literary resources. They tried to follow the advice and to do everything they could to keep themselves and their children safe. The fear came from the

medical information they were reading which emphasised pregnancy as a time of vulnerability, risk and danger, and the stories other mothers shared online and on the apps about their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and child care. The stories the mothers read were often exaggerations; the fears were not even relevant for the middle-class women in my study who had clean running water, access to healthy foods and medical aid

Talking about the 'scary' information and discussions from forums in the Baby Centre app Vuyiswa said, "Some of the stuff was hectic though. Like other people started miscarrying, others had stillborn, others had babies with severe deformities which means they would be born stillborn, so others rather terminated. It was terrible… so some days I'm like no I don't wanna see this… You go on the internet when you, you know, when you are freaking out about something, I only ever go in there when I'm freaking out about something. It's not for good things; you don't go to the internet when you happy…" Due to the stories she had read and heard about caesarean birth (C-section) and its potential complications such as being in pain for 'too long' after the delivery, an epidural not working and therefore feeling pain during the delivery, the side effects of getting an epidural and never walking again, blood clots, bleeding out and dying 'on the table', Chwayita was not happy that she had to have a C-section. Her first baby had not turned as expected closer to the birth, and the doctor feared a breech birth and recommended a C-section. Thinking about the experience in an interview, she said:

> When I heard that I was going to have a C-section, I was devastated, just thinking. I mean, all the stories I had read and heard about C-section- when it's cold, *umthungo*[12] *uzoba b'hlungu* (the c-section scar will be painful) … Oh my gosh, and for the rest of my life. I was just like, Oh my gosh. that whole thing. Like, all those things that I had heard growing up all my life with people and had met so many people who had *imithungo*. There was a lady who came to help out at home at some point. And she had *umthungo* that was just bad. Her operation was her sickness [C-section wound]. Whenever it was cold, she would cover up with big blankets, and she would just sit

[12] A term used to refer to C-section and particularly, the scar.

> and wait for the pain to go away. She was just almost incapacitated by the fact that she had an operation. So, that was me. All those thoughts.

By contrast to Chwayita, Zizile chose an elective C – section because of all the stories she had read and heard about vaginal births. When we met for the second time, she explained that she is tired of people expecting her to have a vaginal birth, especially because people have no idea of the risks associated with vaginal birth. She relayed to me all the stories of vaginal births that had gone wrong. Imitating difficulty in breathing, she explained the dangers of childbirth for asthmatic mothers, excessive tearing, dying during childbirth that she had heard from friends and family. Just as was with Chwayita, all the complications she had read and heard about made her so scared, so she elected a C-section. Zizile was probably the most anxious person out of all my participants, and the more she read, the more worried she became. Responding to my question about how she is, she said, "… I'm in September [planned delivery month] in my mind, which is a better place, I think, mentally for me, because the first three months I was in stress mode. I was reading things, looking up things, I was thinking about every complication, everything that could go wrong and I'm finally at the point where I think I am relieved and I can just be in the pregnancy, and I think that's why now it's changed into this excitement. And, and the second trimester, as much as it is coming to an end now has been the easiest, I think as well." Although she was reflecting on having been too anxious at the beginning of her pregnancy, evidenced by her constant thinking about things that could go wrong, she started to be excited. For example, her fears about something going wrong during a vaginal birth prompted her to decide on an elective C-section. Her worries about something [an accident] happening to the baby after he is born prompted her to do a first aid course, in an interview, Zizile said:

> I do wanna do like a first aid course, that's been on the top of my mind because I'm just thinking that you know if anything should happen, both of us [her and her husband] wouldn't know what to do and you know with all these scary things that people scare you with when the baby is born, so you need to have basics, at least be

> able to do CPR, you know… I was speaking to another mother, and she had a baby who was, a premature baby, uhm so, and he also has sleep apnea, cause they bound to have sleep apnea, which just means they just stop breathing sometimes when they are sleeping. But if it continues, that's how you know uhm, cot death really takes place. So, in a case like that, you know or any other scenario that's similar, you just have to keep doing CPR until a medic or someone helps out.

It is apparent in the above excerpts that researching through reading and listening to other people' stories and knowing what could go wrong led to a lot of anxiety. For this reason, some of the mothers in my study wanted to limit how many stories they read and listen to but not necessarily leaving the apps or social media. For example, although some of her mom friends spent a lot of time on Facebook 'mom groups', Chwayita was not fond of it, in an interview she said:

> I don't want that; I just can't. I don't like it. Mimi does use it. Like, she'll go on mom pages and find out stories. What I hate about it is that you'll find stories that'll freak you out. Like, to a certain extent, I'm okay with empathising with someone who's gone through something. But, to a certain extent, it's just scary to hear of someone that's gone through something traumatic with their child. Because then I'm just imposing that on my child. What if it happened to me? I want to empathise, and I want to understand that bad things do happen, and it happens to normal people. But I'm just like, no, can I not have that reality? And that's the thing with social media. I've not used it.

Ironically, some mothers continued to use the apps and books even though they were aware that they could see much negative and fear-inducing information. Furthermore, although they knew that chances of something dangerous happening leading to death were slim for them as middle-class women in the South African context with access to good medical care, they still worried, particularly with the first baby.

**"Do You Wanna Do a Blood Test or Do You Wanna Pray"**

The mothers I worked with knew that they had little control over what happens in their motherhood journey despite how much they had read and prepared. No control over the pregnancy experience, whether or not they would carry their babies to term, have a safe birth,

have their birth go as planned, circumstances under which they raised their children and decisions about raising their children were all uncertain. In this section of the chapter, I suggest that when confronted with the inherent fears that surround pregnancy due to the risk narratives that surround reproduction and that saturate the literature they engaged with as well as other unexpected circumstances during their pregnancies, the mothers in my study who all identified as Christian (except Vuyiswa) used spirituality as a way of making sense of that which did not make sense and taking comfort. Additionally, faith was also another way of knowing that the mothers employed. I describe the mothers' stories, particularly moments where they relied on their faith to get them through challenging experiences during pregnancy, birth and in their experiences of mothering and a moment when the experience enhanced their faith and spirituality. In this thesis, my understanding of spirituality is shaped by Keating (2005),

> ...when I speak of spirituality, at the most basic level I am referring to in understanding of the self as encompassing body and mind, as well as spirit. I am also referring to a transcendent sense of interconnection that moves beyond the knowable, visible material world. This sense of interconnection has been described variously as divinity, the sacred, spirit, or simply the universe. My understanding is also grounded in a form of lived spirituality, which is directly accessible to all and which does not need to be mediated by religious experts, institutions or theological texts Keating (2005:253).

From the beginning, anthropologists have always encountered religious, spiritual and ritual expressions. They have always shown interest even though the initial perception was to consider them primitive practices and not reasonable beliefs. Anthropology has long since moved from that imperialistic and Eurocentric stance to seeing religion and spirituality as ‘valid’ aspects of people’s lives. One of the most popular works on religion and anthropology is that of Geertz (1993:90) who defines religion as “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions

with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". Geertz (1993) further says:

> The religious perspective differs from the commonsensical in that, as already pointed out, it moves beyond the realities of everyday life to wider ones which correct and complete them, and its defining concern is not action upon those wider realities but acceptance of them, faith in them. It differs from the scientific perspective in that it questions the realities of everyday life not out of an institutionalized scepticism which dissolves the world's givenness into a swirl of probabilistic hypotheses, but in terms of what it takes to be wider, nonhypothetical truths. Rather than detachment, its watchword is commitment; rather than analysis, encounter. And it differs from art in that instead of effecting a disengagement from the whole question of factuality, deliberately manufacturing an air of semblance and illusion, it deepens the concern with fact and seeks to create an aura of utter actuality (1993:112).

Thus, Geerts (1993) views religion as part of culture. Anthropologists such as Talal Asad (1993) have taken issue with the focus on religion as part of a cultural system, arguing that it is equally important to consider the power and political and economic factors. On the other hand, other scholars have considered religion a "matter of personal experience" (Hann, 2007:387). However, despite the interest in religion and spirituality seen through the ample research on shamans, healing, and ritual in anthropology, Hann (2007) argues that Christianity which was the religion in countries where anthropology was established has been often left untouched. This is because of Christianity's familiarity to anthropologists, leaving the research on churches that are viewed as suspicious by dominant Christian institutions and the connections between Christianity and colonisation instead of researching mainstream Christianity in Britain and the United States (Hann, 2007: 384). Outside of anthropology, spirituality and religion and their role in health-seeking behaviour and its association with a positive impact on one's wellbeing have been explored (Isaac, Hay and Lubetkin, 2016). This research is replicated on religious studies, feminist, health and midwifery literature that seeks to demonstrate the relationship between spirituality/religion and pregnancy, looking at how spirituality and religion influences one's motherhood practices (Holness, 2004; Callister and

Khalaf, 2010; Jones, 2016; Cheruvallil-Contractor, and Rye, 2016). In Midwifery and medical literature, leading with the underlying assumption or understanding that health includes emotional health and emotional and spiritual wellbeing calls for a focus on understanding in catering for spirituality for their clients/patients (Hall, 2006; Jesse and Reed, 2004). For example, midwives in Australia are expected to account for beliefs of the women they serve and respond to these needs with respect. This is written into their professional standards (Carver and Ward, 2007). However, Carver and Ward (2007) argue that although there is literature on the link between spirituality and pregnancy, there are no women's voices in the narratives presented. In these narratives, pregnant women tell their stories about their spiritual journeys and their spiritual needs. It is also important to note that, in all these studies, although spirituality for many might mean participating in formal religious structures, for other people, spirituality is not necessarily linked to particular/specific formal religious structures. This was particularly the case for one of my participants, Vuyiswa.

There are various ways in which motherhood is written about in literature about spirituality and religion. These include the idea that pregnancy is a spiritual event that allows for closeness with God (Hall, 2006; Athan and Miller, 2013; appeals to medical professionals to consider the spiritual needs of pregnant women (Crowther and Hall, 2015). Although my research is by no means a study of religion or Christianity, Christianity was a big part of how some of my participants made sense of their lives. So I look at religion in a Geertz fashion - how it is used to create meaning. I particularly look at how faith was used as a coping mechanism and how it was used to make sense of the childbirth, unexpected financial constraints, and sociality of childbearing. Speaking about the role of God, in an interview Chwayita said:

> Natural birth is a very crazy thing. And that's when you just know that you are God's and you are not your own. Because you have so little control over what happens. And

> the whole time, you're just like, you know what? Honestly, *la* (here), I can't do anything. It's just that thing… God takes over, and you then understand where your body came from and that you're just borrowing it for some time. This big thing that happens to you is a very God moment.

Chwayita's story is a reflection of all the birth stories from the participants. All of the mothers felt that none of the things they had read could have prepared them for childbirth and the feelings that come in the moments. Describing what Chwayita and other participants called a 'God moment' Zandile used her hands to demonstrate how labour pains escalate. She drew a graph in the air talking about how the excruciating labour pains keep going up a notch. "*Yoh, Ziyanda, ngikuxoxele indaba"* (let me tell you the story), Zandile keeps saying in short intervals. "In the room, before I gave birth.... with the nurses, everyone, *sathandaza* (we prayed)". "Ibuhlungu leyanto"/ "That thing is painful" as she described her labour, contractions and vaginal birth with no epidural. She concluded her birth story with, "God's grace and mercy is sufficient" because she felt it was only because of her prayer and belief in God that she could safely get through childbirth.

Zandile's faith around her pregnancy and her birth did not start in the delivery room. From the beginning of her pregnancy, she already had to draw from her faith. In her first consultation with her gynaecologist, Zandile explained that there was no heartbeat soon after a positive pregnancy test. In addition to there being no heartbeat, the gestational sack shape was not as round as Zandile's gynaecologist had expected it to be. Describing her thoughts and conversations in that consultation room in one of our interviews, she said:

> …this is why I say being a Christian becomes important. Because that becomes the point of departure between gynae and another. She [gynaecologist] said to us, "Do you wanna do blood tests?" So, this is what it is. You tell me what you wanna do. Do you wanna do blood tests or do you wanna pray?" And I was like, "*tjo*! what a... (laughs). What kind of decision is this?" But we said, "Look, we'd like to pray about it because I don't know... I don't know what would inform the decision for blood tests

> other than fear. I'm happy to do blood tests, either way out of faith." You get what I mean? Cause that [faith] ultimately guides everything.

Secondly, Zandile and her husband had planned to be pregnant later in the year. However, as soon as Zandile discontinued use of contraceptive, she conceived. They had begun the project of mothering before she was pregnant - to use the first half of the year to secure a bigger home, a bigger car and better work opportunities so that they could be financially comfortable by the time they have a child – that is, afford a bigger house, a bigger car and all the necessities they felt a child required. However, their plans around the pregnancy and income work opportunities did not go as planned as they conceived as soon as Zandile discontinued using contraceptives. When Zandile got pregnant, she and her husband were not as financially prepared as they would have liked to be. This caused Zandile a great deal of anxiety initially, partly due to the pressure to participate in pregnancy's consumerism rituals. “When are we going shopping?”, “When are you doing the nursery”, “When is the baby shower?” were some of the first questions her friends asked. These questions were stressful for her at the time because these were things she could not afford. These were things she had wished to participate in when she had her first child, but she could not participate due to circumstances. As Rogerson (2016) puts it “Currently, mothering, for middle-class women in South Africa is modulated by particular late modernist and capitalist orientations to maternity, health and care”. But even with this, Zandile says she prayed for peace and refused to allow financial insecurity that presented itself surprisingly when they were also pregnant to ruin what could be a joyous celebration of life.

Unlike Zandile, who was determined not to allow herself to think about her fears and did not want to act on them despite the number of things that were not going as planned, Thandi had many worries right at the beginning of her pregnancy. Her biggest concern was that she had

no medical aid. Similarly, to Zandile, Thandi and her husband had planned to discontinue contraception and try to conceive in the following year. They had planned to save money and cut out unnecessary expenses such as medical aid and join medical aid again later in the year so that by the time they start trying to conceive, she is back on medical aid. However, Thandi had to change from one contraception method to another, and it was in that transition period where she conceived. She had already cancelled medical aid, and they were buying a new home. She feared that she would not afford to give birth in a private hospital, especially with buying a new home. She then decided that she would have to give birth in a public community clinic. Still, as someone who had been on medical aid throughout her life, she had never experienced public health care beyond hearing horror stories, which scared her.

Prompted by this fear, she and I spent a lot of time researching alternative options that were not as expensive as private hospitals but had better conditions and reviews than public clinics. After reading the horror stories or birthing in public clinics, and agonising about not having medical aid to afford private care, Thandi decided to pray and have faith to counter the growing fear. Talking about her fear and her faith, Thandi said, "I'm sitting there, at some point and I was like, I might not come back with my baby. But it took a lot for me get myself to a point that, you know God. I will pray for that day. I will pray for everything, and that's it, I can't be fearful. I will pray for people *ababesenza leshift leyo* (working in that shift). I will pray for everything, and that's it, I can't be fearful…" After that decision to not be fearful and to instead pray and know that God will protect her and her unborn baby, Thandi decided that she will go ahead and give birth in a community clinic. Thandi ended up being induced at 42 weeks of her pregnancy as she was now overdue. However, she still did not give birth until 43 weeks of her pregnancy where the doctor suggested a C- section and her daughter was born. When relaying her birth story to me a few months later and encouraging me to pray

for a safe delivery she said, “Pray for the day of delivery, pray for the doctor and his team. It really helps. *Mina* (me) my team turned out to be Christian, even the doctor had prayer before the procedure. Dr Tumi [a Gospel artist] played in the background. Even when my blood pressure was high and they stabilised it, I was relaxed, knowing I am in good hands. Just pray. Remember I was uneasy since it was my first time in a public hospital. Maybe God delayed the birth to get that specific team together”. Here we see that for Thandi, during the pregnancy and during childbirth, God remained a consistent source of comfort and a way of making sense of her experiences.

Circumstances around what the mothers called ‘planned oopsie’ are when you are planning to have a child, but for some reason or another, you conceive sooner than you had hoped as was the case with Thandi and Zandile. This was also the same in Zizile’s case. Zizile conceived her son at her honeymoon, and as people who love to plan every detail of their lives with her husband, the pregnancy came as a shock, especially so early on in their marriage. Zizile was even worried about telling her husband at first because she felt that the honeymoon pregnancy happened “too soon before they could plan properly for a baby” – that is save for a house, save money to buy items such as car seats, strollers, baby clothes and all the necessities a child requires. Relaying the story in one of our interviews, she said:

> **…**you know before people used to say, God’s time, God’s time, but it was just a word. I am a spiritual being, but now it’s become like real, that God’s time is such a real thing and it’s perfect. Like I said, I think I was saying before that we always… me and Tim (husband) delay things, delay getting married, delay having children, having a baby and all of that, and just the way it happens. The fact that I went off the pill and I see that as God’s perfect and divine timing. Because had it been us discussing, our discussions were saying, ‘nah we’ll take it easy’, and now, he’s like the most exciting thing that’s happened to us, and we both excited for this new phase, you know. So, so yah I believe that, I believe in a higher power obviously, and I believe that everything is through God’s timing. And that’s obviously gonna have a big role in how we raise him as well.

As someone who as seen in the previous chapter had a lot of fear during her pregnancy, Zizile was worried about going into labour before the scheduled C-section, but in the same story she said, “If He [God] put him there, surely He’s gonna keep him there, till he’s ready.” And in her conclusion of the story of how she found out she was pregnant and how she felt about it, she said, “God’s timing can’t be argued with”.

In a similar situation to Zizile was Thembeka. Her second pregnancy's timing came as a shock for her and her husband as they had planned every detail of their first pregnancy after four years of marriage. The second baby came not long after the first very planned baby. “Even though she was not planned by us, she definitely was planned by God. She changed her sister’s life. If it weren’t for her, the sister would have been more reserved, and it would have been hard for her to socialise”, said Thembeka. For her third pregnancy which is when I met her, Thembeka had gone back to planning. She stopped using contraceptives and waited for a while, “it took time”, she said as she rubbed her tummy at our first meeting. After a series of negative pregnancy tests, she and her husband planned an international trip to visit a friend. Just before they left, they found out that she was pregnant and also that she had cysts. However, it was too early in the pregnancy to operate, and the cysts would not be a danger to her or the pregnancy, provided that there are no complications. Although Thembeka hesitated, she decided to go ahead with the planned trip. She had safely reached her holiday destination when a complication with the pregnancy occurred. “It was such a God moment”, she says as she describes how everything worked out well. Thembeka did not want to do a medical procedure far from home, and without a doctor, she knows and trusts. However, her friend, who is also her midwife contacted a doctor she trusts and had just returned from an international vacation. Although the doctor had not planned to return to work soon after their trip, they agreed to return and operate on Thembeka as a matter of urgency. Thembeka was in

awe that she could be operated on by a doctor she now trusted in a foreign country. She was also in awe that the doctor had returned “just in time” as Thembeka said. In time to conduct the procedure that saved the life of her unborn child. The series of events for Thembeka was an indication that God took control of a situation that she had no control over, “praise to God” she said as she concluded the story.

Although it was for different reasons, Chwayita also needed her faith to get her through some fear. Like all the women in the study, she had a ‘planned oopsie’ with her second child. Still, unlike Zandile and Thandi, she felt financially prepared -she was on comprehensive medical aid and could afford a private room at a private hospital. However, she remembered having a lot of fear as well in her first pregnancy. Describing her feelings and thought process after finding out she needed a C-section, in an interview, Chwayita said:

> You try to know everything. You read a lot. And when every little movement happens you read up on it. And you try to know everything, but you can't know everything. And when my daughter didn't turn it was weird, and I wondered what that means? And I got worried. And I worried about *umthungo (C-Section scar),* and I worried about what was happening and what's wrong with my stomach. What is it that's not making things work?... And then the tragedies that other people have experienced come up and you think what if it happens to you. But you just trust that that's not going to be your tragedy. And if something bad happens, God's going to be there as well. So, you just have to have that sort of mindset. Hard things are going to happen, but God will be there even if that happens. One of my husband’s family member gave birth to an albino child. And I was like, albino? And then I was like, it's their baby, and he is perfect, and there's nothing wrong with him. There would be nothing wrong with my baby if they were albino. And I was busy reading up on albinism. When will you find out? Can the doctor see when they're doing the scan? Down's syndrome. You think about all those things. But you think that even if it does happen, they would still be your child. And God would have ordained that you were going to go through that. And you will either learn something or other people will learn from it. And, you know, you will be the best mom to that child that has whatever condition. And so, it's just a big reliance on God and what he has seen fit for you to handle.

This faith is a point of departure for some. It relies heavily on a present God who will take care of your situation. It is also a faith that calmed the mothers as they used faith as a coping mechanism to make sense of the surprises and uncertainties. The faith did not necessarily

mean that the mothers did not have moments of fear, but they tapped into their embodied knowledge of faith and spirituality to make sense of and also counter that fear. The mothers carried beyond the fears and uncertainties surrounding pregnancy and childbirth and was also a big part of how they raised and cared for their children. Talking about her reliance on God as she raised her children, Chwayita made it clear that she realised early that her children had "inputs from the world" and others, not just her as a mother. And therefore, she was aware that her daughters could come home and say things she had never taught them and that they would have picked up from outside her home. This too she knew she had no control over even though she would have liked to. "*Ukukhula komntwana* (the growing of a child) just happens. And that's when you know that it's not you and it's not your wisdom. And it's not your greatness that makes it happen. But God also plays a big role in it. And so, for me, it's just made me realise how much I need to rely on God and know that there are certain things that I cannot control that I need to know that I can't control and therefore pray about it. And that's why when you're praying so much more, it's a lot of letting go…"

Whilst religion, faith and spirituality were only superficial in conversations with Zee, Vuyiswa was on a different spiritual journey from the other mothers who were all Christians. "Boo and I are currently questioning the whole… the role religion plays in our lives. So, spirituality wise, we meditate a lot in this house, that's just something we do, but religion, we don't quite get it yet." She was talking about how she misses church because of the practice of being at church and the community even though she "did not quite buy into Christianity anymore" as she phrased it. Although Vuyiswa and her husband were questioning religion's role in their lives, drawing from Buddhism, they loved meditating. Spirituality was a big part of how they led their lives and her pregnancy journey. "We don't necessarily follow their teachings, although there is something to pick from Buddhism… I'm a generally anxious

person, so when I'm feeling really anxious, it's [meditating] something I do. But also, just clearing my mind, because I felt I was over thinking a lot about everything in life. So, when I'm feeling a bit anxious or I feel I'm over thinking, then I need to meditate." Thus, even though it was from a different perspective, just like the other participants, Vuyiswa used spirituality to navigate anxieties and fears around pregnancy and birth.

This section is important to show that the knowledge practices described at the beginning of the chapter do not go alone but are accompanied by other ways of knowing. Oyewumi (2005) argued that if we consider knowledge in Africa, we have to contend with how religion is used to interpret the 'material world' and everyday experiences. Alexander (2005) suggests that there might still be discomfort for some scholars to associate themselves with religion as a legitimate way of knowing (and not the romanticism of religion or relating it to the belief that stands in the way of people pursuing 'legitimate scientific knowledge'). However, she argues that "the personal is not only political but spiritual" (Alexandar, 2005: 7).

**Merging old and new ways whilst tending to sociality**

> *My mother keeps saying "Kanene abantwana benu ngabaka google" (Your kids are Google babies). This happens every time I tell her about something I learnt on the internet or when I tell her about going to google for answers during my pregnancy. I guess I am not the only one who does this. In fact, I am pretty sure I picked this habit up from my participants last year (Fieldnotes, May 2018).*

My participants' mothers looked forward to their birth of their grandchildren. They were excited about the depth that pregnancy would bring into their relationships and bond created by the passing on of knowledge and tips. Their daughters were about to enter the world of mothering, and they as grandmothers had planned to guide them and show them how to do things. Some had travelled from far, leaving their homes to be with their daughters to support them after birth. Vuyiswa's mother was looking forward to travelling from Eastern Cape to

Gauteng to look after Vuyiswa and the new infant. Chwayita's mother was looking forward to travelling from KwaZulu Natal to Gauteng to look after Chwayita and the new infant. Zizile, Zandile, Thandi, Zee and Thembeka's mothers all resided in Gauteng and were able to stay with their daughters to care for their daughters and new grandchildren. When I was approaching my child's birth, my mother called to ask if I would be going to Cape Town to give birth or if she would be coming to me in Johannesburg. *"Kaloku xa usandula ukuzala, uyafika umama wakho okanye wena uye kuye okwethutyana akufukamise ade umntwana aqine nawe uphola" (*After you have given birth, your mother comes to stay with you or you go to her for a while *akufukamise* until the child is strong and you have healed) she said as she explained the *ukufukamisa* to me. Almost like a hen, the new mother is meant to rest and keep warm with her infant whilst her mother cooks for her, shows her how to bathe and dress the baby and helps her transition into motherhood. Although all my participants had been cared for by their mothers after childbirth, they did not use the term *ukufukamisa*. When I directly asked if they knew the term, they asked that I explain what it meant. When I did, they found the practice familiar and knew terms with similar meaning in the various languages spoken by my different interlocutors. *Ukufukamela* (IsiZulu)/*ukufakamisa* (IsiXhosa /*ho beha setswetse* (SeSotho) - all of these terms refer to the period where either one's mother or an older woman in the family comes to look after the new mother and new infant. Just as my mother explained, they come to cook, clean, teach you how to bathe the baby, how to deal with the umbilical cord, how to dress, how to breastfeed and so forth.

Post-partum practices such as the one described above and by my participants are not unique to South Africa but present in other societies. In some families, there are rules and regulations of the post-partum period. Some see it as a time for rest for the mother after months of pregnancy and birth. On the other hand, some believe it as an important time to protect the

new mother and child from evil spirits by ensuring they stay home until they are strong with no visitors. With the post-partum period being associated with the mother and new-born vulnerability, Stern and Kruckman (1983) provide a detailed account of rest and social seclusion rituals in the post-partum period in different contexts. These also include perspectives of the mother as impure after birth and set activities that serve to purify the mother after the seclusion period. However, these practices are not without critique. For example, Lama and Kamaraj (2015) write that some women have been denied vital nutrition necessary for lactating mothers due to certain foods' restriction in some cultural contexts.

The view of the post-partum period as not just associated with vulnerability of mother and child but protecting the family from the polluted mother after childbirth is recorded by Akoonyatse (2018) in her experience of the practice of *ho beha setswetsi.* She explains that this, not a practice welcomed by all mothers, although they might enjoy the rest aspect. The restriction might include using separate crockery and cutlery from the rest of the family, not seeing friends but only focusing on rest and breastfeeding and bonding with the baby, which Akoonyatse (2018) found frustrating. Akoonyatse's experience resonates with that of my participants. Unlike my mother's generation, which is the same as that of my participant's, the new mother, in this case, has access to information. Based on the information from their phones, books and professionals, they have made some plans – created birth plans, downloaded contraction timers and in a sense, "they know what to expect when expecting". They also have plans for the post-partum period - menus for themselves to promote breastfeeding, plans for their newborn, and should things not go according to plan. They have their midwives, gynaecologists, lactation consultants, and paediatricians easily accessible via cell phones. How do the new mothers then allow their mothers to continue with the sociality of pregnancy and birth through uku*fukamisa* and the specific post-partum practices the

grandmothers know and expect when a big part of their role appears to be replaced by technology and 'expert' knowledge? How do the grandmothers help with 'google babies' and new-mothers who want to host baby launches/welcoming, have friends visit in the hospital and their homes soon after birth? In their pursuit of 'expert Scientific knowledge', how do mothers ensure that they are not disconnected from the 'Motherline' which Naomi Lowinsky (1992) describes as:

> When a woman today comes to understand her life as a story from the Motherline, she gains female authority in a number of ways. First, her Motherline grounds her in her feminine nature as she struggles with the many options now open to women. Second, she reclaims carnal knowledge of her own body, its bloody mysteries and their power. Third, she makes the journey back to her female roots; she will encounter ancestors who struggled with similar difficulties in different historical times. This provides her with a life-cycle perspective that softens her immediate situation… Fourth, she uncovers her connection to the archetypal mother and to the ancient worldview, which holds that body and soul are one and all life is interconnected… (1992:13).

My participants, particularly Zee, Zizile, Vuyiswa and Thandi, favoured scientific and medical knowledge. Although it was important for them to hear stories from other mothers, including their mothers, they still trusted their doctors' knowledge as superior. Mothers of my participants sometimes went against what participants had already decided to do based on what they had read or what their doctor had recommended during the pregnancy and soon after birth. This tendency for grandmothers to go against mothers' wishes is mainly documented in literature about infant feeding where mothers choose to breastfeed exclusively as recommended by WHO and health departments. For various reasons, grandmothers decide to give the children supplementary food and medicines (Majombozi, 2015). This frustrated the mothers I worked with, especially those who wanted to figure out how to do things their way – their 'way' being whatever they had decided suits them best out of everything they had read from the apps, books, read/seen online and heard from their midwives and gynaecologists. For some of the mothers in my research, the pregnancy stage was a bonding time between them and their mothers, such that – the mothers were some of the first people to

know about the pregnancy. For Zizile and Zandile, their mothers were in the birthing room and seen as a big support source and 'brought us closer together' as often said by my participants when they were pregnant. However, their child's birth initially caused a lot of tension in their relationship with their mothers. Explaining tension with her mother and mother in law, Zandile had this to say in a WhatsApp conversation with me,

> I am such a lover of many of our mothers' ways; they are quite timeless and resourceful. They found ways, within constraints and just overall weird environments to raise kids. All that knowledge and expertise is invaluable, and I believe should be passed down and made available to us to use and apply… My main problem is then the presupposition that this establishes them as the parenting authority. It doesn't... At least not without our collaboration. Our mothers often want to prove to us that they know what they're doing, rather than work with us for what's best for baby. That's a power play, and a difficult one to navigate. They don't want to work with us, and they certainly don't believe that they can learn from us when it comes to our children. With both my mom and MIL [mother in law], [my son] has ended up in hospital or needing the doctor. For the MIL, she just doesn't understand eczema... And has subjected him to things that made me cry. With my mom, it's food and overfeeding, or giving foods premature of age, making him sick. I think they truly struggle to reconcile how all this education they want us to pursue, can make them feel like they are on a backfoot, and so the authority is re-established this way.
>
> *Mina* [me], I am in full support of *ukuba ugogo* (being a grandmother), even with its dynamics. But I think the sabotage is more about them as women and mothers, and survival vs. thriving. And *iqalwa kanjani* [how do you begin] that conversation when they struggle to, and may never see us as women who without the scars they have, are the very privileged youth that warrants their constant dissention and teaching. The infantilisation is being passed down through generations, shows up as part of the continuous mother wound... And gets minimised as outdated. We ourselves need to be more intentional about how we think about this if we are going to change it.

Much has been written about the mother and daughter relationship, particularly the tensions and disagreements that arise as daughters make different choices and decisions than those made by their mothers. Motsemme (2011) argues that where the relationship between mother and daughters is discussed, it is often filled with narratives of blame and conflict and dominated by western psycho-analytic and social learning theories (Hill Collins, 1991 as cited in Motsemme, 2011: 93). However, by adopting an African womanist perspective, one

can situate the dominant narratives of blame and conflict within "historically and contextually sensitive frameworks regarding the development of these relationships". The conversation with Zandile above is a retrospective one. By the time we had this conversation, two years later, she had already had time to process the relationships she had with her mother and mother in law, and by now, she already had a second child. I am starting here with this conversation with Zandile, which is, in a sense, to show the complexity of childbearing's sociality - particularly the mother and daughter relationship. Four years ago when Zandile had just had her son, the conversation would have been one that centres the tension between mother and daughter, but from Zandile, it is clear that this tension is located in more nuanced interaction and the hard work of building sociality. Her view is also empathetic to the mother. It shows an understanding of how historical contexts shape how the older generation and the younger generation interact – how grandmothers who felt they should be all-knowing and be 'helpful' are now competing with knowledge that was not as available to them as well as opportunities for the mothers and their infants that due to class and the racial history of South Africa would have been out of reach or not the priority for the now grandmothers. There were now opportunities for thriving and not just survival. On this Zandile and I continued to talk about the context where our mothers were denied and learnt to do without whatever was not essential for survival. Now they could not reconcile the 'new' and 'unnecessary' ways of mothering that new mothers were employing not just to survive but thrive in their mothering journey. This idea of thriving vs surviving was articulated well by Chwayita in one of our nterviews when she talked about being glad she had access to information and time to implement things and says;

> With the parents, they just got us to live and, you know, eat, drink, sleep. They took care of that part of things, but they weren't more concerned about motor skills and those kinds of things. They really weren't concerned about that stuff. A lot of stuff you only learned when you were in grade one. And you're just thinking, that was a long time to grow without knowing all of that stuff.

Zandile and Chwayita's sentiments reveal novelist Toni Morrison's views on love, and she puts it in her interview with CBS News, "Each generation has a kind of love. Some of it's really tough. What my mother's mother thought was love for her children was really staying alive for them. My mother thought it was love for her children to get a better place, maybe send you to college if you wanted to. What I thought was love for my children was giving them maximum freedom, setting an example of how you could make choices in your life". Although not about love for my participants per se, there were changes in the ways their mothers and they view childcare. In the end, Zandile understood this complexity. Now we turn to the process that got her to that point not just for herself but also for the other participants. In my interviews with Vuyiswa, her relationship with her mother featured significantly. For example, in one of our interviews, Vuyiswa said:

> I think it's [birth of her child] definitely testing mine and my mother's relationship, cause she's had a lot of say in my life for the longest time. And *ngoku* [now], I'm married, I have a child, and I need her to back off, and she does. But you can see, you can sense that it's hard to let go… *Ngoku* (now) she says, '*nika umntwana this*,' (give the child this) and I'm like 'hmm, okay', but I'm not going to do it, and she knows I'm not going to do it, I'm just saying just for *ukuba singa xabani* (so that we do not argue). So, I think she doesn't feel needed anymore… Abamameli oomama (Mothers do not listen).
>
> So the one night, I slept at 7 pm and woke up at 7 pm the next day. My mom was like, 'what did you do to my child' [asking the husband and new-born], 'why is she so tired?' I'm like 'well mother, I'm a mom' she was like, 'No you're still my baby.'
>
> So even when *umama* was like okay, with the nanny situation [her mother agreed to assist her in finding a nanny], I was I'll get back to you, let me talk to my husband first. I'm sure she was like …[makes a shocked face]. Also, I think it's the dynamics with my husband, versus the dynamics with *yena* (her) and her husband. Where with my dad, *ezinye izinto bebengazidiscussi nokuzidiscussa* (she does not discuss some things with him), she made decisions, uke *ubone* (you see). So *ngoku* (now), I'm talking to my husband about what?... What does your husband have to do with what needs to happen with the nanny?
>
> During the pregnancy, not really [referring to not much input from her mother]. But as soon as baby got here, I was getting large information *ukuba abantwana* (that,

> children) this, when I had you, *ndandinithambisa* i-Vaseline (I moisturised you with Vaseline)… '*abantwana abafani*' which means no two kids are the same which means just because something worked on this child, doesn't mean it's gonna work on the next one.

From this interview excerpt, we see how Vuyiswa's understanding of her relationship with her mother evolved and resembled the power play described by Zandile. In the beginning, Vuyiswa rejected suggestions from her mother and felt as though her mother was trying to 'take over' and do things her way without respecting Vuyiswa's decisions and so Vuyiswa felt that her mother was not listening to her. She then understood that her mother is also a mother and felt a sense of loss at not being useful or needed by her child. In that particular interview, Vuyiswa continued to sympathise with her mother as she for a second imagined what it would be like when her now infant grew up and did not need her anymore. She also started to appreciate some of the tensions between her and her mother were shaped by her mother, having a very different kind of marriage and co-parenting with her husband. Lastly, although her mother had a lot to say about how Vuyiswa must care for her child, she made suggestions regarding the baby's skincare and food. Reacting to the 'unnecessary' skin products that Vuyiswa had chosen to use on her daughter, her mother would insist on using Vaseline. However, Vuyiswa was grateful that her mother also recognised that no two children are the same. Vuyiswa's mother eventually 'softened' her suggestions. It became clear for her that she and Vuyiswa had different ideas on how to mother and she at the same time as Vuyiswa was reflecting on their differences, her mother began to do the same thing. This allowed Vuyiswa to search more freely without feeling a heavy expectation of taking up her mother's advice. She felt that her mother now understood that things that worked on her children might not work on Vuyiswa's children. Instead of outright rejections or ignoring suggestions, Vuyiswa began to explain to her mother why she has chosen specific products and chooses to feed specific food to her daughter even though these were things her mother

was unfamiliar with. And after a few months, Vuyiswa reported at some things 'being useful I guess' as she reflected on her relationship with her mother when she came to *ukufukamisa.*

Zizile, on the other hand, felt that there was not a lot of room to reject advice from her mother directly. This was partly because unlike Vuyiswa whose mother was in Eastern Cape and came to Vuyiswa's house after the birth, for Zizile, she stayed a few minutes' walk from her parent's house, and after the birth, she and her husband moved into their house. For example, her mother kept insisting that she needs more supplements, and after ignoring this advice for a while, Zizile eventually bought the pills and just pretended to take them. She knew that according to her apps and her gynaecologist, she did not need any more supplements. Still, she also did not want to exclude her mother and hurt her feelings by rejecting her suggestions especially since her mother had been very supportive during the pregnancy – bringing her dinners and any other tasks that she could no longer do comfortably. However, it was not with all things that Zizile could just pretend she has taken on the advice and suggestions. Sometimes she had to disagree with her mother and not take on her advice, especially after the birth and her mother could closely monitor If her suggestions had been taken or not. It was moments such as that the mother could use information from the doctor and apps and its language to articulate the 'scientific' reasons for not taking their mother's advice. For instance, when Zizile's son was teething, her mother insisted on teething beads that she (Zizile) 'absolutely hated'. She resisted this and explained to her mother using the information and language and alternatives from her apps to explain why teething beads were used and how they were no longer necessary. There were alternatives such as teething gels, biscuits and other teething toys. Although it really would not have made much of the difference if the baby had used teething toys or beads, the point was that Zizile did not like teething beads. She wanted her mother to recognise that this was her child and that there were

shifts in techniques in terms of how things used to be done and how she was not doing them. Instead of feeling rejected and ignored, her mother was also intrigued by the alternatives and wanted to learn more about methods that people in different parts of the world use for teething. Zee had a similar feeling about also teaching her mother and mother in law some things as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Even before Zandile had reflected deeply about her relationship with her mother and mother in law, she tried to find ways to include and not reject the grandmothers. Zandile's son had eczema, and her mother in law insisted on bathing him 'all the time' and moisturising his skin with Vaseline petroleum jelly. Her actions went against the child's dermatologist's advice who had emphasised that the child must not bath every day as that will dry out his skin and that he needed specific moisturisers. These did not include Vaseline petroleum jelly. However, her mother in law was adamant that babies must be washed every day and more than once a day to be clean. She could not see what was wrong with using Vaseline as she had bathed her children every day and moisturised them with Vaseline, and 'they turned out alright'. To explain her position on why the child cannot and must not be washed every day, Zandile used the information from her dermatologist, adopting the medical language she had received to explain baby skin conditions and how to treat them. Also, even though bathing every day and using Vaseline is not in itself wrong and other babies were fine with it, it could not work with her child because of his skin condition. These kinds of conversations were very prevalent in the Baby Zone room. The mothers exchanged stories of what their mothers were currently insisting on regarding the pregnancy; the child, advice on breastfeeding and how to deal with the post-partum body. These were sometimes said as complaints and frustration on how forceful grandmothers can be.

Although there were many frustrating moments, there were also many moments where these stories were shared as jokes and times when the mothers were grateful for their own mothers' presence and support and advice. Talking about being a confused new mother, in one of our interviews Chwayita said:

> But what helped is when my mom came, because that [feeling of not knowing what to do] went away. Because at times where I was feeling like that, I could ask my mom a question, and she could tell me what she thought. My daughter had a bad rash those first few weeks. It was bad. And I wasn't sure what it is. And my mom had all sorts of solutions for that. And I was worried about the solutions she was providing. Because she said, we must put calamine. And I was unsure if you can use calamine on a new born. And I googled it, and there was no real answer about it. It was just that it makes the skin dry. And if it's eczema, her skin going dry is just the worst thing. So, at some point, I did put calamine because I was just so desperate. I also sent a message to the sister [midwife] who had helped us with our antenatal classes. But then it was around December, and she was on holiday. But she did reply. She said it might just be baby acne. So, don't worry, it'll pass. Just make sure that you just keep her moisturised. Use Epimax. And don't bath her too often.

From Chwayita's example, we also see the relief that can come with having your mother's support. Amid the tensions and differences, the mothers appreciated having help around. They also found other ways to relate to their mothers that did not include the points of contention. They were grateful to their mothers help and allowing them to rest. In Chwayita's story, we also see an example of tinkering, a process mothers went through as they searched for best possible care for their children. Chwayita tried to use calamine to alleviate her daughter's eczema as suggested by her mother. However, she worried that it continued to dry her skin and continued searching online and consulted with her midwife who then suggested Epimax lotion which she then used and saw better results.

Vuyiswa had a lactation specialist to address her milk supply issues. However she still found it important to have her mother present and show her how to position her baby when she was learning to breastfeed. Zizile on the other hand had relied on medical advice in her breastfeeding experience, however, when she was dealing with engorged breasts, she relied

on her mother for immediate assistance who then prepared cabbage leaves for her to relieve the engorgement. The mothers in my study relied on their own mothers for prayer, support with house chores and someone who shared stories of their anxieties with being a new mother. Put together; all these examples show us two things. They show us that although the mothers were convinced about the importance of adopting 'expert scientific knowledge', they also understood that a child's birth was also about relationships. Thus, it was also important to nurture relationships with their mothers and to maintain sociality of pregnancy and birth as part of human relationships. Secondly, as time progressed, the mothers grew to see their mothers' knowledge as something they could add to their information collection even if they did not necessarily always use it. Mothers began to understand what had shaped the information that came from their mothers and began to consider it as part of the knowledge pool and consider it as knowledge to be reckoned with. Instead of an outright rejection, they began to see how the suggestions could work in some contexts and sympathetically explained how and why they could not work in their contexts.

The mothers found ways to navigate the problem of wanting to 'do mothering yourself in your own way' and needing to create a form of sociality with pregnancy and infancy and carefully tending to relationships with their mothers. This sometimes meant accepting your mother's advice even though you will not act on it as it was with Zizile and the extra supplements. Sometimes it meant acknowledging your mothers' advice as legitimate information suitable for some context and explaining why it will not work in your particular case. Sometimes it meant taking on your mother's advice even if it is due to desperation as in Chwayita's example, even if you first cross-reference her advice with other sources. As the discussion above has shown, women triangulated different information sources, frequently using information from literacy sources to inform themselves and navigate others' advice. In

so doing, they had to take care not to offend the live sources of information – often their mothers – while also shaping their knowledge practices. The above also shows power relations between mother and daughter and how although, in literature, the focus is usually on the power that health professionals have 'over' mothers, there is also a power dynamic between mothers and daughters that play out when a grandchild is born. However, even in this power dynamic, mothers eventually learned to appreciate the Motherline stories. Thus we can see here that although daughters may have some tensions and conflicts with their mothers, eventually the daughters yearn to be connected to their mothers and through stories, sharing meals, they were still able to experience the connectedness and sociality and an opening of a different kind of communication about sexuality that was previously not explored. The kind that allowed my mother to encourage me to spend time with my husband and go '*ndiyoshinisa iring'* loosely translated as 'go polish your wedding band' and speaks to spending quality time and not forsaking sexual relations as I now shift focus to being a mother.

**"I know my child": Decision making and growing intuition**

> *Today at church in the Baby Zone room, the moms seem to all have come at the same time to fetch their babies. It was really nice though because instead of just picking up their babies, they stayed and were chatting. They talked about how people sometimes treat moms like they do not know their children when they are the ones with this child day in day out and obviously have the children's best interest at heart and all the decisions they make, even if they go against what the doctor said or what their own mom said is still for the best of their child because something inside of them always tells them what to do. What was more interesting for me though was that they further spoke about the connection that they have with their children and echoing the comments on connection, Zandile talked about the first time she met her son she said: "It was like I am meeting someone I have always known. And I was like, sawubona, sawubona Ayanda". This comment was followed by a resounding "Yaaaas" in agreement from the other moms in the room. They proceeded to share stories of when people (Drs, moms, friends) did not believe when they tried to explain that 'something' was not right, and it turned out that they (the mothers) were right (Fieldnotes, November, 2017).*

Thembeka who was pregnant with her third child at the beginning of my fieldwork remembered how scared she would be after reading some of the apps and books, but now, she felt she just knew what to do next and had no reason to read all over again demonstrating how over time, the knowledge had become embodied. As the pregnancies progressed for some and the children grew older, some mothers found different ways of engaging with the information. As opposed to constantly worrying and seeking a health professional's approval to calm their fears, the mother began to trust themselves and their intuition.

Oaks (2001: 25) states that "Part of being a good mother-to-be is determining which advice is best and then following it". In this text, Oaks (2001) explains how mothers then get to this decision 'rationally'. They consider information such as how many children does the doctor have, how many children has my mother raised, who else has encountered a situation similar to the one I am facing – and based on that, they decide on what would be the best decision to make or rather, whose advice it makes more sense to follow. However, as clear in the extract above, the mothers I worked with relied on more than 'rational' ideas on who knows best or has more experience on a particular topic. I argue that coupled with the embodied experiences of childbearing, embodied spiritual knowledge, engagement with scientific knowledge and 'lay' engagement with knowledge from their mothers' experience, intuition was created. Mothers then relied on their intuition to navigate their way out of the midst of information overload that they were both confronted with and sought after. Thus, the intuition did not come 'out of nowhere' or some innate 'natural' response of mothers but was a product of the process of embodying knowledge after having done the tinkering with the information, noting their experiences and those of others around them. My participants' experiences resonate with those of midwives in David-Floyd and Davis (1996). Davis-Floyd and Davis (1996) argue that intuition is a way of knowing in midwifery. Most importantly,

they stress that although many devalue intuition because of wrongly associating it with a lack of scientific knowledge, intuition is instead built on embodied knowledge and experience.

The mothers spoke a lot about 'trusting their gut' and following their intuition or feeling inside' over and above listening to advice from friends, mothers, doctors and books. For example, speaking of the importance of 'listening to her instincts', Vuyiswa said, "In the first few months of motherhood I relied heavily on my midwife, paediatrician etc. I've learnt to trust my instincts now. If something doesn't seem right the number of google articles will not convince me otherwise." Continuing to talk about having a feeling that something is not right with her son she said, "I've read up on it. We've consulted his paediatrician, and we're still not convinced". It took time for my participants to trust their intuition. Although they shopped around for knowledge, at the beginning of their journeys as mothers, they still relied heavily on medical knowledge. They would filter their doctors' advice through their doctors as seen at the beginning of the chapter from Zandile. However, as time went by, they 'trusted their intuition' and guarded against anything that required them to do something that "was off", that they had "a bad feeling" about, that they had a "gut feeling about" or that was just against their intuitive feeling. These examples from above coupled with others in the previous chapter show that instead of just being there as an innate natural response, intuition grew or was produced over time. Mothers then began to trust the intuition generated by a series of embodied knowledge(s) and experiences.

For example, when I followed up with Thembeka on her comments about gut feeling and intuition, she said "It's [intuition] everything, I trust it. Even more than a doctor's opinion. I use it to choose nannies, everything- it's a maternal instinct. I've kicked myself every time I ignored it" In a similar conversation with Zizile she said, "Intuition is probably how I sum up

my entire motherhood journey. My mom would want us to do this or that, and if it didn't feel right to me, that was that really". The mothers understood that the connection they have with their children was not to be taken lightly and that most importantly, their intuitive knowledge which is shaped by an amalgamation of ways of knowing outlined in chapter 6 has more value than any knowledge from a medical professional, articles, friends and family alone. Zandile captured hers and those of the other mother's feelings on intuition perfectly when speaking about being caught between feeling the need to exclusively breastfeed as recommended by her paediatrician and her instinct that the child is not satisfied, as well as being caught between some of the recommendations from the dermatologist for her son' skin and feeling like she does not want certain products. She said, *"yeyam lengane, ngiyayazi ingane"/ This is my child, I know my child and this child does not get enough food [referring to exclusive breastfeeding not being sufficient]*. So after this, Zandile went ahead and purchased formula even though she was well aware of breastfeeding literature and branded herself as a breastfeeding advocate. Coupled with pressures at work and exhaustion from a new baby and lack of sleep,

**Pulling together the fragments**

Thus far, I have described the various resources that my interlocutors engaged with, how they made them feel, and how they decided in a sea of excess information that sometimes pulled them into a different direction. How does all this sit with my arguments on 'conscious'/'woke' mothering? There is a notable tension here. This chapter highlights the tensions that arise when one is engaged in the process of learning and unlearning. In the introduction chapter, I describe mothers who are in the process of forming a consciousness about what it is to raise Black children in a racist South Africa and the importance of acknowledging the intellectual capability of Black people. However, those very same

mothers in this chapter place an enormous trust in 'scientific knowledge' without questioning much of it. It's linked to colonisation; it's linked with the west; in fact, they in some ways unreflexively consume information from American based pregnancy apps. Although they are reckoning with ideas of decoloniality (which is described in more detail in the next chapter), things from the west, they end up with 'google babies' and not as intent as I would have expected on drawing from the knowledge of their Black mothers as I would have expected. Although they draw from different sources, these sources mainly focus on so-called scientific knowledge and resources that are all specifically designed by the west. However, this changed overtime. In the beginning, the mothers adopted scientific knowledge without questioning it and they doubted knowledge from their mothers. However, with time, they began to reckon with knowledge from their mothers and navigated their way through the different sources and types of knowledge whilst also being intentional about tending to relationships with their mothers.

This shows that the forming of consciousness is a process. Although in some areas, one might have something 'figured it out', other areas might take a bit longer. Thus how the mothers engaged with knowledge, particularly during pregnancy and soon after childbirth seems to be disconnected from how they wished to raise their children. However, also considering their reliance on spirituality and clear understanding of the limits of the scientific knowledge they eagerly seek and also the political knowledge of Black existence are not at odds with each other but rather show us that the mothering journey in its fullness involves many complexities and sometimes contradictions and the forming of consciousness in whatever area is complex. These tensions do not end in the prenatal, pregnancy and infant stages but we will continue to see them in the last two ethnographic chapters as the mothers grapple with practical ways of instilling Black pride in their children.

## Conclusion

This rather large chapter explored the ways of knowing that mothers engaged with. There was the ‘expert scientific knowledge’ that my participants felt they needed to know to qualify themselves as good mothers and be qualified by others as good mothers, which was an experience that resonated with studies of middle-class motherhood. I demonstrated how this constant research and self-education that the mothers took part in also produced anxiety and worrying. This chapter moves on to discuss spirituality and shows how in addition to the scientific knowledge, mothers drew on their embodied spiritual ways of knowing and used their faith to counter the fear induced by the scientific knowledge and as a coping mechanism for other issues of pregnancy that produces uncertainties and insecurities. I end this chapter by looking at the aspect of sociality in pregnancy. While shopping around for knowledge and tinkering with it, mothers also wanted to nurture their relationships with some of the live sources of information in their lives, particularly mother and mothers in law. In this, I show the mothers tread carefully as they try to figure out knowledge that will shape how they raise their children, which included amalgamation of the scientific knowledge, information from their mothers' lived experiences, and spiritual embodied knowledge.

# CHAPTER 5

## Mothering In The Decolonial Moment: Exploring Parenting In Context Of Social Transformation




*Figure 4: Screenshot of a Facebook pregnancy announcement.'*

In late 2016, Zandile and her husband announced their pregnancy on social media with the text image shown above (Figure 4) with a caption that reads, "… he's been cooking, readying himself to join the ranks … #ComradeBaeby[13], #ChasingUhuru[14]". The text image itself reads, "Some ask why bring a child into this world? A world with war, hate and injustice. We say why not add to the ranks of soldiers who bring hope, faith and love. January

[13] Initially, the term was used mainly on social media to refer to attractive male students involved in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall students protests, combining the words 'bae' – (a slang used to refer to a romantic partner) and 'comrade' (fellow soldier, ally, partner). However, the term is now use is used more generally as a term of endearment for people who are activist or are actively involved in political matters and is still biased towards attractive 'political' males on social media.

[14] Uhuru is 'freedom' in Swahili. '#ChasingUhuru' means 'chasing freedom'. This hashtag, along with #NotYetUhuru are used when taking about the struggles of Black people that have continued to exist beyond the end of colonial rule in African countries. The term also relates to pan-African struggles…See Badru (2012) for more on Pan-Africanism.

2017… Welcoming Comrade Baby". Friends commented and relayed their excitement about the 'reinforcements' in the 'ranks of soldiers'. Some were excited about the new 'leadership' and the new 'revolutionary'. Many of her friends were excited about how God has used birth 'to declare His truth amid chaos and conflict' and wondered what truths God wanted to show or say with this new baby's birth. There was no engagement between the friends commenting on these two perspectives – religious and political. However, the mother engaged people from both views. For the Zandile and other commenters, these were not mutually exclusive perspectives. As such, in one comment, someone could write about the baby from both a 'religious' and 'revolutionary' perspective, as displayed in Figure 5 (below).

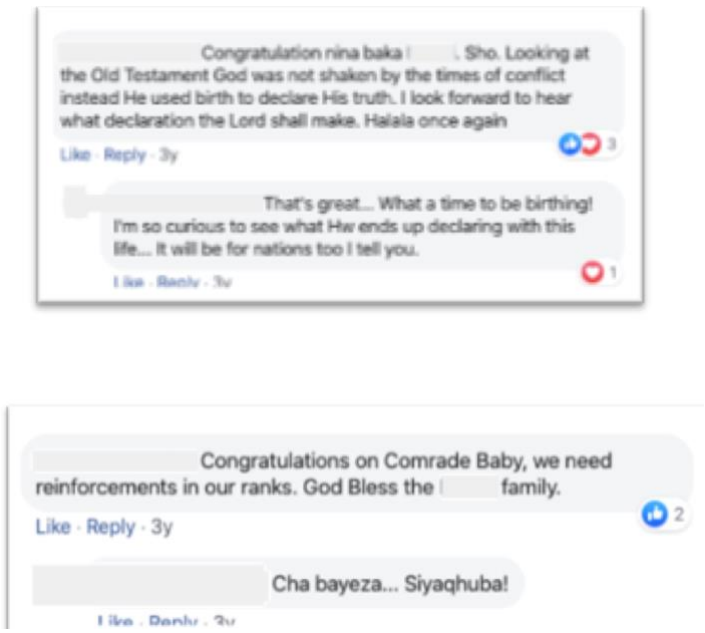


*Figure 5: Comment section on Zandile's pregnancy announcement*

Similar statements to the ones made on Zandile's post were made when Black Land First deputy president, had her baby in September 2019, see Figure 6 below. The statements made on Zandile's Facebook post in 2016 and later on BLF deputy president's Facebook in 2019 reminded me of words that had been uttered by Julius Malema in early 2016.

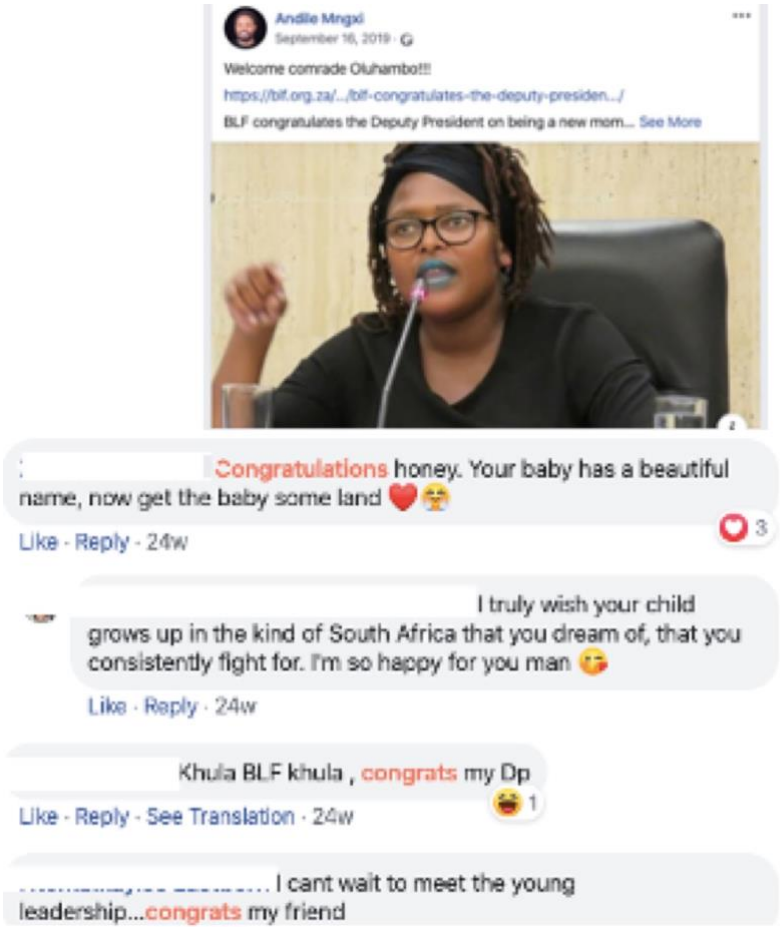


*Figure 6: BLF DP birth announcement*

In April 2016, Julius Malema - the leader of a South African political party called Economic Freedom Fighters, urged Black people to have children. Addressing the people in Soweto Malema said;

> Give birth and expand because if we do not make children, we are going to disappear as a Black nation. To make children is a revolutionary duty, because children represent reproduction of society. And when you reproduce yourself, you reproduce your ideas and legacy…. (Mabuza and Goba, 2016).

Julius Malema's remarks are not unique in the South African context. They surprisingly resonate with the Afrikaner Nationalism *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) ideology. Therefore, Malema's politically motivated call to Black people to have more children to fulfil 'a revolutionary duty' forms part of a historic politicisation of childbearing, motherhood and by extension, women's bodies. This is demonstrated best by population control efforts that

took place both in colonial and apartheid South Africa to curb the growing Black population (Brown, 1987; Chimere-Dan, 1993; Kaufman, 2000)[15].

**History of politicisation of birth in South Africa**

In apartheid South Africa, the apartheid government justified the blatant measures to reduce Black fertility with the argument that overpopulation would lead to poverty and that there were too many Black people reproducing. The growing Black population was met by rigorous population control measures by the apartheid government. The government feared that the growth in the population of Blacks also led to the growth of unemployed Black people. Brown (1987) traces the development of the National Family Planning program launched in 1974 - apartheid South Africa and argues that "The term 'population control' with its double entendre of population limitation and domination over people is the appropriate phrase to describe South Africa's programme" (1987:237). In urban South Africa, the programme was advertised as one where women could willingly use a contraceptive, but multiple strategies were used to coerce Black women to use birth control. More drastic measures included forced sterilisation of Black women should one refuse to willingly use contraceptives (Brown, 1987:61; Burns, 2004). Alongside the efforts to reduce the Black population by putting measures in place to curb the ability to reproduce by Black women, measures were also put in place to promote the White population's growth. White women were encouraged to have more children which meant that apartheid government would get more skilled labour from White people, thus benefiting the national economy. Furthermore, the state also provided incentives for White families who chose to have more children as this aligned with their wishes to grow the White population (Brown, 1987).

[15] Also see Anne McClintock (2013) 's *Imperial Leather*. She gives an account of the genealogies of the politicisation of reproduction on a global scale and provides an analysis of the socio-cultural climate of Victorian Britain and how power and discipline in relation to reproduction looked like in Apartheid South Africa.

The governments' family programme that offered contraceptives and sterilisation to Black women was met with rejection and distrust by political leaders in the Black community. Many suspected that the programme was politically motivated. This was the case specifically for Black leaders in the African National Congress (ANC). Along with other organisations, ANC leaders issued a counter call for 'freedom babies' – encouraging Black women to reject birth control and have more children instead. Kaufman (2000) further describes such attempts by African organisations and says;

> In 1988, Mr Stephen Sihebe, the minister of welfare and pensions in the former homeland of KwaZulu, stated that every extra African child was a boost for freedom and that, even if big families had to do without the 'bare necessities' of life in the name of the liberation struggle, sacrifices had to be made (SAIRR,1988)… In 1987, the director of community affairs for the Urban Foundation, Mrs Deborah Mabietsa, claimed that the government was using birth control to ensure White control (SAIRR 1988), and Sister Bernard Ncube, president of the Federation of Transvaal Women, stated that contraception was a 'safe way of murdering a nation' (The Star, March 18 1986), a sentiment seconded by Regina Nzo, a leading figure in the ANC Women's League (Weekend Mail, October 5–11 1990)... In Cape Town in 1985, a noticeable, albeit temporary, drop-in clinic attendance occurred subsequent to one political call for more Black children (Cape Times, July 19), and in Port Elizabeth in 1986 clinics were forced to close because of threats and intimidation (Weekend Post, November 8). The political call for 'freedom babies,' or 'people's rejection of population control' seemed to have more to do with political positioning than with the constraints of women's lives. Family planning was a White-controlled programme and thus a political target (Kaufman, 2000:109)

The politicisation of childbearing in South Africa went beyond population control and the encouragement of White women to have children but extended to a politicisation of the concept of motherhood through the *volksmoeder*/mother of the national ideology. Brink (1990) traces the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) ideology to the post-Anglo-Boer War in the late nineteenth-century. At this time, a generation of Afrikaner Nationalists was concerned and feared degeneration of the Boers and wanted to instil a nationalist ideology. The 'volksmoeder' concept that translates as 'mother of the nation' is a role created and

designed by men and readily accepted by women. This role emphasised Afrikaaner women's need to bear and raise children whilst also preserving the purity of the White Afrikaner race (Brink, 1990). The *volksmoeder* ideology was immersed in Afrikaner Nationalism, which aimed to preserve identity and personhood that they felt was threatened post-South African war. Through education, media and the church and what Van der Merwe (1994:52) refers to as 'Nationalistic Patriarchal Christianity', an ideal domesticated Afrikaner woman who would take care of her husband, bear and raise children, teach them their language and preserve the culture was constructed. This idealised womanhood and motherhood were portrayed as a female hero - characterised by sacrifice and suffering and who would do anything to ensure her husband and children (Brink, 1990; Kruger, 1991; Du Toit, 1996; Du Toit, 2003). This ideal woman's most emphasised role was to bear and rear children who would be the foundation and bring about social change for the Afrikaner nation. Thus, as Du Toit says, "Mothers were called upon to rear children not only for the community of the church but also to build a people defined by language" (Du Toit, 2003:165). In her analysis of speeches and magazines from this period in Afrikaner history, Kruger (1991:233) notes that "Afrikaner women's reproductive function belonged to the *volk*. In bearing and rearing their children, in the ostensibly private sphere of her home, Afrikaner women were working for the *volk*."

Scholars have pointed out the contradiction and complexities of Afrikaner women. They appeared to serve Afrikaner Nationalism passively and displayed a commitment to birth and raise an Afrikaner nation by promoting Afrikaner ideals, teaching children about God and teaching children 'pure Afrikaans' and protecting the traditions of the *volk* from foreigners (Du Toit, 1996; Du Toit, 2003:161; McClintock, 1991). However, women also played a role in creating and promoting Afrikaner Nationalism and the ideology of *volksmoeder*. Kruger

(1991:338) suggests that although the women were constructed as passive subjects, “they remained mobile within this discourse: always negotiating, planning, creating and articulating new identities and roles for themselves”. More of this becomes clearer as demonstrated in (McClintock, 1991; Du Toit, 1996 and Vincent, 1999) who suggest that although Afrikaner women’s magazines and women’s organisations emphasised the domestic role of women in the household as mothers and wives, women also carved out a political role for themselves through the construction of a 'maternalistic' and nationalist discourse. This approach showed an understanding of a distinction between men’s issues such as matters of the state and women’s issues at home as designed by men through the *volksmoeder* ideology. However, women also used the *volksmoeder* ideology, which presents them as people responsible for the people of the nation to argue that they needed to go beyond the household but into other spheres in Afrikaner society. Thus, they played their wife and motherly roles but simultaneously extended their reach in planning and negotiating around welfare programmes, their funding from the state, mobilising for the right to vote and the charity work they engaged in for poor Whites (Kruger, 1991; Du Toit, 1996; Vincent, 1999).

Afrikaner Nationalism and by extension, *volksmoeders* created conditions for Black people that mirrored those created by the British for Afrikaners. Poverty, poor health and generally poor living conditions necessitated ideological and practical strategies for Black people to survive. The African National Congress liberation movement ironically used a similar ideology to that used in Afrikaner Nationalism – ‘mother of the nation’ (Kruger, 1991:331). Gaitskell and Unterhalter (1989) note some of the differences between Afrikaner Nationalists' volksmoeder discourse and the ‘mother of the nation’ discourse by the African National Congress (ANC). Unlike the *volksmoerder* discourse that initially imagined a domesticated, sacrificial and apolitical Afrikaner woman, the ANC discourse from the onset emphasised an

imagined strong woman, an '*imbokodo'*[16] who was also politically active – birthed the children for the revolution that she was also fighting for alongside her male counterparts. Although there were differences in the Afrikaner Nationalists and the ANC discourse, they had in common an idea of a 'mother of the nation'. She births and carries a nation, albeit in somewhat different ways. In all these statements, we see how birth and motherhood can be instrumentalised to political ends whilst also displaying a subjugation and perpetuation of gender roles of women being relayed to the private and domestic sphere. However, Ross (2000) cautions against tying women as activism too tightly with their roles as mothers and shows that although that role is important, they also politicise other issues. She says,

> Although motherhood was important in mobilising women, it would be misleading to suggest that their political conscientiousness was simply derived from their children's activities in protest. Young women were mobilising by other means, including peer education and their experiences of violence... Some of those mobilised under the rubric of 'mothering' drew from a powerful political critique generated as a consequence of appalling working conditions on farms and in factories and the establishment of and forced removals... (2000:187).

The South African story told above offers a good example of Handwerker's (1990:1) argument that "The birth of a child is a political event. So is its absence, for any or all of the events that comprise human reproduction may be part of a strategy to acquire or extend power, may create new ties of dependence or may provide a means to break ties of dependence…". Handwerker (1990) further suggested that although having or not having a child is personally significant to individuals, it is also about power relations and can involve states, policymakers, governments and many who have power or wish to acquire it. Thus, although a deeply intimate and personal event, the birth of a child and motherhood is political.

[16] This term is part of the phrase *'wathint' abafazi, wathinta imbokodo'* (You strike a woman, you strike a rock) – words from one of the resistance songs sung by women during the 1956 Women's March against pass laws in South Africa, led by The Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). The song symbolizes the strength, bravery and courage of women. Drawing from the same sentiment, the hashtag #MbokodoLeads was used by students during the 2015 students protests in South Africa – highlighting the role of womxn in the protests. See Dlakavu (2015) and Clark, Mafokoane, and Nyathi, 2019) for more recent discussions on the phrase.

**Politics and Birthing of Children Today**

Although it might look as though Zandile and Zanele Lwana (BLF Deputy President) were playing into the patriarchal notions of motherhood evident in the descriptions of *volksmoeder* that I have provided above, I argue that Zandile's experiences show us a side we do not often see. Beyond the politicisation of motherhood and more of the politicisation of mothering. A focus on how governments have politicised motherhood does not necessarily show us how women engage politics in their mothering practice which is what I am interested in this chapter. How the mothers I worked with weaved in the political in their everyday practice of mothering.

The mothers I worked with encompassed wokeness. The term 'woke' was popularised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement through the hashtag, #StayWoke which often accompanied Facebook and Twitter posts reporting police brutality and racism. The term was used to raise awareness and call people to critically think about social issues such as racism, patriarchy, homophobia, inequality and social justice. Thus drawing on that description of the term, I refer to my interlocutors as 'woke mothers'. In this thesis, a 'woke mother' is a mother who is aware and critically thinks about race, sexuality, social justice, etc [17] . Having noted in the previous chapter that like all people, my interlocutors are complex and sometimes contradictory, as I tell their stories in this chapter you will see the tensions that arise as they practice mothering and wokeness.

[17] See https://splinternews.com/how-woke-went-from-Black-activist-watchword-to-teen-int-1793853989 for a discussion of the terms 'woke'.

**"What a time to be birthing!": The Context that Birthed the 'Woke' Mother**

Before I describe the context which I call the 'Decolonial Moment', a context in which my interlocutors were mothering in, it is important to note that decolonisation itself is not a moment. My use of the term 'moment' as a singular refers to the most recent past of student protests but I fully acknowledge that it was preceded by several significant decolonial 'moments'. There are various 'decolonial moments'/ 'key historical moments' that together form part of a long and historical trajectory of fights against racism, against apartheid and for decolonisation. Therefore, in this thesis, whilst I describe a singular decolonial moment, I conceptualise 'decolonial moments' as various defining moments in the history of the fight for decolonisation in South Africa. Thus, my use of 'decolonial moment' in this thesis is not to trivialise decolonization or to ignore its rich history, instead, it is to zoom in on a very particular and defining moment in contemporary South Africa whilst noting that there has been a series of decolonial moments.

The term 'moments' is a popular one when describing key events/moments in the decolonial turn. One can see its use in Maldonado-Torres (2011), where he describes the genealogy of what he calls 'the decolonial turn'. Along the same lines, Mignolo (2011) describes some 'historic moments' within decolonisation movements. Furthermore, Rebollo (2018: 71) conceptualises 'decolonial moments' as "fleeting occurrences that are likely to be missed in so much as they are spearheaded by subjects, who by virtue of their class, race, and/or gender are relegated to the background of our socio-political landscape". More recently, in his seminar presentation to the Institute for Humanities in Africa located at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town, Toyin Falola discussed what he calls 'decolonial moments'. In the seminar, he described decolonial moments in this way, "The labels "decolonizing" and "de-colonial moments" encapsulate defining moments within the periods

after the Second World War (1945+), from the start of political decolonization (the 1950s) to the present time. The era concerns the identification of watershed moments in the course of the advancement of decolonization". His discussion of decolonial moments forms part of Toyin Falola (2022)'s forthcoming book Decolonizing African Studies *Knowledge Production, Agency, and Voice*. What is clear in all these authors is that although each other might be referring to a specific moment in decolonial moment in history, decolonial moments in themselves are not new, they are work in progress that continues to unfold. It is in the ways described above that I use the 'decolonial moment' in this thesis and it is in reference to the student protests in the 2015 – 2018 period.

March 2015 marks the Rhodes Must Fall movement (RMF) establishment at the University of Cape Town. Although many pinpoint the beginning of this movement to when Chumani Maxhwele threw faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT), others argue that numerous events were leading to the poo-flinging (Mupotsa, 2017; Langa et al., 2017). The former indeed got the media's attention. The movement gained momentum leading to the subsequent removal of the Rhodes statue from the UCT Upper campus and the creation of platforms to hear students' stories and grievances.

Some of the key grievances of students in the RMF movement included not belonging to the university campus. This sentiment came across in many of the Black student narratives during the RMF movement. It persisted under the FMF movement and many other calls to decolonise the university space in different universities across the country and different parts of the world[18]. Soon after the RMF movement, the FMF movement took off in 2016 with students calling for free university education (Mupotsa, 2017; Langa et al., 2017). These

[18]For more details and student experiences of these movements written by students themselves see, Dlakavu, Ndelu and Matandela (2017); Chinguo, Kgoroba, Mashibini, Maubane, Moyo, Mthombeni, and Ndlovu (2017); Ndlovu (2017); Ndelu, Dlakavu, and Boswell (2017); Manzini, 2017.

conversations were not restricted to the University of Cape Town only but were happening in universities across the country although they manifested in different ways and inspired other university tailored movements such as the Open Stellenbosch movement and *Luister* documentary film at the University of Stellenbosch, with students challenging the Afrikaans language policy (Mpatlanyane, 2018; Ndelu et al., 2017; Langa et al., 2017). These conversations were also a call from these movements to Black people to not only decolonise the university space but also use the time as a moment to reflect and 'decolonise' one's mind, actions and a reminder that decolonising is not reserved for universities but needs to take place in day to day lives and day to day decision making both inside and outside the university.

The debates in universities across the country also inspired young people in high schools to be vocal and bring the racism they experience at schools to the fore, especially in 2016. Two of the most notable incidents include the controversy surrounding Pretoria Girls High School. Learners reported that their afros (natural hair) were discriminated against and labelled as 'untidy' and 'distracting' (Waltham, 2017). The second incident was at San Souci, around Black learner's hair, and prohibited from speaking *IsiXhosa* (Chiguvare and Mellow, 2016). Journalists and Black twitter[19] focused on these issues under the hashtags #PretoriaGirls and #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh, which trended for days on different social media platforms. University student activists from FMF showed support to the Pretoria girls and students from the University of Pretoria. The EFF joined the learners in a march to the school. These incidences reflected the racially divided country and induced a lot of fear and frustration in many parents- particularly, my participants. Most importantly, issues that had started gaining momentum as part of student movements focused on university experiences

[19] Black Twitter refers to an online community of Twitters that discuss issues of interest to Black people where the conversation can often be followed through a hashtag. The topics range from serious issues of race and other social justice matters as well as jokes, events, TV shows, etc.

quickly permeated discussions in high schools and other spaces outside the university context.

The conversations in Baby Zone and conversations with my interlocutors in interviews and social media were not happening in isolation from the rest of the world. For example, in 2012 after yet another murder of a Black person by the police in the United States of America, starting with a "love letter to Black folks" written by a Black queer woman, Alicia Garza, Black Lives Matter (BLM) was birthed (Ince et al., 2017). #BlackLivesMatter was then used on all social media platforms, particularly Twitter to draw attention to police brutality against Black people and was later used more broadly to draw attention to other social issues affecting Black Americans such as racial inequality, abortion rights, housing, healthcare etc. (Ince et al., 2017). Alicia Garza ended the original Facebook post with, "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter. Black lives matter" (Ince et al., 2017:1818) - a sentiment that many shared as they celebrated Blackness in a variety of ways on social media. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has since been used globally to draw attention to social injustice issues faced by Black people. The call to 'stay woke' as termed in the United States of America following the Black Lives Matter movement was also used in South Africa and some of BLM's strategies. Hashtag activism[20] applied in BLM was also used during the student

[20]Tombleson & Wolf, 2017:15) define hashtag movements which started with #MeToo and made popular during #BlackLivesMatter as "act of fighting for or supporting a cause with the use of hashtags as the primary channel to raise awareness of an issue and encourage debate via social media". Although hashtag movements were popularised during BLM, there were earlier ones such as the the #MeToo movement which documented and drew attention to issues of sexual harassment and assault. The success of that movement and the organising that took place, motivating others to speak up and take action showed that online platforms would be a very good place to raise awareness and do activism for causes and can generate conversations in ways that a movement might that does not have financial resources for events and rallies could benefit in this cost effective way of reaching the public and break geographical and international boundaries. (Allagui & Breslow, 2016) . Another earlier movement was the #SayHerName movement which drew attention to issues that affected women such as rape and gender based violence and later other issues affecting marginalised Black groups such as LGTBQ and people with disabilities (Brown et al, 2017).

movements in SA to both report on issues of police brutality on campuses, to organise as well as to offer counter-narratives to the official news outlets that were not always sympathetic to the protestors and sometimes not accurate in their reporting of the events.

My interlocutors were increasingly reflecting these trending issues mentioned above. They began to wonder what the debates and discussions they saw online meant for them and how they mother. Decisions about naming your children, what books you read, what movies you watch, what music you listen to, how you wear your hair, where you buy your clothes, what language you speak, how you respond to racist remarks addressed to you and others, choosing health practitioners, church, schools, games you play and so forth were of everyday discussions among my participants. For example, Vuyiswa considered race and representation as she chose health professionals, she said, "Race mattered to me in terms of the birthing process, so I made sure to select an all-Black, female team of gynaes ([gynaecologists], midwives and a doula". After years of not necessarily considering race when choosing a health professional, she noted that she decided to leave her White male gynaecologist in mid-pregnancy. For my interlocutors, debates about decolonisation also became personalised questions of belonging and centred on the representational - appearance and language – things that you could look at and point to a physical 'change' that reflects a move towards pride in Blackness. Like university policymakers, academics, and student protestors, my participants thought of alternatives to the status quo. My participants began to look for ways to affirm 'Blackness' and 'Africanness' and ultimately play their part in 'decolonising' through their mothering practice and related maternity issues. They were not sure what this decolonised world many were striving for looked like, but they were trying to figure it out. They hoped that it would be a world that is not racist or sexist. They imagined it

as a world where their children could freely express their Blackness however they see fit and that their children would see themselves represented in the world and see themselves as belonging in the world as they are. They longed for this. Although these ideas may have crossed their minds before and that they have come across them at different times of their lives, at the time, they were not parents. When these ideas were revived through the student movements, the movements became an immediate and relevant point of reflection and a reference point as they thought about what these ideas meant for them as parents now.

### *Babafundisa izinto zabelungu*: Seeking Alternatives

The frustrations induced by student protests, RMF and FMF and the racial incidents in high schools in South Africa took over in conversations with my participants. They worried about what these incidents meant for their Black children when they began school and what it meant for the creches they currently went to. They wondered how to raise their children in a way that would allow them to deal with racism effectively should it 'happen' to them. They wondered what their role was in creating a different world for their children. Still, they also wondered how to prepare their children for the world as it is – unequal and particularly the reality of racism seeping through in the racial incidents that made news. For example, Thembeka reflected on the racism that was highlighted in schools such as the incidents at Pretoria Girls High said, "I am very intentional when I'm raising my kids, to make them aware that they are Black and what that sometimes means [referring to the possibility of encountering racism]. Uhm, so I want them not to be apologetic about their skin colour or shrink themselves because of it or let someone treat them badly because of it".

Similarly, Thandi was also intentional about the race issue. She said, "One of the reasons I wanted my girl to start creche early with different races was so that she could get used to being around different races so that she never feels inferior to a different race. We try to

affirm her, we allow her to discover herself. I think once she knows who she is and what she stands for she could never be a victim."

The views above, particularly regarding race work Thandi and Thembeka engaged in and the importance of affirmation were shared by some of the Ladies' Breakfast that I attended with women from my local church, some of which were participating in my research. A conversation about the student protests developed, which became the norm in social gathering as the student protests often made national news. Chwayita reflected and said, "Eish, mina I don't know guys. At first, I could not relate with the students because I was raised to *ukubekezela* [persevere] you know and keep my head down. But actually, this affects my kids and the kind of world they will grow up in and the kind of varsity experience they will have", this was followed by a shrug, a sigh and more sighs around the table. It was unclear on which side of the debate everyone stood, but just before Chwayita hesitantly spoke, other women around the table had expressed their 'frustration' with the 'entitlement' of the protesting students indicating that "if they don't want statues of White people around them, they must build their universities and not go to UCT", "they must build their own schools" and "or accept that things are what they are", "it is what it is" some said. Eventually, the conversation that had seemed to have the potential to be uncomfortable died out. This conversation was one of the first clear examples of how the student protests were folding into my participants' lives. A breakfast date that was just a year ago 'light-hearted', filled with giggles and funny stories about husbands, babies and toddlers was now heavy. There was less laughter, more silences, more shrugs and more sighs. Chwayita was not sure what she needed to do, or how this would affect her parenting specifically, but she knew that the current context would affect he kids as she mentioned in this breakfast and a few more times in our interactions.

During the #PretoriaGirls protest, many on Twitter suggested similar responses to some mothers' breakfast at the women's breakfast mentioned above. Some suggested that Black people must build their own schools or home-school their children to protect their children from racist school environments that do not accept them and their Blackness – their hair, languages and stories. Like most current topics, the topic also made its way to Baby Zone conversations in many heated after church conversations as young Black couples and parents in the church. This particular conversation was about raising Black children in a racist South Africa and one that does not affirm Blackness. The couples and parents were concerned about ensuring that their children celebrate their Blackness in looks, language, hair, skin, and perceived loudness and see representations of 'smart' Black people in what they learn. "Me I can build us the schools *shem*, I just need the money to do so", said Zandile as we were reaching the end of the conversation brainstorming some solutions – more African languages at the schools, examples that draw from stories of working-class Black people as well as experiences of South African rural life, a focus on the history of Black people before colonisation, stories of Black people that do not include White people.

In a conversation with Zandile about why she kept moving her child from creche to creche, she sighed and said: "*Babafundisa izinto zabelungu Ziyanda*" (They teach them White people things, Ziyanda). She commented that the songs they sang, and nursery rhymes they did were in English and the teacher read the books that are not set in the African context with images that do not speak to the children's context. She was mostly worried that the teacher did not seem willing to 'diversify' her curriculum and add more stories and songs in the African context or at least in the South African context. Because of this, she felt her son was spending a full day, every day at a place that was not affirming his Blackness and his context, particularly the African continent and at the least, in a household with Black people, a church

with Black people and at a creche with predominantly Black children. He was not seeing 'Black people things' and "Black people" represented in what he is learning, Zandile lamented with a defeated look on her face and slightly raising her hands above her head. It was important for Zandile to find schools that would contribute to her efforts to ensure that her son is around other Black people. She also hoped that in these schools, he would get to see Black people in the books he read and hear the various languages spoken by Black people in South Africa. Although speaking about homeschooling and not necessarily 'building our own schools', Zandile captured the sentiment that was shared in Baby Zone on schooling as well as her concerns about her son's schooling eloquently on her social media post and said,

> Do you know why it is paramount to us that our children be home-schooled, at least in their formative years? Because we need them to see themselves in the things they learn and understand about the world. They must be able to locate themselves in it by knowing that this world was created for them too to faithfully labour in. Whenever I read anything that has people in it (basically everything), I imagine them as being White. I often have to be intentional about being represented and located in my own mind, and I'm inclined to believe many can relate. The battle for Black/African identity is not just in the tangible places where we work live, and play; but also in those intangible spaces where we think, create and believe. Basically, we are being intentional about our kids being Black and seeing #Blackexcellence[21] and really seeing that they have a place/stake in everything in the world.

The post above illustrates the crux of the woke mothering I am talking about. It is reflected in the sense of intentionality. We see it in this post and Zandile's practical action of deregistering her son from one creche to another as she looked for a creche that would affirm her son in his Blackness. We also see it in Thembeka's intentionality about sitting her daughters down to tell them that they are Black and that this might mean they will encounter

[21]#BlackExcellence is often used on social media to celebrate achievements of Black people. It often captions pictures of graduations and professional achievements. The hashtag use originated in the United States of America and is associated with an old struggles of African Americans countering negative narratives of dysfunction about themselves and wanting to put forward a positive representation of African Americans (Motsemme, 2011:47)

racism and equipping them with skills to cope and confront should those racist encounters occur. We also see it in Chwayita who although at the time did not know what to do practically, she knew that she needed to apply herself and find ways to affirm her Black children and equip them with skills to confront racism so that they do not 'hold their heads down' as she had done in the past. It is clear here that my interlocutors have started the process of developing intentionality and consciousness. They had taken on the project of mothering but not necessarily in the same way of managing the lactating body and breastfeeding as the women in Rogerson (2016) and Waltz (2014). Instead, they approached mothering as a project – in this case, a political one.

The conversation I had with my participants and other Black couples from church about our understanding of raising Black children also organically resonated with Biko's concepts of unity, self-reliance and Black pride – pride in own languages, Black skin, and the recognition that 'Black is beautiful'. As well as his appeals for Black people to create a society where Black people do not see themselves as less than White, but to come together and recognise their collective power (Biko, 1977). These are sentiments that Biko's colleagues reiterate in Pityana (1991)'s reflections on how the Black Consciousness Movement has left a legacy of defiance and fearlessness and transformation of Black people's minds – encouraged to take their destiny into their own hands, push beyond what has been set as limits for Black people and setting new 'bounds of possibilities' for Black people. Williams (2017) articulates the relevance of Black Consciousness in Black pride and Black self-love beautifully and in a way that resonates with my participants and says;

> The idea that, in face of violence, being proud in one's Blackness is essential in the fight for justice. It is this thinking that deeply resonates with the current political climate which bears witness to (and often underpins) the rise of the "alt-right" and White supremacist ideologies. The idea that in our striving for justice, that the

> restoration of pride and self-love be central to our understandings of Black Consciousness and, in and above that, be central to our movements for social change… As of late, many have come to understand that the need to harness our collective strengths, in the fight for justice, is growing each day. And it is through radical self-love that we, as colonised people, are able to rise from an imposed place of powerlessness to reassert and reclaim our humanity. If not radical self-love, then how else are we planning to fulfil the vision of a just society that the likes of Biko spoke truth to? (Williams, 2017).

When the mothers who were my interlocutors talked about the need for their plans to be more 'intentional,' they were deliberate in their actions because 'everything is that deep'[22]. This meant that nothing could be taken for granted, but every song, nursery rhyme, hairstyle, play date had to be considered through the lens of whether or not it would affirm their children, particularly their Blackness. For some of my participants, there was a realisation that the small decisions they make are 'that deep' as they speak to wider conversations about representation. For example, Chwayita worried that her daughter preferred a White doll which she felt would have been seen as 'not that deep' because 'it is just a doll', now the question would arise, 'what does this mean for representation? Does she think the White doll is more beautiful?' The mothers all pointed out that most nursery rhymes on YouTube and the creches they sent their children to (which were those closest to them in the suburbs they resided in), were in English. And so, the practice of their intention was reflected in their seeking out of alternatives. For example, on YouTube Kids[23] which Chwayita often used, the nursery rhymes, stories and songs are often in English, and kids' channels dedicated to African languages such as the ones in Figure 7 below are not available. However, they are available on the main YouTube platform.

[22] 'It's not that deep' means something is not that serious. It is often used when a person is perceived to be taking something 'too seriously'.

[23] YouTube Kids is mobile app launched by the American video-sharing online platform. It offers parental controls, a simpler interface and offers particular channels which offer age appropriate videos and designed to filter out inappropriate content.

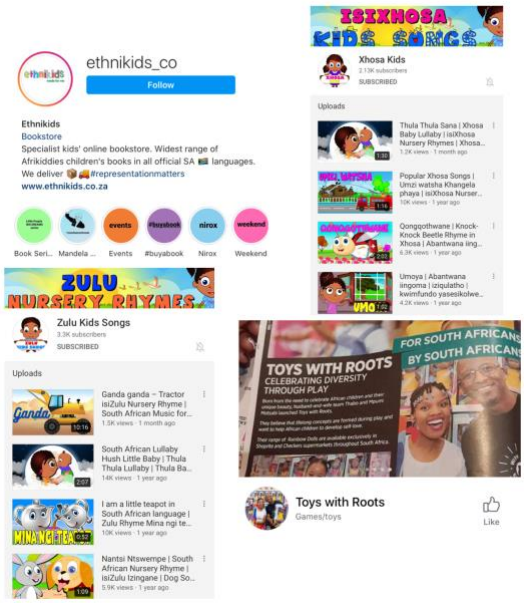


*Figure 7: Resources that cater for African languages*

Retail stores that stock a selection of books also tend to only have children's books in English and Afrikaans, except bookshops with a limited collection of books in African languages. Even then, the mothers argue that these tend to be a translation of English books that already do not mirror their Black children's everyday lives in South Africa in terms of the storyline and examples used[24]. They also felt that although more shops now had Black dolls, it was often a limited range. As a remedy, the mothers actively looked for resources online, especially since many of these items were available on Instagram store, online stores, and advertised on social media by authors who self-published. These were also available in selected markets and book festivals, and thus, one would know about their availability by recommendation or word of mouth. See examples of some of the Instagram and online stores

[24] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1992)'s *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature* is perhaps one of the most notable writings on the politics of language, and the need for literature that African children can identify with, written in their own languages. Although limited, there is literature that documents the need for as well as the challenges associated with the publication 'culturally relevant', 'multicultural', 'multilingual' and 'indigenous' children's books as well as critiques of representation in children's books in South Africa (Bloch and Block, 2009; Bloch, 2012; Edwards and Ngwaru, 2012. Organisations such as Nal'ibali, Puku and The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa also often raise awareness of these issues.

dedicated to multicultural and multilingual children's books and Black dolls in Figure 7 above. Black dolls gained popularity as many Black mothers wanted their children to have dolls that looked like them, such as Ntombenhle dolls, Sibahle Collection, Momppy Poppy, Baby Thando, Akiki and Lali. Literature by Africans and literature in African languages also gained popularity both for adults and children intending to ensure that children know their African languages and can connect with the stories they read. More specifically, in 2016, we saw the launch of the Abantu Book Festival[25] in Soweto. The founder 'Mgqolozana imagined a healing space for Black readers and writers' as stated on their website. The Brown Sense[26] market was established in 2016, and its focus was to support Black people and Black business. Toys With Roots, an online store that consolidates the children's literature and toys and creating a 'one-stop-shop' for parents has a mission to 'see every Black child with a toy that celebrates their African skin and African features' and believe that '…lifelong concepts are formed during Play, and this is a rich opportunity to educate our children. We want the African child to recognise his/her greatness and beauty...We want to help African children develop self-love' as it says on their Facebook page.

My interlocutors engaged with the options mentioned above, either physically or visiting the websites to look for alternatives for books and toys. They, including myself, looked for recommendations and mined through these options, checking if the translations were done properly. They also checked if the pronunciation was done properly to avoid the situations where the person providing the resource was not a native speaker and mispronounced words. My participants and I would often chat about our favourite products and complain about disappointing translation or accents for some of the songs and narrated stories on the audio

[25] See more about the festival on their website, https://www.abantubooks.co.za/festival/about-festival/

[26] Brownsense describes its purpose on their website in this way, "BrownSense Markets can be summed up in one line: We are unapologetic and deliberate about giving Black owned (Brownie owned) businesses access to markets. Too often, businesses think they need capital injection to grow, only to find that what they actually need is a reliable pipeline of business. BrownSense is building those pipelines through the BrownSense Market." https://www.brownsense.co.za/

products. For example, Chwayita and Vuyiswa often complained about the accents of the people narrating stories in IsiZulu and IsiXhosa, respectively on YouTube.

**Gender and the decolonial moment**

Although the 'decolonial moment', mainly emphasised race issues, it also brought issues of gender to the surface. This came across strongly in FMF and RMF at UCT where many men took centre stage and women, and the queer community were not recognised for their role in the movement regardless of the movement having been framed as one that will be intersectional and one that would base its decolonial agenda on "Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism and Black Feminism[27] (Chigumadzi, 2016). After different forms of violence, particularly gender-based violence and rape, took place within the movements but were not addressed. Black cis & Trans women and non-binary people who had worked at ensuring that the movement is intersectional through the Patriarchy Must Fall movement, and Trans Collective confronted this issue. The slogan 'The revolution will be Black-led and intersectional, or it will be bullshit' was popularised and printed on the back of t-shirts worn during the protests by some (Chigumadzi, 2016). Issues of gender also came across strongly in the movement at WITS especially after the 4th of October 2016 when three women stripped and bare-breasted they stood between the students and police, begging the police to ceasefire (Ndlovu, 2017). Following this 'nude' protest, the women who participated faced ridicule on and offline with their bodies being sexualised and shamed whilst some celebrated their bravery. This also brought to the fore the gender dynamics in the movement that had now become led by men. Many felt that inserting feminism in the movement would be

[27]Black feminism gained prominence in the 1960s in the United State of America when African-American women recognised the different ways in which patriarchy affects Black women and the type of feminism at the time catered to middle class White women and did not account for experiences of African-American women. It was also used to show that Black women endure different kinds of oppression, they are oppressed as Black people and also women (Smith, 2013).

divisive and take away from race and class issues that RMF and FMF movement were challenging (Ndlovu, 2017). The nude protest- the backlash and its celebration in 2016, the 2017 #MenAreTrash[28] movement that focussed on gender-based violence and death of women in the hands of men in South Africa also prompted many mothers and fathers to think about how they raise their daughters and sons. They were anxious about their daughters' safety, thinking about patriarchy and how they could raise strong women like the ones on the 'picket lines' of FMF and RMF who reminded them of strong women who fought alongside men in apartheid and women who demanded the end of pass laws. On the issue of patriarchy, one of my participants posted on her social media, "Black mothers tend to raise their daughters and love their sons. #TobeTheGenerationThatChangesThis #DeconstructingPatriachy." On a similar note, Chwayita and I spoke about the 2016/2017 political events she spoke directly to issues of gender, using a different vocabulary but the same sentiment as the other participant's post she said this in our interview:

> "A lot of the thinking is not what I grew up with. I grew up where a lot of what is being said now freely and easily and being encouraged was not encouraged. So, I'm from a very conservative background. *Intombazane* (a girl) must look a certain way and dress a certain way and do certain things and be a certain way. Even a wife. Even just how I grew up looking at how wives were. Be it, my aunts, be it, my own parents. And just a sense of freedom that women didn't have in my community. And how my aunts would be around their husbands. *Makunomsebenzi* (when there is a traditional event) the husbands are being catered to. And they are just the most important people at this thing. But they are sitting around, *abenzi lutho* (doing nothing). It was normal. And it's almost like, the women took pride in taking care of these men and all of that. *And now I'm being made to question that***.** I would watch it and be like it's not fair, but it's happening. It's just how it is. But it doesn't look right. But you say that inside, and you could never say that out loud to anyone… Over the years we've lost a lot of the men in the family, I guess through AIDS. And so, now it's just my mom and her sisters that are left. And they are having to take things over because the men are gone. And so, I'm seeing more of that, and I'm seeing my importance as a woman. *But what I'm seeing now is that it doesn't have to be the fact that there aren't any men. It's okay for women to have influence in family situations in this case. And anywhere else in society. So, as much as I'm seeing that, she's [her daughter] going to see even more of that. She is going to be in a world where women are powerful. Where women have a lot of influence. So, for me, it's just to reinforce that for her. And even dispel some of*

[28] The #MenAreTrash movement took off on social media following a series of murders of women in South Africa at the hands of men. This movement was raising awareness about these deaths, calling government to account and calling out 'toxic masculinities' (Makama et al, 2019).

> *how I still think. I still think in that way that I saw things growing up... I'd like for her to not have to talk herself out of it. I'd like for it [understanding of women as powerful and having an important role in the home and society at large] to be her base and build from there*. Whereas for me, I'm starting from back and getting there and then moving up. So, still have to contradict my thinking and then move on. And contradict even the way I dream about things and dream about how I want to see things. So, for her, it's going to be different. And because it's going to be different for her, I have to also understand that she's going to look and be different from me. The way that she sees and reacts to the world is going to be different from mine. And I need to be prepared for that. I need to not tell her that girls don't do certain things. I have to remember that she doesn't have to be that way…" [Italics my emphasis]

Both the mothers above expressed a desire and hope for a different way of thinking about gender in society. Zandile, as a mother to a son, wondered what her role would be in shaping her son's masculinity. As I probed, she mentioned how, as a wife, she had seen how mothers are gatekeepers of patriarchy, loving on their sons whilst expecting the *makoti* (wife) to be the responsible accountable one. She wanted to change the narrative in her life. She wanted to hold her son accountable when she needed to, and love on him, and do the same for her daughter one day. Chwayita, on the other hand, faced with pictures of women at the forefront of the student movements. She was in awe of the circulating pictures of women leading protests. An example of such pictures is the iconic picture of one of the WITS FMF leaders and newly elected WITS SRC president Nompendulo Mkhatshwa during a FMF march to the Unions Buildings(see below). Chwayita admired the bravery of the women who she felt were doing things she would never have imagined doing, particularly the women who participated in the nude protest at WITS. She wondered how she could raise her daughters to know that they can do anything and everything and be as fearless as the students had been.



*Figure 8: Picture of Nompendulo Mkhatshwa taken by Gallo Images / Nicholas Rawhani*

Mothering, in this context, was filled with a lot of questions than answers and solutions. We (my interlocutors and I) all had questions as we were all in a state of 'figuring things out' as mothers and mothers to be to Black children. In the midst of an epochal shift, we found ourselves faced with new tools, invigorated by new and older ideas. This had the effect of producing a sense of having to 'figure things out', a phrase overused by my interlocutors and me. Although useful, the traditional gender and child-raising scripts that we had inherited from our parents were no longer adequate nor desirable for the world we found ourselves in. We wished for our children to relieve aspects of our childhood experiences as with Chwayita's desires for her daughter to be surrounded by an extended family of IsiZulu speakers and watch traditional events often, sing songs, and listen to stories from elderly people. However, there was also a realisation that the experiences would not be the same. Thinking about the different experience of Blackness that her daughters would have, in an interview, Chwayita said:

> The whole Black and being proud kind of thing, for me, being Zulu, Zulus are very prideful [There is a stereotype that IsiZulu speakers are proud]. And they are very protective of their culture. And so, with Blackness and being proud of it, I feel like we're going in the right direction as a society, not just here at home. It's getting better without me having to fight so much….when they go out there, the fight [against an anti-Black system and fight for the affirmation of Blackness] will have been done for them. So, by the time they come of age, I feel like Blackness is going to be so different to what it was when I was younger and what I have seen up until now. So, I think in that sense there is a lot of... It's almost like Blackness is being appreciated in a different way for them. For me, it would have been my Zuluness, and me being proud of that and the heritage that comes with it. And the different rituals that make

> us who we are. And almost like being proud of that over even other tribes. So, it's not just me being Black, but it's me being Zulu… So, for them, Blackness is going to be different.

Chwayita was aware of how she understood Blackness and had prioritised *Zuluness*, she was increasingly seeing how the country was changing, the calls for Black people to unite and how for her children, a celebration of Blackness would not be confined to Zulu rituals and customs and that Blackness and its celebration was beyond language and cultural aesthetics - there was a different future of Blackness imagined. She articulates this beautifully when she further says:

> "It's [Blackness] not going to be an ownership of a heritage or a culture, but it's an ownership of everything that comes with your skin colour and understanding that it can be great. And you can be allowed to explore what you have and expand or grow it or cultivate it. And not be scared because someone is going to judge it a certain way, or it might not be great as something that someone else has done. So, it's just for me to encourage that in them. Like I'm saying, I'm not going to instil a whole big Zuluness [Pride in being Zulu] within them. They're already a mixed sort of thing. They are mixed cultures already within them. I always think that I want them to know what comes with the heritage of the Zulu side of things…It is a thing for me. It means something to me. I can't shake it. I really can't. This is their pride, and this is what they hold to themselves and what sets them apart. But, now it's more of a diluted society, so you're not going to see a lot of it out there. But this is your base. So, I will encourage it. And I think more than anything it's just that lack of fear. To not be scared. If you're creative and you want to invent something new, we didn't think things like that were possible for us. We were like, "oh well, the White man has done everything. So, for them, it's freedoms that we did not have. I'm happy that they'll get to have them. I would want to encourage that. And know that they would not have that reservation that I would've had at any other time before."

**Towards a conclusion**

As seen in this chapter thus far, particularly from couples from Baby Zone, Chwayita, Zandile, Thandi, Thembeka, Vuyiswa and Zandile - macro-political events seeped into intimate spaces, and my interlocutors approached mothering as a political project. Specifically, the decolonial moment forced the mothers I worked with to be intentional about how they mother their children.

When I considered how to think about and describe the intentionality and consciousness present in my interlocutors' mothering practice, I saw it as positive parenting. The positive parenting here was not necessarily just consisting of the psychological parenting model advocated for by organisations such as the WHO (World Health Organisation) and UNICEF. The above type of positive parenting is one which Gould and Ward (2015:2) describe as "…warm, consistent parenting where parents have good relationships with their children, use non-violent forms of discipline, and exercise supervision over their children as appropriate to their developmental stage." This is a parenting philosophy that in South Africa has policy implication and is being used to underpin parenting programmes based on research that draws parallels between unemployment, poverty, illness and abuse in homes. The proponents of this parenting philosophy suggest that there is a need to intervene to ensure that children grow up in healthy environments where they are not spanked, but there is an appropriate attachment with parent and child and boundaries instead of harsh discipline, children are provided with cognitive stimulation and taught how to regulate their emotions (Gould and Ward, 2015). This, in turn, will lead to children who will later 'form good adult relationships' and will be more likely to 'succeed at school and 'find good, stable employment' and less likely to 'suffer anxiety and depression, abuse substances, engage in risky sexual practices, and be involved in crime and violence' Gould and Ward (2015:5). Thus positive parenting forms part of parenting philosophies that practice 'conscious parenting', a parenting philosophy whereby the parents 'are aware in their parenting, as well as respectful and understanding towards their children' even if they might make decisions that their parents are not familiar with and do not agree with as mentioned by Chwayita earlier (Rahmqvist et al., 2014:937).

Although useful in some ways and a reflection of how my participants approached discipline and helping their children process emotions, the aspects of 'positive parenting' outlined

above are not adequate to fully encompass the mothering that my participants were engaging. In addition to the 'positive, conscious' parents my participants were becoming, I suggest that they also applied a racial consciousness in how they were mothering. This racial consciousness in parenting is best conceptually described as 'critical race parenting'.

Race conscious parenting has long existed in communities of colour where there is rife racism, notably here in South Africa and the United States of America. This is because there is a need to educate one's child about institutional racism, how it might affect them and strategies to deal with them. This is necessary for survival and mental health. Depouw and Matias (2016: 238) state: "These are the race-conscious parenting skills passed down for generations that are necessary to not only survive but thrive within the racial micro-and macroaggressions of (neo)colonialism and White supremacy." With origins in the United States of America, critical race parenting draws on critical race theory. It recognises that parenting happens in contexts rife with racism and, more specifically, a context that necessitates race-conscious parenting and a Black Lives Matter movement described earlier in the chapter. This is also a context similar to the one experienced by parents in apartheid South Africa as seen earlier from Sindiwe Magona (1999)'s *Mother to Mother* in the first chapter of this thesis. I also show earlier in this chapter through Ross (2000)'s descriptions of how Black mothers mobilised each other during apartheid to fight for their children's safety.

> A critical race perspective on parenting includes a critical analysis of systems of oppression, including institutional racism, and is embedded within the lived experiences, knowledge systems, values, and pedagogies (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009) of families and communities of colour". However, although critical race parenting is about acknowledging and addressing the racial injustice and its impact, it is also about simultaneously "nurture our children with a humanizing love so that they see themselves as complex human beings who are impacted by but not defined by institutional racism and White supremacy (Depouw and Matias, 2016:237).

Above is an explanation of the marriage of parenting and critical race theory that is developed by Depouw and Matias (2016). I am not simply refereeing to a merger of critical race theory and parenting but instead, I want to draw attention to a very intentional theorisation of parenting that foregrounds race and how white supremacy folds into the intimate experience of parenting. Critical Race Parenting offers possible solutions to a question that was at the heart of Baby Zone conversations and many other conversations with my participants, "how do we prepare our children for a world where there is so much racism". It goes beyond the 'keep my head down', 'it is what it is' kind of 'race-conscious' parenting that featured when many of the people in my research described their upbringing. Using their own stories and the counter stories method, DePouw and Matias (2016), Matias (2016) and DePouw (218) show how they use critical race parenting to confront racial oppression and teach their children about race, racial oppression and identity. In their development of the concept of critical race parenting, DePouw and Matias (2016) borrow some key concepts from critical race theory - racial realism, the centrality of experiential knowledge, intersectionality, and critical race pedagogy (CRP). DePouw and Matias describe the concept and the need for it in this way:

> Critical race parenting evolved from the need to teach children within communities of colour how to develop resilience and resistance in the face of intergenerational experiences of White supremacy and institutional oppression. For hundreds of years in the United States, different communities of colour have worked to advocate for, protect, and educate their children to be full human beings within a context that, at its best, did not consider them in the design and, at its worst, was designed to destroy them… (2016:242).

> … Similarly, under the current repression of racist policing systems, we as parents must continue to protect our children, regardless of the oppressive state of society. The focus, then, is twofold: *We must continue our struggle to affirm and maintain our humanity and that of our children under a racist state and its institutions [my emphasis]*, even as we work to avoid uncritical investment in solutions that rely on idealistic "changes of heart" or interpersonal colourblindness as the key to ending institutional racism and White supremacy (2016:247).

In the stories, the proponents of critical race parenting talk about parents' need to familiarise their children with race language and stereotypes about Black people. They, as parents, need to challenge these in front of their children further. Examples include explaining to their children the everyday racial realism incidents that happen to the parents, using questions to dig deep into the children's understanding of race issues, allowing the children to explain their racial realities and exercise their resistance as they see fit and teach them about racial assumptions based on racial phenotypes and teachings about the intersections between race, class and gender. All of the stories show how mothers can 'engage their children' on race and 'acknowledge race realities' (Matias, 2016:25) of African American woman narratives of mothering and how they incorporate the race question with their children). Although my participants were in the process of finding ways to affirm the Blackness and how to teach about it, it is clear that the thinking work done by these authors is very similar to the thinking work that was happening with my participants and in the Baby Zone room and serves as a useful framework to make sense of the experiences of the mothers I worked with.

**Conclusion**

> I was so happy the day I thought in Zulu, and it's been my mission ever since to increase that average score! To be made in God's image and likeness must mean to wage war against anything that has taught me I am not. It makes me deeply sorrowful to interact with a creative world I have been subconsciously made to believe I have no place in. To each his own battle in re-humanising. We will strive for our children to not need to re-engineer their minds, just the way the world works.
>
> #ColonialLegaciesAreMindDeep #FightingInternalisedOppressionDailyIsHard#WeWereFearfullyAndWonderfullyMade#TheBattleOfBelievingThisForABlackPersonIsHarder #AlutaContinua

Above is a Facebook post from Zandile. This post, just like the opening post from Zandile in the opening of this chapter, we see some of the ways in which Zandile infuses her Christianity with politics of representation and blackness. Most importantly for this chapter, Zandile captures a desire she shares with my interlocutors, to raise their children in a world

that they can see and believe that they belong in. Through what they learn at school, through what they see in the books their parents read for them and through the affirmations from their parents – being reminded that they are beautiful and intelligent even though they are in a world that might tell them otherwise because of the colour of their skin. The experiences I have described in this chapter are the lived experiences of mothering amid an entanglement between the pursuit of certain class aspirations and resources as well as a pursuit of their own childhoods that they are nostalgic about as they strive for the ever so elusive 'Africanness' and 'Blackness'. Their class position and contemporary political discourse give them access to 'their ancestors' wildest dreams' in terms of where they can stay, work, play, and reimagine what being Black means and how they can perform and live out this Blackness. Importantly, I have shown how the everyday macro-political moments through the student protests fold into my participants' everyday mothering practice who had a new found urgency to instil a Black pride and affirm the Black beauty and intelligence of their Black children. This urgency, I suggest, was inspired by the students and discussions that stemmed from the student protests. This chapter has further shown how my interlocutors' intentionally find practical ways and tools to represent and affirm Blackness for their children. I have also shown how from the toys, the books and the toys; there is a clear involvement of material objects, thus showing a relationship of objects to self-making. And for those who were able to move beyond physical objects and verbal affirmations such as Zandile, I have described how she moved her son from crèche to crèche until she could find a crèche that would not 'teach him White people things' [stories with White people and their experiences]. A crèche that would focus on language development not just in terms of English but also African languages, sharing her pursuit for a school that embraces Blackness, Zandile often shared posts like the one in Figure 9 (below) on her Facebook, the one, in particular, was in relation to her difficulty to find a school that she was confident that it would affirm her Black son.




*Figure 9: Zandile shared a post from the New York Times on her Facebook page*

# CHAPTER 6

## 'Decolonising' The Tongue: Thinking About Language, Identity and Belonging

*My husband leans over to talk to the baby in my stomach, and he starts speaking to her in English. "Sukhumsha" (Don't speak in English!), I protest. I am thinking that at this stage of the pregnancy, the baby can hear, and we have discussed that we need to be intentional about teaching her and exposing her to isiXhosa as her home language. After I tell Fiona the story, she gently prompts and asks "why?". I just shrug and say "because you have to, she needs to be able to communicate and relate with her gogos (grandmothers) and cousins. There is something about language that would make that relationship work in ways it wouldn't if she can't speak IsiXhosa and I can't do that to her".* Fieldnotes

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's (1981) *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature* is perhaps one of the most notable writings on the politics of language, and the need for literature the African children can identify with, written in their own languages. In 'Decolonising The Mind', Wa Thiong'o (1981) argues that language was and is not just about communication. It carries culture, and in his words, language is "the medium of our memories; the link between space and time, the basis of our dreams" (Wa Thiong'o, 1981: 212). The association of language with culture described by Ngugi wa Thiong'o is an idea that continues to persist. For example, Maseko (2018);

> Language, whether written or spoken, is the medium through which *abantu* – the beings with a soul/people – share their values, thoughts and opinions about their physical, social and spiritual environment. It is the lens through which they construct their ideas, beliefs and thoughts about the world around them. It constitutes the words that *abantu* in a society use to name things and phenomena around them. The words themselves are not random, but are craftily selected to reflect the manner in which social beings make sense of their surroundings. In other words, the manner in which things are given names reflects society's thoughts about those things (2018:41).
>
> However, while language as means of communication is important, it is not as important as knowledge, the ideas and wisdom embedded in the language itself (Mafeje 1994:64-67). Mafeje argues that any language can be appropriated by different users for authentic representation of knowledge in their own cultural worlds. Knowledge itself is generated from the manner in which a society makes sense of, struggles with, and interacts with its social and natural environment. Knowledge constitutes skills, both abstract and concrete, that *abantu* gain through their lived experiences or education, skills that help them understand the present and predict the future (Gqoba 2015). This understanding of language and knowledge suggests that all

> beings have a common phenomenon – to use language to express past experiences and to react to the present to make sense of the future (Maseko, 2018: 41).

In retrospect, I believe this kind of thinking about language as something that carries culture and knowledge described by wa Thiong'o (1981) and Maseko (2018) is why I protested when my husband spoke to the baby in my stomach in English. I did not want to 'erase' my language; I did not want to be unable to relay some of my memories carried by IsiXhosa. I wanted the opportunity to give her a language that she could understand when she went to Cape Town or the Eastern Cape without needing translation. For her to be able to spend time in the village with her cousins and take part in the songs that are being sand during traditional ceremonies and und understand the meaning and significance in the songs. In order to prepare children for relationships that they will have in the future and cultivate intimate relationships with their grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and others close to them, they needed to speak their mother tongue. This was a goal that I alongside the mothers in my study pursued.

Mesthrie (2008) examines the complex language decisions parents make for their children, and in this process, he reflects on how English spread in post-apartheid South Africa. In his examination, he debunks Mike Nichol's article - 'Death of the mother tongue' (Sunday Times, 29 February, 2004) and criticises the author's perspective, that there is a death of the mother tongue, stating that English is a more powerful and resourceful language. Mesthrie (2008) argues that black parents who could afford Model C schools fees after the apartheid era did so particularly because Model C schools were of higher standards. The parents hoped that having their children attend such schools would open up more opportunities for their children. Black children who attended Model C schools were the minority. Therefore, they had to make cultural and language adjustments; something their peers from other racial and ethnic groups, who constituted the majority did not have to. These Black children then faced

backlash and accusations of having lost their culture and mother tongue proficiency. They were referred to as "coconuts" by their Black peers when they returned to the predominantly black townships. Mesthrie (2008) conducted a study with 40 students from different backgrounds at, the University of Cape Town, and found that all the students placed value on comprehensively speaking and understanding the English language and their mother tongue which they viewed as part of their heritage. This finding is interesting considering that Black children who had attended "Mode C" school were, at the time accused of having lost their culture and abandoning their mother tongue by their Black peers whereas here we see that the connection between language and culture is one that the students continued to reckon with. Mesthrie (2008) also suggests that although the students who participated in his study maintained their ethnic cultures and mother tongues, their children would not, should they raise them in middle-class suburbs, where the English Language is dominant. This is the dilemma that the Black middle class mothers in my study are experiencing, which some are ashamed of.

**Language In the homes of my interlocutors**

The theme of language came up throughout this research. It was a conversation I regularly had with the participants of my study before my pregnancy, and formed a substantial amount of conversation between my husband and myself during my pregnancy, as seen on the short extract in the opening of this chapter. Language came up when Thandi relayed stories of how her husband spoke 'vernac' [vernacular] and in their case, IsiZulu to her pregnant stomach. '*Ngumjita lo'* (this is a boy)- he would say, as he guessed the unborn baby's sex, and featured on in many conversations I had with Zee. We spent many hours in restaurants and at the park with her family and had numerous WhatsApp conversations. When I met Zee, she emphasised how she taught her daughter both English and IsiZulu and often referred to her daughter as her 'Zulu Princess' on Facebook. She knew that being in an interracial marriage,

and living in a neighbourhood where English was the predominant language; it would be a challenge to maintain the IsiZulu language. She was, however, determined to teach her "Zulu princess" her culture and language.

Language was equally as important to Thembeka, who has four children. Thembeka had two at the beginning of the research and ran her own company from the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg, where she resided at the time of this research. Language was particularly important to her with regards to naming. She and her husband insisted that they would be responsible for naming their children, despite their parents' pressures. Thembeka and her husband wanted their IsiXhosa and SePedi ethnic identities and their faith to be reflected through their children's names. Their friends often told her that her children were Xhosa since her husband was Xhosa. This bothered her as she was uncomfortable with the idea that her children belonged to one culture. She felt that her children could be both Xhosa and Pedi, and language in naming was one of the avenues she used to reflect that. It came up more often in conversations with Zandile, Chwayita, Vuyiswa and Zizile, whose stories are told throughout this chapter and in my own language reflections. My conversations with my participants mirrored what was happening around us on social medial and university campuses at the time. Therefore, this chapter also draws on online conversations on Twitter and Facebook in addition to my participants.

Language was another practical way in which mothers pursued a celebration of Blackness and Africanness that included speaking and celebrating African languages. In this chapter, I show how language issues were discussed during the protests on social media, and how some of these language debates online in South Africa served as context to how my participants thought and talked about language and ways in which they engaged with it. My argument in this chapter is twofold; I argue that language is about access - access to relationships, belonging, the knowledge carried by language, culture and identity. Secondly, language

forms part of the larger debates around decolonization and taking pride in Blackness, thus continuing the mother's practical pursuit of Blackness and instilling pride in the black children as discussed in the previous chapter.

**Language, loss and shame**

The shaming of parents who speak English to their children or 'allow' their children to only speak English and the shaming/ridiculing of Black people who cannot speak African languages and only speak English by other black people is not new. Historically, the shaming and disapproval are evident in using concepts such as "coconut", made popular in Kopano Matlwa's (2007) debut novel, even though she did not originally coin the term (Matlwa, 2007). The term "coconut" in the South African context refers to a Black person who is perceived to be behaving like a white person or taking on mannerism associated with white people (Rudwick, 2008). The term "coconut" also includes a Black person who speaks the English language eloquently - this was particularly the case for Black people who attended Model C schools. A term with a similar meaning that is seldom used in the South African context and more prominent in the United States of America is 'Oreo'(Rudwick, 2008). As with many issues, the shaming and displays of disapproval became more apparent in the age of social media, where people boldly sat in the comfort of their own home and the anonymity of their accounts, posting antagonising comments and updates. Students who could not speak an African Language or their 'mother tongue' whilst 'claiming to be revolutionaries' were ridiculed as seen in Figure 10 - a post by one of the UCT RMF leaders, Wandile Kasibe on his Facebook posts. This post sparked debate on his timeline about whether or not people who could not speak an African language could be 'revolutionaries' or could legitimately participate in protests that call for decolonisation - while they have in a sense been

'compromised'. Updates such as the one by the RMF leader, Wandile Kasibe, were partly essentialist in their understanding of decolonisation. Such updates did not consider the various reasons why some Black people could not speak in their mother tongue, nor did it consider that English was, in fact, their home language for some Black people.

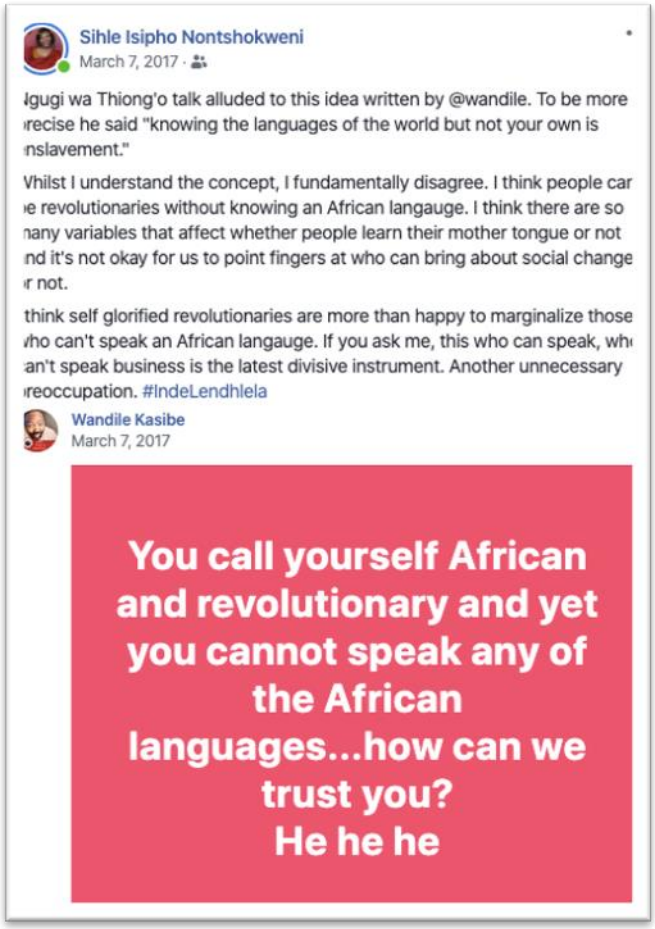


*Figure 10: A screenshot of a Facebook Post on the link between Africanness and Language*

One of the contributing factors for some Black people not being able to speak an African language is schooling. The inability to express in one's home language fluently is not uncommon in South Africa due to Model C schooling. According to Christie and McKinney (2017), Model C[29] schools were established at the end of apartheid in the National Party's

[29] At the end of apartheid, schools were divided into 3 categories. "Under Model A, the school would become fully private; under Model B it would remain a state school; and under Model C the school would become state-aided (or semi-private),

attempts to ‘protect’ white schools that were the most resourced. These previously white-only schools then started admitting Black, Indian, coloured and other races. However, these schools remained majority white, located in formerly white-only areas under apartheid and continued to be some of the best-resourced and high achieving schools in South Africa. Some have also remained relatively unchanged in their racist values and discriminatory policies, particularly regarding how they responded to African languages and hairstyles as seen in the previous chapter. This is no surprise as “Decisions on key issues such as admissions, language policy and fees lie with SGBs and, as legacy white schools, the cultural and linguistic ethos of their historically white-only parent bodies continued to prevail even as student bodies diversified” (Christie and McKinney, 2017: 9). Within the context, some Black adults such as the ones ridiculed in Figure 10, who studied in these kinds of schools, cannot speak their home languages or African languages. The emphasis in the Model C schools was to assimilate, to whiteness regarding language and aesthetics. Some school language policies even prohibited the use of languages other than English on school premises which is one of the key issues that came under scrutiny during the university protests and later the protests in High Schools as discussed in the previous chapter. During and after the demonstrations in high schools, the spotlight remained on language issues in South Africa within the academy, and on social media as this old issue of language use and language policies in South Africa had been revived by the protests. Tweets such as the one below in Figure 11 are a good example of times when language issues sparked a national debate on social media and the news and went beyond the student movements' parameters.

with its management council responsible for the running of the school, appointment of staff, determination of fees and maintenance of facilities.” (Christie and McKinney, 2017: 9)




*Figure 11: A screenshot of Ntsiki Mazwai on Mandela great-grandchildren.*

On the day of apartheid activist, Mama Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela Mandela's memorial, her great-grandchildren and grandchildren who all spoke in English spoke at their *gogo* [grandmother] and *khokho* [great grandmother]'s memorial. A South African poet Ntsiki Mazwai tweeted the following series of tweets: "It's not cute when a black child only knows English… it's not cute at all"; "The Mandela grandchildren and great-grandchildren need to spend some time in the village so that they wake up from their nasal twang slumber"; "Speaking English to your children is a form of child abuse… you are alienating that child from their people. Stop it!".

These tweets trended as more and more people on Twitter discussed the topic of the Mandela great-grandchildren. Many tweeters expressed their 'disgust' and 'disappointment' at the children's inability to speak African languages. Some even went as far as to say *Mama u*Winnie must be so disappointed that after fighting apartheid, children closest to her still feel that their African Languages are so inferior that they choose to speak in English at her funeral. Some commented about how speaking English means losing identity, especially if one speaks it with a 'twang'. Following Ntsiki Mazwai's comments, South African radio

personality Eusebius McKaiser engaged his callers on radio 702 and on his tweets, asking if it is wrong for one's children only to speak English and no African language. Many shared the sentiments that if one only speaks English, they have lost their identity. Many said that Black people who only speak English must feel that African languages are inferior and colonized. They further said that it was completely 'wrong' to raise children who only spoke English as a language – that language is tied to culture, heritage and identity. Many others felt that it was wrong to make assumptions about why some children only spoke English and that Ntsiki's tweets were a form of bullying and to criticise children and adults alike on social media, whilst having no idea what influenced them only to use English with their children was unfair. Many used the radio and twitter opportunities to articulate their frustrations and shame of being adults who could not communicate in their mother tongue and were constantly ridiculed by those on social media or even in public through disapproving stares.

Despite being useful in allowing others to celebrate their languages and express their Blackness through language, debates about linguistic competence had unintended consequences outside academia. These debates tended to undermine Black people who did not fit Blackness's expression that required linguistic competence in African languages. Value judgements such as that, if one cannot speak an African language, they must see their language as inferior, were harmful. Although a few on social media attempted to show different perspectives, as seen on the RMF students' response in Figure 10, these nuances and complexities were often drowned out. Not enough room was left to discuss the intricacies of home language acquisition. My participants were also confronted with the social media trends, particularly on the topic of Winnie Madikizela Mandela's memorial as well as the 702 radio segments that followed. They were constantly thinking about the content put forward and what it meant for them and language in their households. Visibly upset, one Sunday after

church at Baby Zone, Chwayita told me about a post she saw on the Brownsense Market Facebook group. On the page, someone wrote about how they get annoyed by couples whose children speak English. Chwayita did not respond to the person on Facebook. Still, in this conversation with other mothers in Baby Zone, she lamented that "people can't go around judging because they don't know what is happening in people's homes". She was referring to the fact that her daughter spoke English because she and her husband communicated in English since they could not speak each other's languages. The topic did not attract more than just sighs and nods from other mothers in the rooms, but I followed up on it in our interview later on and Chwayita said:

> What a pain the language this is. What a pain [slightly raising her voice]. It is the worst thing because it's the one thing I knew I was going to struggle with, and it's happening exactly the way that I thought it would. And it's just sad. I knew that because we speak English to each other. My husband speaks Sesotho, and I speak IsiZulu. We do not speak each other's languages. So, how are the kids not going to speak English? It's sad. It's our reality, though. And I have to constantly forgive myself for it because I'm constantly bugging myself about it. And I'm just waiting for the time when someone else judges me, and I will just know. And will be like, "well I'm the biggest judge of myself as it is. So just pile it on". It's already there… If I look at where I grew up, I just think it's so sad. And I don't know how to make her that way [A Zulu speaking child]. She's never gonna be the girl that grew up where I grew up [KwaZulu Natal surrounded by IsiZulu speakers and extended family]. She cannot be me. And it does make me sad because I really wanted her to speak an African language before she spoke English, but it's just not that way. It's just not that way. But I will not stop. That doesn't make me give up. I will not stop teaching her both Sotho and Zulu. I just keep hoping she does keep it up and she picks it up quicker rather than later. I just don't want her to struggle with the judgement when she is conscious of it. It's better if the judgement [judgment that people get for not speaking African languages] happens, but she is still young, and she doesn't really see it. I don't want her to deal with the judgement where she realises that she's being judged for speaking English. But I think she is going to have to. I think, to a certain extent, it is just going to happen. Because the turnaround is just not happening as quickly as I thought it would. But she's two; she's turning three. She still has some time. I will not give up. I'll keep working at it… So, the language thing is tough.

From Chwayita's words both in the interview excerpt above and the conversation with other mothers, it became clear that there was a sense of loss, pain and shame that her child could not speak an African language. On a few occasions when I visited her house, Chwayita would

talk to her daughter in IsiZulu, and when she (daughter) responded in English or with a blank stare, Chwayita would turn to look at me and sigh "*uyabo*" as she shrugged. Although language was a concern of hers before, particularly her daughter's inability to speak isiZulu and seSotho - it was also one that she had been able to dismiss in the past with "but English is everywhere – church, school, malls… everywhere". However, with the recent calls for Black pride and Blackness reflected in aesthetics, language, and more, the stakes were higher. It felt more urgent for Chwayita to do something about her daughters' language ability. The more people on social media and social gatherings spoke of a Blackness closely tied to an ability to speak an African Language, the more urgent it became for Chwayita for her 2-year-old daughter, and her new baby to learn IsiZulu and seSotho. Thus, the changing discourses produced a conscious reflection and a change in practice. Mothers who had taken their children to English-speaking crèches such as Chwayita were already riddled with guilt with how their decision might negatively affect the children and were trying to find ways to rectify that through having their children listen to bedtime stories and music in their home language. This was a change. In the past, she let her daughter listen to music and bedtime stories that she was familiar with from creche. She would have normally spoken child in English since that was a language her child was more comfortable - the language, she was exposed to at least 8 hours a day at crèche. She then made a conscious decision to speak isiZulu to her children more frequently. For example, speaking about her 2-year-old daughter in an interview, Chwayita said:

> I've taught her all her body parts in Zulu. She'd never be able to use it in a sentence. But she understands. I'm making sure now that she understands. To a certain extent, we were speaking Zulu to her, but I was actually realising she doesn't understand. She just goes, 'yah'. But she doesn't really understand. So, I'm making sure that when I say phrases to her, as much as she would not speak it back to me, she does understand what I'm saying. And make sure that I do not stop. Because when you stop, you're thinking that she still remembers what you taught her last week. But she forgets quite easily because there's so much that she's taking in elsewhere. It needs constant work".

The ethnographic snippets above allow us to see the relationship between the broader social context and the immediacy of a particular parent-child relation – in this case, a change in their language habits. Mothers were intentional in using language, education, and tradition to reclaim and re-emphasise Blackness by preserving their mother tongue in naming their children, using mother tongue at home, affirming their children, and taking pride in African languages and African literature. This intentionality was evident in how they sought out children's books in African languages that are not always as popular as English books. They would explain that "if you are at a Dischem, Pick n Pay, Checkers, if and when they have children's books, they are most likely all in English and some in Afrikaans". Thus, to find children's stories in African languages, they had to search for them. A few would be at local bookstores such as Bargain Books and Exclusive Books. Still, many were self-published available on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and personal websites. Figure 12 is a Facebook post, shared by Chwayita, a book she had come across on the social media platform in IsiZulu. Her post expresses her excitement in finding a children's book, written in isiZulu. Its captioned "Always lovely to find more of these [books in IsiZulu, Siyabonga! (thank you)".




*Figure 12: Chwayita shared a post of this storybook in IsiZulu on her Facebook page*

Besides the shame and 'feeling bad' which comes across strongly from Chwayita, the focus on teaching their children African languages by my participants was also motivated by their desire for their children to build relationships through language.

**Language as access to intimate relationships**

Although I can speak an African language, listening to and reading their stories about the legacy of colonialism and apartheid on language reminded me of my own association of good things with whiteness as I was growing up. Growing up my mother and other adults around me always referred to fancy and good quality material things as "*izinto zabelungu*" [white

people things]; talking about beautiful clothes they would say "*azintle, ingathi zezomlungu*" [they are so beautiful like they are a white person's]; talking about a beautiful house they would say "*Akukuhle ingathi kukwamlungu*" [it is so beautiful, like a white person's house], and when they have acquired money and bought themselves these beautiful things, I would hear them say "*Hayi ndingumlungu sana, kukwamlungu kwam*"[I am a white person. My house is like that of a white person's]. I was so frustrated when I realised that my older sibling had insisted on naming my twin brother and me vernacular names. In primary school, I gave myself the English names, I named myself Charmaine and later Tracy and labelled my school books, bible and other church books with these names. I would put clothes on my head, not as a *doek/*headwrap but to pretend to be swinging my blond hair. Having long braids would bring me so much joy. I could really do my pretend blond hair and happily say "inwele zam ingathi zezomlungu" [my hair is like a white person's]. From a young age, I learned that whiteness, or things that white people had, was something to aspire towards. One of my biggest desires was going to a 'White school' so that I could speak 'nice' English because 'English opens doors' as I often heard as a child and as such, I was so sad that my parents could not afford to send me to a Model C school.

The experiences and views described above are not divorced from a South African context where White people have more resources. For these reasons, we had what we called 'English time!' at home growing up. 'English time' was when my older sisters and I for a few minutes dedicated to just speaking English; giggling and laughing at each other as we mispronounced words. When the landline rang, we got so excited. This was our time to practice the few English phrases we were confident in stringing together. When the phone rang, it was usually my parent's or older sibling's employers calling, who all spoke only in English. "Hello! I'm sorry I can't speak English", or "Sorry, I don't understand English". My mother, her friends, and I made perfect sense to associate 'nice' things and resources with whiteness.

English was also seen as a resource that gave access to jobs and many other things in a world where Black people had access to very little and so of course, parents made sure that their children spoke English fluently, even if it came at the expense of their mother tongue. Rudwick (2008) argued that one could not deny the 'economic value' of English in South Africa. English proficiency remains one of the requirements for well-paying jobs.

In his book 'Black skin, white masks", Fanon (1967) begins with the subject of language. Referring to French, he speaks about the power of language and its association with culture.

> "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is…. Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago", (Fanon, 1967: 25)

It is clear that as early as the 1960's, the power of colonial languages was already evident and to be able to speak a colonial language was a great achievement for a black person. However, Black people's need to speak English to participate in the job market also had the unintended consequences of associating English with intelligence and proximity to whiteness as the standard to strive for. As argued beautifully by Magolego (2015), speaking English and particularly with a Model C accent gives those around you the perception that you are well educated. In addition to that, the Model C accent indicates that you are familiar with 'white culture'. On the economic implications of fluently in speaking English and in a particular accent, he writes:

> "A Model C accent speaks of the ease with which an investment bank would hire you to join their corporate finance team (all in the name of culture fit). Or how easily a law firm would see you as competent to be inducted in as an associate. A Model C accent serves as a gatekeeper when at the Louis Vuitton shop in Sandton City, the salesperson is not sure about you. It serves as a marker of those with whom one can reason. An accent facilitates empathy from Twitter users who see projections of themselves and, therefore, see legitimacy in your demands. An accent serves as a visa to opportunity but also a passport boldly asserting your origins. That is to say; a Model C accent is a passport asserting you one of the "coconut" bourgeoisie…On the

> other hand, when someone speaks with a vernacular accent, they are often seen as being in a rude state of refinement. A vernacular accent is the voice of unreason. It is the accent which comedians and intelligentsia alike mimic when they want to personify someone driven by base desires absent of any reason, absent of rational strategy. A vernacular accent is associated with those guys that burn things. Those guys that cannot articulate their concerns but have to resort to violence", (Magolego, 2015)

Language has been and continues to be seen as access, particularly the English language in the South African context as access to economic opportunities and cultural capital that serves one well in different contexts. However, I argue that language for my interlocutors, an ability to speak their mother tongue is access to familial relationships. Being able to speak English and Afrikaans eloquently has, and continues to be seen as having access to jobs, schools and ultimately, 'success' as described above - leading to many parents insisting that their children learn and be fluent in English. Some parents even focused on their children's English and Afrikaans proficiency at the expense of their ability to speak their mother tongue. These parents had good reason to believe that their mother language would not necessarily lead to upward mobility or give them economic opportunities. In similar ways, I argue that the 'decolonial moment' legitimized a longing and desire for language to access different kinds of things, particularly access to relationships. Decolonial awakening was best demonstrated in Zizile's comments in one of our interviews when she said:

> Language was a big one, my language skills suck so… and you know, I don't know, it's just, it's just, I don't have a knack for it [here she meant she finds learning languages very difficult]. Uhm and it does concern me because I don't want it to impact Lizo. I would have loved for him to have a choice, but unfortunately, as his mother, I'm going to be the biggest influencer, and if I don't speak fluent Zulu, chances of him speaking fluent Zulu are not there [Chwayita had gone to Model C school for both Primary and Highschool education and her parents had chosen to use English as their main language of communication at their home]. But I think he'll definitely understand the language, being surrounded by the language. Because Thando [her husband] and I don't naturally speak vernacular to each other, we speak only when we are gossiping. We speak Zulu, but sometimes he [husband] will speak Swati, to his mother. So, his mum is more language inclined uhm, so you know, if he

> needed to, we have to actually consciously speak to the child. *For him to communicate and have a good relationship with his grandparents, he needs to learn vernacular [My emphasis]*. Even if it's Zulu, Zulu is safe. Probably Zulu because it's more, it's everywhere. As much as on Thando's, side his mother is Swati, but she understands Zulu. So uhm, he speaks Zulu because he was in KZN for some time, so it's not like he can't. So, he needs to so he can communicate with his grandparents as well and just have variation; we're not sure. But that concerns me that I don't speak it fluently. I speak a bit of mix masala [Referring to the fact that she speaks a mix of English and IsiZulu and finds it difficult to hold a full conversation in IsiZulu without reverting to English], you know. Yah so, it concerns me that that's obviously going to have a high impact, but then do we consciously try speaking to him that way. But then it's weird when we switch to each other.

Zizile grew up in the Johannesburg suburb of Roodepoort and spoke English with her father and her siblings, while her mother insisted she only communicates with her IsiZulu. As Zizile grew older, it bothered her that she was not confident when speaking IsiZulu as it was the least used language for her, and even with her mother, she would revert to English. Zizile felt that her inability to speak IsiZulu inhibited her ability to form deep, meaningful relationships with other people who spoke vernacular, particularly her mother. She wanted her son to be confident in his ability to speak isiZulu and have intimate relationships with others, particularly with his grandmother. Zizile's son spends a lot of time with his grandmother, as she plays a big part in his care because Zizile and her husband live very close to her parents. Although access to relationships through language was intimate for Zizile, for Zandile, it went beyond just forming familial bonds.

In Zandile's lounge in one of my initial visits to her house, we spoke casually about being Black, race, Cape Town racism, privilege, my work outside the PhD and her work as an entrepreneur before we began the interview. Most of the interview was actually a venting session. We reminisced about our time at the University of Cape Town, the city and its beauty while remembering some of our first heartbreaking encounters with racism in the mother city. I played a bit with her son and spoke to him in a mix of English and isiXhosa,

and then I asked her what language he spoke, which is a question I had learnt to ask but not ask because of how sensitive it had become. From speaking with and observing Chwayita when people asked what language her children spoke, she would get defensive and uncomfortable. In this instance, I had asked the question at the right time because she cheerfully responded, "I want him to be multi-lingual. He can learn English, but he will not be learning it from home. We speak to him in isiZulu, and when people come over, they can speak to him in their languages. It means he will take a while to speak. You can go ahead and speak to him in isiXhosa". After this response, Zandile and I continued to engage in our usual mix of isiXhosa and English, and I comfortably engaged with her son in isiXhosa to him.

Vuyiswa shared a similar approach to language as Zandile did. Vuyiswa is a Chartered Accountant who lives and works in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg. She identifies as Xhosa and speaks isiXhosa, while her husband identifies as Motswana and speaks Setswana. In our interview, Vuyiswa said this about language:

> "I am going to speak everything, and you are in Joburg girl, [looking at her daughter] so like, you will speak all languages. I said we must go to Pretoria so that she can speak '*IsiPitoli*[30]'. Daddy is from Pretoria hey, he speaks that silly language [IsiPitoli] that they speak there. She [referring to her daughter] will speak isiXhosa and Setswana. A Xhosa speaking Tswana girl. English as well, she will speak everything, and then go to school and pick up more. That's what I want. She must not be like us, Ziyanda. It is too late for us".

[30] *By IsiPitoli, Vuyiswa is referring to Sepetori. "Sepitori (pronounced S'Pitori) is a language spoken by residents of Pretoria (called Pitori by most natives). The language is an informal language and a result of mixing mainly Sepedi and Setswana. There are other borrowed words from other informal languages such as Tsotsi taal, which makes Pitori lingo even more complex and beautiful. It's understood, like a language on its own, and is one of the most spoken languages in the northern parts of Gauteng" (Kekana, 2018)*

Vuyiswa felt that learning a new language at our age would be difficult and that now she had so many things going on in her life. She had to work, parent and run her household. The demands of life she felt left no time to invest in learning a new language, even though the desire to learn was there. We also see here that the desire for a multi-lingual future is projected onto the children. In a way, it's a kind of deferral. It is worth saying something about this – part of the work that 'the maternal' does is to find avenues through children for one's wish fulfilment. Problematic, to be sure, but definitely present in mothering.

Vuyiswa continued and explained that she was very serious and intentional about teaching her children Setswana and isiXhosa even though she and her husband mainly communicated in English as they did not speak each other's languages. "Let me show you!" she proudly announced and disappeared into her daughter's nursery and walked out with two books that she had recently bought for her daughter, one in isiXhosa and the other in Setswana. She laid them on the coffee table and explained that she read the isiXhosa stories while her husband read the Setswana stories. She wanted to show me some of the practical ways she uses to ensure that her child becomes multi-lingual. The creches closest to her house used English as the prime language of communication, and she was very likely to send her daughter to primary and secondary schools that too used English as the predominant language.

In these conversations, the mothers had different reasons for wanting their children to be multi-lingual. Firstly, it demonstrated the argument that language was a tool they would use for the children to access familial relationships and relationships with other Africans around them. Through teaching their children their home language, mothers wanted to give their children access to relationships, belonging, cultural knowledge carried by language, culture and identity. Others, like Chwayita, felt that it would be difficult to translate tradition and heritage into English. A big part of Chwayita's Blackness was defined through her heritage as a Zulu woman; something she wanted to share with her daughters. Although they were all

beginning to question what it meant to be Zulu, Xhosa or Pedi, they still felt that knowing the mother tongue was necessary to be part of the generation rethinking what Zuluness, Xhosaness, or Pediness means nad looks like. The participants' children needed to observe that process and be part of it. They needed to speak the language.

Furthermore, the mothers thought about language in relation to what Blackness could mean in the future – Black people celebrating each other, Blackness itself being celebrated, and a different world that required their children to speak different languages, particularly African languages. Zandile, for example, clearly noted that she wanted to raise a Pan African baby and what that looked like was a child who could communicate with other Africans, in their own languages. Zandile explained that her desire for the future is for her child to travel to different African countries and learn as many African languages as he could, a desire she had for herself. The multilingualism aspect was a desire shared by Vuyiswa, who also felt that the city of Johannesburg required a child that would be able to relate to people in different languages. Whilst for others, particularly Zizile and Chwayita, they were more concerned about a child speaking their mother tongue and relating to close family.

The last part of this chapter is about how language forms part of the larger discourse on decolonization, emphasizing Black pride and reclaiming Blackness, including embracing, speaking, thinking, praying, and even dreaming in one's language. Parenting in the 'decolonize everything' era, excited and worried the mothers as they felt they could not control much. They could not control how their children perceived themselves - whether or not the positive affirmation they gave would result in Black children embracing Black pride. Would the Black dolls, the children storybooks written in vernacular, the e-reading materials, the Youtube kiddie videos and how they spoke about Blackness in their homes influence their

perception of how the children see themselves in relation to Blackness. And to what extent? However, they felt that while the other influencers were representational, language acquisition yielded clear and immediate results. It would be easier to ensure that their children learn to speak their mother tongue and other African languages. As a result, they were intentional about speaking African languages to their children. When they felt that they could not speak the languages comfortably, as is the case with Zizile, they were intentional about having people who can speak African languages around their children. Language is the one aspect of Black pride and owning Blackness they can control, with immediate results.

Using language to express Black pride is something others have pursued in the past. For example, poets used style, aesthetics, and Black Consciousness to express their black pride and draw on black people's reality in their craft and expressed resistance to their status quo. They did this through abandoning "Eurocentric conventions of literature - which included deliberately breaking the English language, mixing it with indigenous African languages, township slang, and fusing the literary genres. The thematic part meant engaging and disengaging every aspect and apparatus of the system and putting together the building blocks for the creation of a new society" ( wa Bofelo, 2008: 196).

Although anthropologists' understanding of culture has evolved and has allowed for heterogeneity in experiences of people of the same 'culture', language,- its association with culture and identity continues to be used as an important identity marker. The ability to speak a particular language can be used to determine whether one can be considered part of the culture. The existence of labels such as "coconut" makes it apparent that there is an important relationship between language, culture, identity and ethnicity.

In her research in a township in KwaZulu Natal, Rudwick (2008) details how learners engage with the dilemma of wanting the opportunities that come with fluency in English and the social capital that allows one to understand the 'white world' as well as seeking to remain included in their township communities. For the learners in her study, speaking English well was not something they aspired to as they feared being called "coconut". She further suggests that apartheid effectively created restricting ideas of identity along ethnic lines (Rudwick, 2008: 108). As with culture, scholars have argued for the fluidity of identity and a shift from rigid understandings and definitions of identity that saw ethnic identities as 'sameness'. Anthropologists have debated the concept of identity as shown in (So˙kefeld, 1999). However, many people still view their identity and culture as fixed. As a result, we continue to see conversations about loss of culture as younger generations attempt to change what defines their culture. Loss of home language or fluency in it is seen as part of this loss in culture further fuelling the fears of exclusion and not belonging.

This resonates with Chwayita who felt that although she understands all the conversations about Blackness pride, she is more concerned about retaining her 'Zuluness' and teaching her daughters about it. "It means something to me. I can't shake it. I really can't. So, for me, I will teach them that [about 'Zulu' heritage, rituals and custom] and teach them that these are the people that you come from. This is their pride, and this is what they hold to themselves and what sets them apart. A big part of this has meant ensuring that her children can speak isiZulu and be part of 'Zulu' experience when they go to where she grew up and be with their grandparents and cousins in KwaZulu Natal.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that although studies and theories on identity reflect that identity is not homogenous. Instead, it is filled with complexities and intricacies, constantly evolving

and fluid. There are some things that people have held on to as signifiers of their black identity, and an essential part of this identity is language as argued by Phinney (1990: 505). Despite the fluidity in how anthropologists understand and explain culture; for many people, language has remained a very big marker of their sense of belonging within a culture. This chapter has also shown that in addition to language being about culture and access to relationships, it is also part of a bigger discourse around Blackness and black pride. Part of expressing one's pride in their Blackness and Africanness includes the ability to speak an African language, regardless of how alienating and limiting this view may seem to people who do not speak an African language.

Both these views show that a big part of the mothering is about how mothers imagine the future. The focus on language is also about futurity. The mothers imagined a different Africa where there would be a celebration of different African languages and almost a fulfilment of the coming together and unity that Steve Biko, Kwame Nkruma and many Pan Africanist dreamed of. The mothers wanted their children to take part in that future and language was one thing that could give them that access - access to a different future of Africa. The mothers' concerns about language with regards to access to relationships with family and access to culture also speaks to how they imagine their children as participants in a culturally rich society where they can be proud of their 'Zuluness', 'Pediness' and 'Xhosaness' and be able to understand the languages and enjoy the relationships that will be born from their cultural participation and understanding.

# CHAPTER 7

## Conclusions: #RepresentationMatters #YouWillBreathEasier #ProBlackAsAResponse #ChasingUhuru #Blackexcellence

As I come to the end of this thesis, I wish to go back to where I started. Early on in this thesis, I take issue that there is limited research on Black middle-class mothers in anthropological studies of mothering and motherhood in South Africa. In chapter 2, I show that anthropologists such as Mkhwanazi (2017) have critiqued the focus on poverty as a backdrop for experiences of young Black mothers in particular and has argued for research on early childbearing that explores the diverse experience and does not centre poverty. However, despite this critique, the anthropological research on Black mothers, young and old continues to be done in contexts of poverty, low income - characterised by struggle, strategies of survival even when these are not centred. I argue that this produces a single story of Black mothers' childbearing experiences and leaves stories of Black Middle-class mothers underexplored in South African anthropology. In pursuit of alternative narratives and multiple representations of mothering while Black, I turn my attention to Black middle-class mothers' stories. Drawing from Black Feminist scholars, I argue for a consideration of Black mothers' experiences that consider how race and politics of representation fold into the mothering practice of Black mothers. As anthropologists, we cannot predominantly look at Black mothers' experience in contexts where they are constructed as trouble or as in trouble.

Furthermore, it is essential to present ethnographic accounts of mothering from diverse class and socio-cultural contexts, particularly those neglected in anthropology studies of mothering such as Black middle-class mothers. When we decentre the class struggles, we're able to see other stories of mothering and see the making of mothering and sociality in diverse contexts.

Although anthropology of reproduction exists and there is growing scholarship on care and childrearing, motherhood, in particular, there is still a need to consider the Black middle-class mothers in anthropology. I argue for an anthropology of Black motherhood that is not centred on poverty or socio-economic issues but one that considers the middle-class mother, race, class, representation and thus offers a variety of experiences of Black motherhood. To do this, my ethnographic research focusses on a small sample of Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa – a unique sample in its middle classness – employment, access to private health care and comfortable housing.

In this thesis, my central argument is that political events—particularly the student protests and Black lives matter movements—set in motion political and social consciousness among the mothers who were my interlocutors. This saw them seeking ways to affirm and instil a Black pride in their children. Thus, in this thesis, I show how macro issues, particularly racial dynamics of the country, themes of race, Blackness, Black pride and representation fold into the everyday practice of mothering for Black middle-class mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa. As the thesis unfolds, I show that mothering is built on conviviality, joy, happiness, anticipation and effort while also built on uncertainty, fear, and worry.

**My story alongside stories of my interlocutors**

I have located myself at the various moments in this thesis as anthropologists do (Susser, 2009). I am aware that my personal history, identity as a Black woman, my experience of the country, its politics and my politics have all informed and shaped the lens with which I collected and interpreted the data I present in this thesis. I also practised reflexivity as I was conducting my fieldwork and reminded myself of my positionality. Thus, as argued by Singer (1995), I am aware that despite my desire to offer a contribution to knowledge that does not rely on the personal, the process of creating knowledge is both personal and political. This is

particularly essential to point out in my case as someone who had both an academic interest – to contribute to knowledge about politics of childrearing and Black middle-class motherhood, as well as a personal interest. I am a young, Black woman who was trying to conceive at the time and grappling with how Black mothers were portrayed in media and scholarship. Drawing from feminist scholarship and anthropology, I offer pieces of my life throughout this thesis and show how my life - aspirations and concerns and those of my participants intersected. My methods prioritised relationship, conversation and observations to obtain rich ethnographic data from my interlocutors. In this thesis, I piece together their stories to show that there is never a single story about any place and add to the various stories already told by other scholars on mothering.

Before delving into the intricacies of how political events at the time of my research seeped into the everyday mothering practice of my interlocutors as they were developing political and social consciousness, I first show that the forming of consciousness is a process. I do this by presenting the tension that arises as mothers reckon with being 'woke' mothers who acknowledge and celebrate other Black people's intellectual knowledge while also buying into notions of being a good mother who researches and privileges scientific knowledge without much question. In chapter 4, I explored how mothers navigate knowledge in a context of increasing technology – where the knowledge came from and how mothers maintained the sociality of mothering and tended to old relationships while also welcoming new technologies and information sources. There was 'expert scientific knowledge' that my participants felt they needed to know to qualify themselves as good mothers and be qualified by others as good mothers. This was an experience that resonated with studies of middle-class motherhood – particularly ideas of intensive mothering, scientific mothering and the good mother. I also demonstrated how constant research and self-education that the mothers took part in also produced anxiety and worrying. This chapter turned to discuss spirituality

and how in addition to the scientific knowledge, mothers drew on their embodied spiritual ways of knowing and used their faith to counter the fear induced by the scientific knowledge and as a coping mechanism for other pregnancy issues that produce uncertainties and insecurities. I ended this chapter by looking at the aspect of sociality in pregnancy. While searching for knowledge and tinkering with it, mothers also wanted to nurture their relationships with some of the live sources of information in their lives, particularly mothers and mothers in law. With this point, I showed how the mothers tread carefully as they try to figure out knowledge that will shape how they raise their children which in the end included amalgamation of the scientific knowledge, information from their mothers' lived experiences, and spiritual embodied knowledge. This chapter is the first instance where I show through its intentional fragmented nature of the chapter itself that mothering is complex. It is also the first instance of showing how mothering is built on conviviality, joy, happiness, anticipation and effort whilst also built on uncertainty, fear and worry. Although my interlocutors were reckoning with ideas of decoloniality, being more intentional in how they respond to things (including knowledge) from the west, they end up trusting American Apps and health providers with scientific knowledge. They are not as intent as one would have expected on drawing from the knowledge of their Black mothers. Thus how the mothers engaged with knowledge, particularly during pregnancy and soon after childbirth seems to be somewhat disconnected from how they wished to raise their children. However, considering that their reliance on spirituality and clear understanding of the limits of the scientific knowledge that they eagerly seek and that the political knowledge of Black existence

is not at odds with each other. It instead shows us that the mothering journey in its fullness involves many complexities and sometimes contradictions in forming consciousness in whatever area is complex. These tensions do not end in the prenatal, pregnancy and infant

stages but we will continue to see them in the rest of the thesis as the mothers grapple with practical ways of instilling Black pride in their children.

In chapter 5, I start to show the practical ways in which my interlocutors sought to affirm and instil Black pride in their children through paying attention to representation through material objects such as dolls, toys, books and music. These efforts were made with a desire shared by my interlocutors - to raise their children in a world that they can see and believe that they belong in. Through what they learn at school, through what they see in the books their parents read for them and through the affirmations from their parents – being reminded that they are beautiful and intelligent even though they are in a world that might tell them otherwise because of the colour of their skin. Furthermore, in this chapter, I show how the everyday macro-political moments through the student protests fold into my participants' everyday mothering practice who had a newfound urgency to instil a Black pride and affirm the Black beauty and intelligence of their Black children. This urgency I suggest was inspired by the students and discussions that stemmed from the student protests which although not new discussions and debates, my interlocutors engaged with them more meaningfully now that they were parents, as Chwayita put it, "… it's [referring to political events, including the student protests] no longer just this far-fetched thing that's happening to other people. It's this far-fetched thing that will eventually affect your child." Lastly, this chapter also acknowledges the tensions that my interlocutors sat with. The experiences I described in this chapter are the lived experiences of mothering amid an entanglement between the pursuit of particular class aspirations and resources and pursuit of their own childhoods that they are nostalgic about as they strive for the ever so elusive 'Africanness' and 'Blackness'. The places they wished to stay and access good schools were not places where their children would 'see themselves everyday' and was also not a place where their children could relieve their nostalgic memories about their childhoods. But again, there was also the desire that they

should not have to be relegated to townships to see and experience Blackness and Black people represented as every part of Johannesburg and books, songs, and dolls belonged to Black people too.

In chapter 6, I showed that although studies and theories on identity reflect that identity is not homogenous but complex, continually evolving and fluid, there are some things that people have held on to as signifiers of their Black identity and an essential part of this identity is language. Despite the fluidity in how anthropologists understand and explain culture, for many people, including my interlocutors, language has remained a considerable marker of their sense of belonging within a culture. This chapter has also shown that in addition to language being about culture and access to relationship, it is also part of a more significant discourse around Blackness and Black pride – part of expressing one's pride in their Blackness and Africanness include the ability to speak an African language regardless of how alienating and limiting this view can be to people who do not speak an African language. The mothers in my study imagined a different Africa where there would be a celebration of different African languages and almost a fulfilment of the coming together and unity that Steve Biko, Kwame Nkruma and many Pan Africanists dreamed of. The mothers wanted their children to take part in that future and language was one thing that could give them that access - access to a different future of Africa. Their concerns about language with regards to access to relationship with family and gateway to culture also speak to how they imagine their children as participants in a culturally rich society where they can be proud of their 'Zuluness', 'Pediness' and 'Xhosaness' and be able to understand the languages and enjoy the relationships that will be born from their cultural participation and understanding.

**Contribution**

There are two essential contributions that I make in this thesis. Firstly, I highlight how mothers engage with knowledge, where it comes from, who it comes from and how mothers learn to know in a context of increasing technology. Secondly, I describe how the political climate at the time this research was conducted where issues of race, decolonisation and Blackness were brought to the fore, shaped the mothering practices. I also describe how my interlocutors conceptualised their role in race work as mothers to affirm and ensure that their children feel seen in books, music, dolls, language etc. Put together, the two key aspects that come through the multiple stories I tell in this ethnographic project contribute to anthropology literature on mothering by showing how for middle-class Black mothers in my study, mothering is about finding ways that will allow for their children to inhabit the world in a positive and energised way where they are represented and made to matter – where they are affirmed as Black children. This thesis is about how particular historical moments and in this case, the decolonisation, race and representation debate that came through the South African FMF and RMF protests – set in motion a space within which my interlocutors could grapple with what ideas they have inherited and what they wish to pass on. It is also about the formation of political and social consciousness. Conceptually, this thesis contributes to an Anthropology of Black Motherhood. I take serious literature, hair, language, and children's toys and see these as critical and political sites where mothers negotiate their role in race work and the decolonial project. They are also sites in which mothers form consciousness and imagine the consciousness of their children. These are also sites they use to hope for certain futures for their children.

**Limitations**

I recognise that this study is not without limitations in terms of scope, size and representation. In the future, it would be useful to explore the role of the fathers. My study followed on the

tendency to focus on either motherhood or fatherhood in current anthropology studies and not looking at childrearing from the family's perspective holistically by speaking to mothers, fathers, and grandparents. Further studies would benefit from hearing other voices on how race, representations and considerations of Blackness and Black pride impact their childrearing practices. What approach do fathers take? What approaches to grandparents take? How do fathers and grandparents respond to the race work that my interlocutors engaged in?

Furthermore, it would be amiss to assume that race and representations issues do not matter to mothers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, future studies would benefit from looking at how Black mothers from poor and working-class contexts engage with race and representation in their mothering practice. This is particularly important in ensuring that this ethnographic project does not become a study about a 'different type of Black mother', thus reinforcing that socio-economic issues are still the main concern or key point of interest in Black mothers' experiences.

**Conclusion**

What I have shared in this thesis may be incomplete. Nyamnjoh (2017) suggests that everything is incomplete – our identities and sense of belonging are all work in progress that can easily shift and change based on our context. This uncertainty is a part of human reality and sociality. This is reflected in the tension and constant work in progress in the mothers' identity work and that of their children described in this thesis. However, despite the limitations and thus, incompleteness, this ethnographic study is an essential contribution to understanding motherhood experiences for Black women, particularly Black middle-class women and how they engage race, gender, and representation in their mothering. Engaging with the current anthropological literature on mothering in South Africa, I have argued a single story

in how Black mothers are represented in literature – with poverty and socio-economic issues as the constant backdrop to their stories. In pursuit of other Black mothers' stories, I have turned my attention to an underexplored group of Black middle-class mothers, decentred poverty and struggle. Drawing on Black feminist scholars, I have centred issues of race, Blackness and representation and how these fold into intimate mothering practices. With the student protests - Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall, and Black Lives Matter movement as a backdrop, I have argued that political events created a space where Black middle-class mothers who were my interlocutors formed a political and social consciousness that saw them seek ways to affirm and instil a Black pride in their children. I opened this thesis describing Sisonke Msimang's encounter with the rage of a white man and her note that "To be a Black mother is to manage the rage of others while growing joyous Black Children." I end it on a somewhat positive note - with a desire I share with my interlocutors – to raise joyous young Black children who rejoice in knowing that they are "young, gifted and Black", who see that they are excellent/gifted and believe it.

**Nina Simone - To Be Young, Gifted and Black**

To be young, gifted and black,
Oh what a lovely precious dream
To be young, gifted and black,
Open your heart to what I mean

In the whole world, you know
There are billion boys and girls
Who are young, gifted and black,
And that's a fact!

Young, gifted and black
We must begin to tell our young
There's a world waiting for you
This is a quest that's just begun

When you feel really low
Yeah, there's a great truth you should know
When you're young, gifted and black
Your soul's intact

Young, gifted and black

How I long to know the truth
There are times when I look back
And I am haunted by my youth

Oh but my joy of today
Is that we can all be proud to say
To be young, gifted and black
Is where it's at

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research participants call

Appendix 2: Information Sheets

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Researcher**: Ziyanda Majombozi
**Research Title**: Everyday Experiences of Pregnancy and Childbirth
**Institution**: University of Witwatersrand

I am Ziyanda Majombozi from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and I am doing research for my Doctoral Degree in Social Anthropology. The aim of my study is to explore women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. I am interested in how black women experience the ordinary mundane life of pregnancy, the changes that their bodies go through and how they make sense of these changes, how they experience the birthing process and how they then take care of themselves and their children.
I am inviting you to be part of the study because you fit the uncomplicated/normal pregnancies criteria stipulated by the South African National Department of Health.
In order to do this research, I will need to spend time with you so that I can gain insight on your experiences and to see how you relate with others and how others relate with you over a period of 12 months. In the spaces where you have allowed me to spend time with you, whether it is at home, work, shopping mall, baby shower, etc., I will be taking note of how you relate to others in terms of conversations and behavior. I will try to make sure that your life is not disrupted by this process throughout the time we spend together and we can come up with rules of engagement and times that suit you best.
**Your involvement in the study will include:**

- Spending time with me in whichever space you are comfortable letting me in (home, work, shopping mall, baby shower, etc.)
- Allowing me to observe you in different spaces.
- Telling me your life story so that I can get a sense of your life and the different influences that have impacted the values and principles you hold and also the decisions you make in your life, particularly with regards to your pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.
- Participating in semi-formal interviews
- These interviews will be audio recorded.
- Your anonymity will be protected as I will use a pseudonym in all of my research notes, in the final dissertation and conferences and seminars where I present the research findings.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate with no consequences. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This form gives me permission to use the information that you give me or tell me about. You can refuse to answer questions which make you feel uncomfortable and you can withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. You will not be paid for your participation in this research, and there will be no direct benefit to you from the research.

The results of this research will be written in a PhD dissertation that will be available on the world-wide web of which a copy of and a summary of will be made available to you at your request. I will also present the findings in conferences and seminars. Any time we spend together, or information that you tell me will be completely confidential. This means that no-one will be able to identify who has told me this information. I will use a pseudonym in all of my research notes, in the final dissertation or research report and conferences and seminars where I present the research findings.
This research has been approved by the Wits Faculty of Humanities and the Wits Humanities Research Ethics Committee.
If you have any queries, or are uncomfortable about anything that we discuss, you can speak to me at any time. Alternatively, you can raise any concerns you may have with my research supervisor (Dr Nolwazi Mkhwanazi).

**These are the necessary contact details:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Researcher:**<br>Ziyanda Majombozi<br>**Cell**: 078 465 8668<br>**Email**:<br>ziyanda.ndzendze@gmail.com | **Research Supervisor:**<br>Dr. Nolwazi Mkhwanazi<br>**Tel**: 011 717 4228<br>**Email**:<br>nolwazi.Mkhwanazi@wits.ac.za |

**FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET**

**Researcher**: Ziyanda Majombozi
**Research Title**: Everyday Experiences of Pregnancy and Childbirth
**Institution**: University of Witwatersrand

I am Ziyanda Majombozi from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and I am doing research for my Doctoral Degree in Social Anthropology. The aim of my study is to explore women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. I am interested in how black women experience the ordinary mundane life of pregnancy, the changes that their bodies go through and how they make sense of these changes, how they experience the birthing process and how they then take care of themselves and their children.

Your partner/family member has agreed to be part of this research. In order to do this research, I will need to spend time with your partner/family member so that I can gain insight on her experiences and to see how she relates with others and how others relate with her over a period of 12 months. I will be visiting your home for this purpose and will try to make sure that your family life is not disrupted by this process throughout the time I spend with your partner/family member.

- Your anonymity as a partner/ family member will be protected as I will use a pseudonym in all of my research notes, in the final dissertation and conferences and seminars where I present the research findings.
- There will be no interaction with you as a family member/partner for the purpose of data collection.
- The results of this research will be written in a PhD dissertation that will be available on the world-wide web of which a copy of and a summary of will be made available to your partner/family member at her request. I will also present the findings in conferences and seminars.

This research has been approved by the Wits Faculty of Humanities and the Wits Humanities Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any queries, or are uncomfortable about anything, you can speak to me at any time. Alternatively, you can raise any concerns you may have with my research supervisor (Dr Nolwazi Mkhwanazi).

**These are the necessary contact details:**

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| **Researcher:**<br>Ziyanda Majombozi<br>**Cell**: 078 465 8668<br>**Email**:<br>ziyanda.ndzendze@gmail.com | **Research Supervisor:**<br>Dr. Nolwazi Mkhwanazi<br>**Tel**: 011 717 4228<br>**Email**:<br>nolwazi.Mkhwanazi@wits.ac.za |